

Experience Report.

Intern: Juanita Jiménez Montealegre.

Sending Country: Colombia.

Employer: ZHAW, Institute of Product Development and Production Technologies.

City: Winterthur, Zürich.

Internship Dates: 01/09/2025 – 30/04/2026.

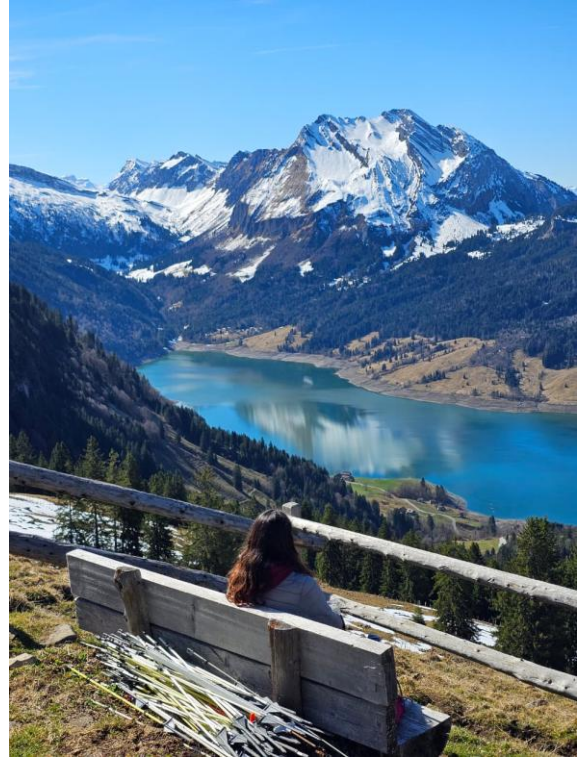
Work.

I worked at the IPP in the Product Development Department, where we were dedicated to the entire product development process through creativity, innovation, technology, and engineering. The institute can be described as a research center that fosters and strengthens the concept of a prototype as a key element for developing technologies, allowing us to understand, through experience and tangible results, the scope of the tools used. This internship had a very positive impact on my life. Firstly, as my first international work experience, it allowed me to explore the diversity of my career from a broader perspective. Furthermore, working on various academic and business projects demonstrated the range of career paths I can choose without losing sight of what I love, all while learning and helping to solve real-world problems.



Experience.

The first days in Switzerland felt like a leap into the unknown: my first time away from Colombia, surrounded by a language I didn't understand and a completely different culture. Everything seemed overwhelming until the Wehrli family came into my life. For nine months, they became my safe place, welcoming me as one of their own and turning the adaptation process into an adventure instead of a struggle. Although there were moments of loneliness and winter was harsher than I ever imagined—with freezing temperatures, gray days, and the distance from my family weighing heavily on me—I also learned to appreciate the little things I once took for granted: a warm hug, sunlight on my face, or simply walking through my city back home.



As the months passed, Switzerland began to reveal its most incredible side. I explored breathtaking places that looked straight out of a postcard, like the Matterhorn in Zermatt, Rigi in Lucerne, and the hidden beauty of Innerthal. I experienced skiing for the very first time in Wengen and throughout the Jungfrau region with my Swiss family. I also fell in love with the country's food culture: its cheeses, its famous chocolate, and the blend of flavors from different cultures. In the end, it was an emotional rollercoaster — balancing the homesickness for everything I love about Colombia with deep gratitude for the opportunity to grow, meet amazing people, and live an experience that completely changed the way I see the world.

Discover.

From a professional standpoint, I added value to everything I learned during my Mechanical Engineering degree, reinforcing concepts, learning new ones, and applying others with a broader perspective of what I'd like to develop in the future within Mechanical Design. On a personal level, I recognized how strong and capable I am to face anything life throws my way, how loved I am by so many people even from afar, and I discovered the wonderful person I am thanks to connecting with incredible people during my time in Switzerland. Regarding my future and my studies, I know I'd like to return to pursue a master's degree, but I also know that from now on I will follow my heart and seek to be where I truly feel happy with who I am, surrounded by those who love me.

