

## Field Report Study Abroad Semester Nursing and Winter School in Winterthur

September 2016 until February 2017

ZHAW School of Health Professions, Winterthur

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### Why Switzerland?

The reason I was first drawn to Switzerland was family ties, as my sister was living near Zurich at the time with her 1 year old daughter. After considering it, Switzerland seemed like the natural choice! I had learnt German in high school, I loved the outdoors and I was excited to experience a snowy winter. I had also visited my sister once before in Switzerland, so I knew I liked it. Although my university did not have a direct partnership for the bachelor of nursing, I got in contact with the international coordinators at ZHAW and they helped me to find a way to come and study for a semester at ZHAW.

### My study abroad timeline

I arrived in Switzerland 2 weeks before the semester commenced, to give myself a chance to settle in and get organised. This gave me a great chance to make the most of the warm weather and see a bit of Winterthur and the surrounding areas. I couldn't believe how beautiful the landscape was, I was just walking distance from serene rivers, endless woods, swimming lakes, wild berries and towering mountains.





After my little honeymoon period with Winterthur, study began on the 19th of September. I decided to take just 4 subjects, as my German was not quite up to studying more than that yet. Classes were difficult, but it was a satisfying feeling when I really understood something. Gradually it got easier and by the end of the semester, I was only mildly exhausted by the end of the day. Luckily, I still had plenty free time to enjoy myself and to spend with family (see photo of my niece Luisa).



As study drew to a close for the Christmas break, my boyfriend visited from Australia and we travelled to surrounding countries for 5 weeks. The fact that we could be in a different country in just a few hours was astounding to us, as travelling anywhere in Australia takes a LONG time. After the Christmas break, I headed back to uni for 2 weeks of study before wrapping up my trip.

### **The Swiss friends I will never forget**

Making friends was a daunting thought when I first arrived, but the students in my course were more welcoming than I could possibly have expected. I was often approached by people who I had never seen yet who knew who I was, to ask if I would like to come to a party, go out for a drink or sit with them at lunch. A group of the loveliest girls I've ever met took me in and made sure I never felt lonely, which I was beyond grateful for! Here are some photos of us.



### **Living in a shared flat**

I chose to stay at the WOKO shared flats (WG in German) that are organised by ZHAW, as I figured I'd be more likely to meet people and be able to use my German with other people around me. I'm so glad I chose to do this, because my flatmates all became friends (or more like family really) that I'll never forget.

I didn't get to practice German all that much given that they all spoke perfect English, but they were able to help me decipher aspects of Swiss culture I didn't understand, help me

with any problems I had and just hang out whenever I was home. The flat itself was great too!



### **Switzerland versus Australia**

There are a lot of subtle differences between Switzerland and Australia, but after becoming so used to them I find it hard to put my finger on them.

The landscapes – for one – are very different. Australia is a lot more dry and bushy, not so green and lush like Switzerland. What we call "mountains" would barely be hills in Switzerland! And the beach is never very far away.

This was a welcome change for me, as well as the beautiful snow that started after Christmas, but by the end of my trip, I am feeling ready to get back to the warmth.

As for people, I found that the Swiss people (not including students) were a lot more cautious and polite in their interactions, while Australians on the whole treat everyone – including complete strangers – like close friends. This sometimes came across as rude or cold to me, but after a while I realised this was just the Swiss way.