

My Tour Team Experience in Switzerland

By Jess Craig

Switzerland... the place where all the best chocolate comes from, oh ya and there's the mountains and apparently swim meets! This is an account of my week in the very European looking country of Switzerland.

My journey to Switzerland began, of course, with a flight. A cold eight-hour flight, full of people bumping into me or blocking the only TV that was showing a movie. When we arrived in Zurich, some coaches from various teams from Zurich greeted us and drove us to the hotel, which was called Puurehuus. To the humour of all the Swiss no one on the team could actually pronounce the name of the hotel, which was pronounced "puroose". At lunch, the coaches told us that we were only allowed to have a two-hour nap because we needed to adapt to the time change, which is six hours. We were all extremely tired because we had been awake for a long time and it was still about three o'clock in the morning at home. Waking up after the nap was extremely hard, but we had to go for a practice, so off we went to the competition pool. The pool was surprisingly small for a big swim meet. It was only six lanes and twenty-five metres, but on the deck there was huge waterslide, so this made it alright that the pool was small! We all wanted to go down it, but the team manager said that he didn't think it was a good idea. After practice we trekked back to the hotel and had pasta and salad dinner then went to bed.

The second day started VERY early. We went to a different pool that was long course and swam there. There are only three long course pools in the entire country, so it was kind of cool that we got to go to one, but it took an additional twenty minutes to drive to. After our practice, we went to explore Zurich. We walked from the pool to a train station and took the train into town, then we spent half an hour trying to find somewhere to eat and eventually found somewhere after going to a Starbucks. At Starbucks we all got to have a hot chocolate, which was seven dollars for the smallest size! After spending the day in downtown Zurich, we went back to the pool to swim and took a Swiss taxi! The taxi driver, who could speak fluent English, just like everyone else there, said that we were small for swimmers and this was the very first time that I was called small in my whole life! After going to the pool we all did our own practices again and after that we got to go down the water slide! This is when the Swiss probably thought we were completely crazy because the boys kept colliding on the slide on the way down. After we went back to Puurehuus and had dinner (pasta and salad), and went to bed.

Day three was a very uneventful day, it was the day before the swim meet started so we were told to just relax and do nothing, and that's precisely what we did. We had the privilege of sleeping in, a little bit, but it was only until eight. Then we had to go to breakfast and then we went and flipped through the channels on the TV to try to find some English, we were horribly unsuccessful. After our lunch, we went on a walk around the neighbourhood of the hotel, twice. Then we did some more walking and eventually ended up walking to the pool, which wasn't very far, but it was a little chilly. After our practice and dinner (of pasta and salad!), we found that all of the other swimmers had arrived at the hotel by now, and this is when Byron, the coach, was telling us all about the Olympians and how they had done in Athens. One of the guys on the team mentioned that we looked like babies in the room and we realized that he was quite right, some of the swimmers on the team were almost thirty five, which is seen as old for a swimmer!

Day four was the beginning of the swim meet. It was a relatively early morning, but when we arrived at the pool it was all worth it, because the music was amazing! They actually had someone DJing the warm-up music. There was also some pretty crazy warm up rules at this

meet. Anyone, at any given time, can dive off of the block of any lane they want. This led to a lot of panic attacks from me because the people would dive as soon as you do a turn and would come very close to landing on you. Most of the team had a panic attack trying to figure out what they say for "take your marks" in German, I'm not one hundred percent sure how to spell it but it sounded like they were saying "auti prete". The other odd thing about this swim meet was the lack of people, for the 200 back there were only three heats! Which meant I was in the first heat! Being in the first heat I had to try to go fast so I was guaranteed a spot in the final because there were only six spots and I needed to ensure that I had one of those six spots. I did so, because I went out like a rocket and realized that the people in my heat were not going to go very fast, so I was able to slow down and go a decent time. After the other two heats were finished it turned out that no one wanted to go faster than I did so I qualified first. When the session was over, we went back to the hotel and had some lunch, then we had a much appreciated three-hour nap and it was back to the pool. At this swim meet, both the A and B finals are marched out and the A final was first. The finals were absolutely crazy! A lot of meet records were broken and a lot of people went very fast! The girl who won the 200 back went 2:08 and she went out in a 1:01! In the men's 200 back the guy who won the silver in the 200 and 100 back swimming, it was absolutely crazy! Instead of medals they gave out 400 Francs (about 400 dollars Canadian) and paddles for first, a giant pull buoy for second, and a towel for third. Each "medal position" was also given a little bouquet of fake flowers. We were also treated sort of like celebrities because little kids kept coming up and asking for our autographs! After finals we went back to the hotel and back to our same meal of pasta and salad!

The next morning was the last day in Switzerland and we were all a little sad. We made the best of it though, on Sunday's at swim meets in Europe the prelims and finals are earlier, the finals started at three!! Which meant, a very short nap and right back to finals. Sunday's finals were a blast! I was able to win a towel, which meant third in the 100 back and we did the most fun relay ever! The relay was IM, and had to have two boys and two girls. My team was in heat one, lane one. We won our heat and weren't expecting to beat five teams in the last heat but we did! We placed second and won Speedo gym bags! After finals we went out to a nice dinner, for some reason everyone was sick of pasta and salad, and then went sledding. Not tobogganing, sledding. We walked forty-five minutes up a mountain, and pure ice and came down on little wooden sleighs! I screamed all the way down the mountain much to the thrill of everyone on the team. After sledding we went back to the hotel to pack and get ready for our early flight. The next morning we woke up and left the nicest place ever and had to say goodbye to the people we'd spent the past six straight days with. We learned a lot about each other, my roommates and teammates realized a couple of things about me. First that I don't wake up in the morning very easily and I never hear the alarm. Second that I don't get sick of food very fast. Third that I get very loud if I think I'm in danger, and fourth that I dance to any music, no matter what!