



Olivia

From Cambridge North
to
Switzerland

I have never seen anything more beautiful.

The past three months have gone by way too quickly. In fact when someone asks me how long I have been in Switzerland, I find my self saying ,“four months“ because it is just to hard to admit that my adventure is already half way over. The last few months have been some of the best, and I have seen so many beautiful things and met tons of cool people. In some ways it still feels like I just got here yesterday and I still have so much to learn. But on the other hand, I finally feel like this is home. I have learned so much and have come such a long way from my very first day here. I will do my best to describe my latest adventures in this Beaver Tale.

One of my favourite memories from last fall was definitely the Rotary organized trip to Zermatt to visit the world famous mountain, The Matterhorn. When I first got on the train to Zermatt I was sitting with about 5 of my close friends who happened to be on the same train as me. But by the time we actually arrived in Zermatt three hours later, we were a group of 111 exchange students all on the same train. It was definitely very chaotic but also so good to see everyone and it was a really special feeling to have so many different countries come together. When we arrived at our destination, and walked to our accomodations (after about a half an hour stop for a Matterhorn photo session), we were sent into the city on a scavenger hunt. In the beginning, we as a group were not so thrilled about having a scavenger hunt when we just arrived in this beautiful city, but it turned out to be the highlight of the weekend. Amongst other tasks, we also had an ongoing mission. The mission was that every group was given a small object, (in our group this was a small pack of candles), and we were to go into the city and ask people on the street,(in German

of course), if they would be willing to trade our candles for something of slightly more value. Once we had a new object, we had to continue trading in hopes of ending up with something pretty valuable in the end. This was for sure one of the funniest things I have ever done, and we had a lot of laughs meeting and talking with new people. In the end we convinced a man to trade us the sweater he was wearing, with our latest object. But that was nothing compared to the group of kids who ended up with a pair of skis! The next day we got to go up a famous mountain, right next to the Matterhorn, to eat lunch. We went up about 3500 m, and I can definitely say I have never seen anything more beautiful in my life. We were looking out at miles and miles of snow covered mountains. It was also really special for a lot of South Americans because it was the first time they had seen snow! After a snow ball fight at the top of the mountain, we had lunch in the restaurant and then had to depart back home. We had a lot of laughs during the weekend, and I met tons of new people.

Another highlight so far would definitely be the two weeks of ski holidays that we had in January. In the first week of holidays, I had the pleasure of going to Austria to a small ski village. I went there with the couple that will be my next host parents, and also their children and grandchildren. We had so much fun together, and it was really nice to learn about my host family before I will actually be living with them. The skiing was absolutely incredible, and nothing I could ever compare to skiing in Canada. The next week I took the train from Austria to the town of Scuol, where I met my first host family, for another week of skiing in their holiday house! I had been to Scuol before in the fall holidays, but it was even funner the second time for a week of skiing. We had so much fun together, and it felt so good to see them again. Changing host families was definitely pretty hard for me, especially since I felt so close with my first. But it was great to have another week with them, and I am happily spending two extra weeks with them, since I am sort of in between switching host families.

Other than that, I have done so many other things in the past 3 months. I have seen a lot of new places and also made many new friends at school, since I am in a different class this semester. Things are definitely a lot easier now and my German is also getting a bit better! Being able to understand the language has definitely made the whole trip more enjoyable and even though my German isn't yet perfect, I am proud to say that I do not need to speak english any more with my host families. I am continuing to learn more everyday, and I am also attending a German course once a week in Zürich.

Christmas in Switzerland was for sure a little harder than I imagined, but I still had a great time and learned a lot about what a typical Swiss Christmas is like. Otherwise I am proud to say I almost never feel home sick. Like I said I don't even want to think about having to go back home yet, and I can't imagine life without my new friends and family in Switzerland. I am very happy to say that I have many friends and host families that are planning to come to Canada to visit within the next few years, and I know for sure I will be visiting Switzerland again many times in the future!

So I guess that kind of sums up the last few months in Switzerland for me! I am continuing to enjoy every minute here, and I wouldn't give this opportunity up for the world. Once again I have Rotary to thank for this amazing experience and I am so grateful that I was chosen to come to Switzerland.

Liebe Grüsse,

Olivia