



Personal Experience Report

From	Vancouver, Canada
Date	May 19 – Dec 19
City	Winterthur
Employer	ZHAW ZPP

- How did your traineeship influence your personal development?

This was the first time that I lived and worked abroad, so the influence on my personal development was huge. Winterthur was a very cosy city and I remember that the first few days felt like a dream because everything was, in one way or another, different. I got to experience short commutes for the first time in my life (since in Vancouver (Canada) commutes to school/work/recreation usually require a long car or bus ride). It made me realize how much time I spent on the road for day to day activities! I also had the opportunity to enjoy travelling to nearby countries (Italy, Germany, Austria, Hungary, France) and enjoyed exploring Switzerland. I also really liked the gym membership program since they had so many activities for students and employees within a **1 min walk** from my workplace!



Figure 1 My favourite IAESTE trip to Lausanne where I got to experience the French side of Switzerland!



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND

- What was your most impressive / meaningful / touching experience?

The most touching experiences were the conversations that I had with co-workers, friends and neighbours and it made me realize that once you get past culture or language, people all around the world are much more alike than different.

- What did you learn from your Swiss colleagues?

I learned German (or tried to, the best I could!). My Swiss colleagues at ZHAW ZPP in Winterthur were incredibly nice people and I got to practice German with them and learn about their culture. This was by far the most enriching experience that I had because I felt that the more you know a country's language, the more you can access the heart of the people and their culture.

- Did you notice any differences regarding the way of working compared to your home country?

There were not too many differences with engineering work that I experienced at ZHAW ZPP compared to the work experiences I had in Canada. As a mechanical engineer, I was working in the Product and Process Development at ZHAW so I got to see machines such as Selective Laser Melting machine which I haven't seen before. In general, the work structure with flexible work hours was similar to Canada. The only main difference was that everything was in Swiss German (which was fun to listen to) and they drank way too much coffee!

However, I do have to say that the lifeguarding system was very different. I am also a lifeguard in Canada, so when I went to the swimming pools here, the lifeguards worked in such a different way than what I was used to! There are far fewer lifeguards on deck and the pool rules were more relaxed.

- In which ways does Switzerland differ from your home country?

Since I am an Iranian-Canadian, I definitely noticed several differences in the Swiss culture. Canada is very multicultural, and people are used to seeing and being exposed to many different cultures. However, I noticed that the average Swiss (not all) did not know too much about people of different cultures since there are not too many multicultural people living in Switzerland, compared to Canada. As I talked to many of the Swiss, their main exposure to certain cultures and ethnicities was through tourism. I hope that the interactions I made allowed them to learn more about Iranians and Canadians!

- What was difficult to get used to in Switzerland / being abroad?

The high prices of everything! Also, it was difficult to get used to the amount of cheese that people eat here for fondue and raclette. Other than that, it was relatively easy to

adjust because Switzerland is a very developed country and similar to Canada in terms of the quality of life.

- What was your experience with IAESTE in Switzerland like?

It was a very enriching experience and I am glad that I took this opportunity. I got to work with a group of smart engineers, try learning a new language and travel.

- What were the advantages of doing an internship through our exchange organization?

The IAESTE program is a very special program for students who wish to experience travel while getting professional work experience. The IAESTE trips were very interesting and I enjoyed going to Bern, Lausanne, and the hiking trips. I highly recommend trainees to take advantage of these trips.



Figure 2 Enjoying the fresh air right before the Mount Pilatus hike