

Expanding Horizons: The Swiss Adventure

On July 21, 2009, I became a member of the advance group of students travelling to Switzerland from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. There were three students and Gaetano Guzzo, PhD. in the advance party. Our mission was to scout out travel routes, and make arrangements for the group that followed two days later. We arrived in Switzerland at the Zurich Airport, and then made our way to our first hotel, The Hotel Allegra, in Kloten, a suburb of Zurich. Group two departed the U.S. on July 23, and arrived in Switzerland on July 24. At which time, we in the advance party, enthusiastically greeted them. Because the second group was tired from the trans Atlantic flight, they opted for sleep, while students from the advance group travelled by train to Winterthur, Switzerland, a beautiful city that blends the old and new. We saw many buildings erected in the 1700s, aligned with buildings of steel and glass.



On Sunday July 26, we made the first move of our trip, from Kloten to Lenk, where we took up residence at the KUSPO sports center. This was our base of operations for the next week. While at Lenk, we traveled all over Switzerland (der Schweiz). We went to the cheeserie on Allmenalp, which is located above the village of Kandersteg, and viewed the making of Swiss mountain cheese (holes in mountain cheese are very small due to the altitude). We also had an authentic Swiss fondue party, hosted by friends of Dr. Guzzo, the Reichen family. The patriarch of the family, Werner, Sr., took a special liking to one of our differently-abled students, and presented her with a very fragile Edelweiss bloom. Allmenalp is a mere 1700 meters up (about 4000 feet).



We made further excursions to Interlaken, and Jungfrauoch, the locale of the Jungfrau glacier, and the highest point in Europe. On July 31, we stood on snow and ice on a glacier (3571 meters or 11,752 feet). We also had a chance to visit Milan, Italy, four hours by train, and spent a day in Lucerne. We travelled to Geneva, and visited the International Red Cross, Red Crescent Museum, as well as the United Nations (formerly the League of Nations) complex. We also visited the city of Bern, famous for many things, but known for the bear pit, for which the city is named.



More

importantly, I was able to have a personal visit to a Swiss Altersheim (old people's home) in Lenk, and was able to compare their level of care for the Swiss aging community with the level of care offered in Dayton, Ohio. Unfortunately, I found the Swiss to be virtually light years ahead of the Dayton area in regards to quality of care, and quality of life for the aging residents of the Lenk altersheim. The administrator (Doris Toscano), known in German as die Chefin, personally escorted me through the facility, and spent roughly an hour and a half with me answering questions. While in Lenk we participated in Swiss National Day festivities (similar to our 4th of July celebrations).

Once again, on Sunday, we moved to our last accommodations in Zurich, the Pfadi Huus (Scout House), which is situated directly across from the Zurich zoo. On Thursday, we boarded our plane for the return trip to the U.S.

I have to thank the members of the Liberal Arts scholarship committee, because it is due in large part to their generosity that I was able to go on this trip. Also, many thanks go to the Wright State UCIE, for facilitating the trip under the banner of the University Ambassadors Program. And I would also thank, very profusely, Drs. Sarah Twill, and Gaetano Guzzo, for giving so freely of their time and talents to make this extraordinary trip a reality. I understand that this was the inaugural year for this particular trip, but I feel much was learned from this excursion that can be applied to future travels, especially with many students who are differently abled. We had three students and a faculty member in wheel chairs, one student who is blind, and one aging student with a cane and vision problems. This was six members of a party of thirteen with some form of physical challenge. The end result is that we successfully accomplished the trip and learned many

valuable lessons on the way. Also, many strong lasting friendships were formed between students and faculty.

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Class of 2009