

## The Exchange program: Studying, Living and Travelling in Switzerland

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During the fall semester of 2019, I was on an exchange program to ETH Zurich, Switzerland. After getting off at the Zurich Airport, my first impression was left by the transportation system of Zurich: this city doesn't have underground transports, and the city is divided into a few zones, the payment should be made whenever you travel passing a zone, similar as when you travel from Stockholm to Uppsala. However, unlike the SL card being valid for the entire Stockholm city, each zone in Zurich is quite small and the railway from the airport to city center passes two zones. Then I know the living in Zurich would be a bit costlier than in Stockholm, and this was proved through the living through the next few months.

As is known that Switzerland is a country in alpiners, the city Zurich also has many high grounds, the campus of ETH Zurich locates on the mountain at the city center, although the common transports have way to go up, there is one special "polybahn" which takes students directly up to the campus. (Although it's common to see funicular railways, but this is the only one in the Zurich city, it is also part of the public transport)



You would see a lot of things start with poly- at ETH, like the restaurant "polymensa", the annual dancing party "polyball", etc., I didn't look into it carefully, but the name ETH probably also includes the meaning polytech in German. This is a quite interesting fact, because any other thing which belongs to UZH (University of Zurich, at the same location with ETH) won't be called poly-something. By the way, UZH and ETH are sharing the campus area, and there are also some others like medical school in this area; students at ETH, including exchange students, are possible to take courses offered by UZH as well, although it may need some transferring procedures.

Swiss people speak more than one language, in Zurich, people speak Swiss German. If you know some German, you may find that German words are somehow similar to Swedish words, so it won't be a huge trouble if you go shopping but is afraid of not knowing German. ETH is also offering the basic German course for exchange students, the course is free to take or leave, but as far as I know, it's not easy if you want to get a German language certificate from

the course. And it's also interesting to know that Swiss German is a different language from German, people use different vocabularies, Swiss words use "ss" instead of "ß".

There is a river passing through the center of city, if not taking tram to go back to my apartment, walking along the river will also lead me to my place, it takes more than an hour though. I also got to know that some local people may swim or boat on the river during summer, the water is very clear.

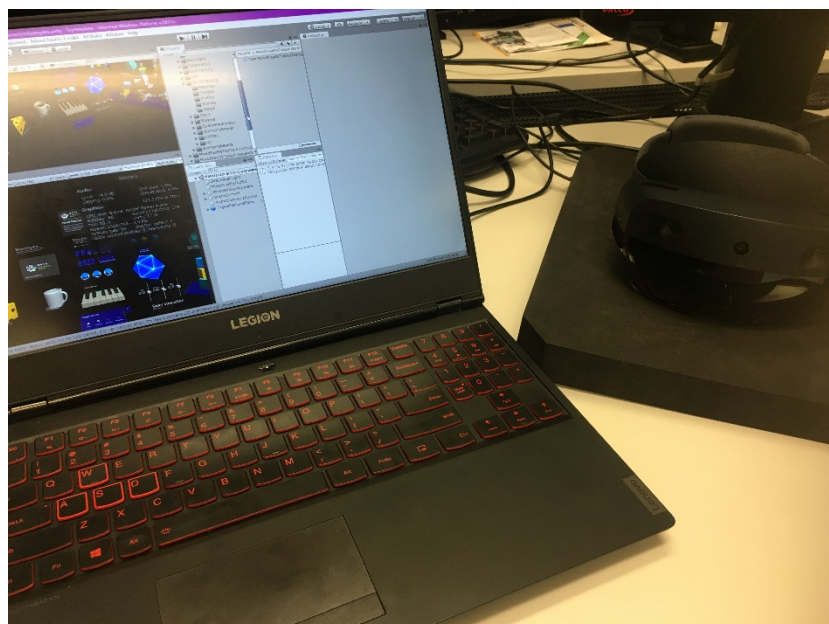


I lived at Meierwiesenstrasse 62, the student apartment kept by WOKO, it's located in the region of the old town, the neighborhood is quiet and the transport is rather convenient. The student apartment in Switzerland is different from the one in Sweden. Everyone have a corridor room, but within the room there is only a washbasin, apart from this, the kitchen, bathroom and toilet are all shared. And unlike the shared kitchen for residents on each floor, the kitchen is only on the ground floor, more like the kitchen of a restaurant.

As I know, almost all of the students living here are exchange students, here is people from everywhere, Spain, Italy, Iran, Germany, so there is chance to meet all these people, there are pleasant experiences, making new friend, chatting and knowing their country and culture, but there are also unpleasant ones, like someone may party in the yard at midnight, or steal others food in the kitchen. (Because people store foods in the kitchen, everyone has a container and a locker, most people don't lock it for convenience, so surely it could be avoided, anyway, from my experience, losing food in shared kitchen is common, the best way to get rid of it is to take care of myself).



The courses at ETH are demanding, most courses require students to be hardworking, and the credits granted are less than ones at KTH. From my own perspective, the courses have more contents, the grading is stricter. If you do not have to take a lot of credits, I would suggest you to take like 20 or so to make life easier, so that you have time apart from schoolwork. However, I could say there are some interesting courses that worth to take, for example, I took a laboratory course “Mixed reality lab” which uses Microsoft Hololens and build projects, it's a new to me also to them, because it was the first year ETH holding this lab.



The summer of Zurich lasts for long, the weather is keeping warm until the mid of November, and it's even not very cold during the winter, the temperature is like 8-9 degrees above freezing naturally, and it seldom snows. Before the weather getting cold, there is always nice days to travel along the country. The famous alpines, the Matterhorn, is a good place to travel.



You may have to get up early to catch the train to the bottom of the alpes, and it costs four or five hours hiking to get to the high grounds, the sceneries along the hike is beautiful; after arriving the high grounds, you could choose to go further up or stop, the tickets to the peak (JungFrauJoch) would cost about 60-100 Euro (I couldn't remember clearly), but after the trip I would say it worthwhile.



The scenery at the top is different. There is snow and places for skiing. If you like to try, you could bring ski board with you.



It's also fast to travel to other countries from Switzerland, especially Germany, the SBB national tickets could take you to the border towns of Germany, Constanz and Waldshut, which are both lovely small towns (,also good place for shopping, the prices in Germany is way lower than in Switzerland).

During September and October, if you got a free weekend, it's also a great choice to go to Munich and be part of the Oktoberfest, people from all over Europe come to this festival and enjoy the brews.



I've also travelled to Spain and France during the winter break, because the final exam period of ETH starts at the end of January, (this means you may miss the first two weeks of KTH spring period), there is about a whole month since the Christmas holiday. Through the vacation I flied to Barcelona in Spain and Nice in France, also Monaco. And this is another story away from Switzerland. ☺

If you want to know more about my exchange experience, feel free to contact me and ask for more!