



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND

Hannah Mokhberi, UK

Intern at Berne University of Applied Sciences (BFH)

Photovoltaic Laboratory, Switzerland

June – November 2021

1. Experience of being abroad (all by yourself...)

- How did Corona affect your internship abroad?

Halfway through my internship, Switzerland passed a new law which meant everybody must show either a vaccine certificate or a negative test result to get into almost anywhere that was not deemed essential. I am not vaccinated, and the Covid tests were not free; therefore, I was not allowed to get into many places. This was probably the only bad experience I had during my internship because I missed out on many activities with my friends.



Figure 1: Me on Titlis mountain in Switzerland in June. It was so warm even though it was full of snow! I was just wearing shorts.



2. Experience at work

- What surprised you most at work in Switzerland?

I was surprised by how friendly people were at work. I felt very welcomed. For example, on many occasions, my colleagues and I went out during weekends or after work. We even had a tradition of going to the pub every Wednesday. I made such wonderful friends at work that I will keep forever. Even though I made many good friends with other exchanges I met through IAESTE events, my strongest friendship was with my Swiss work colleagues.



Figure 2: Raclette dinner at work



Figure 3: My leaving party at work



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND



Figure 4: My colleague invited everybody for lunch at his house. He made the most amazing pizza himself.



Figure 5: Wednesday pub night with my colleagues



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND

3. Cultural differences

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

Switzerland has hotter, sunnier summers than the UK. So, I was so pleased to finally be able to swim in lakes and outdoor swimming pools. Going to Marzili for a swim and then getting ice cream from Gelateria di Berna (just next to it) was my favourite activity in the summer. I went there with my friends a lot after work.



Figure 6: Me doing a backflip in Marzili



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND

I was extremely impressed with the transport system. Pretty much all the regions were accessible via trains. The relatively high frequency of trains coupled with short travel times between regions (due to the country's small size) made it possible to go on day trips to almost anywhere in Switzerland without much-advanced planning. The SBB app made the travelling experience even smoother because it included all the transport options available from my location to the desired destination. I am so glad I got the GA because I did not have to worry about which zone I was in or when I should get the train. Even though the GA is quite expensive, I think it is worth it (if your place of work is in a different town from your accommodation and you have to get the train to work anyway) because then you can go and explore all around the country in the weekends. It makes you much more spontaneous and mobile.



Figure 7: Next to a railway in the Rigi mountain



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND



Figure 8: This is a cogwheel train that took us from Vitznau directly to Rigi Kulm



Figure 9: Boat on lake Lucerne



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND

- What did you miss most back home?

I think there are more options for leisure activities in the UK or maybe it is just because I am a local I know of more places. Regardless, I missed having a lot of shops, restaurants, pubs, and cafes to choose from.



Figure 10: Coffee shop in Geneva



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

The cost of everyday food items was a lot more than what I am used to. I used to get a shock every time I wanted to pay for my weekly food shopping. It was quite frustrating because most of the food was not necessarily better quality than the ones back home, but it was much more expensive.

4. IAESTE

- What was your experience with IAESTE in Switzerland like?

My experience with IAESTE Switzerland was utterly incredible. It was the first time I had ever lived away from my parents, so naturally, they were very worried about me, and I was quite nervous myself. However, IAESTE Switzerland made it clear that they were reliable from the very beginning. They answered my emails fast and regularly checked up on me during my internship. They also established regular communication with my employer, so they were always in the loop if I had any problems. They even got in touch with my accommodation providers when I had a problem with my deposit. Their job was even tougher than usual because my internship was during Corona, when international travel was near impossible, yet they tried their hardest to get me to Switzerland. This meant a lot to me because the internship changed my life, and I will be forever thankful to IAESTE for making it happen.



Figure 11: Daytrip to Basel with other IAESTE exchanges



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND



Me and my colleague measuring how much power the solar panel receives at different tilt angles. The big umbrella is for exerting shadow for when we want to do the same experiment with shade.



IAESTE
SWITZERLAND



Me and my supervisor in the PV plant on top of the roof of the building. We were looking into the multiplexer that is used in the measuring system.