

## **From our alumna: Kerri Hunter, University of Helsinki (Spring 2010) Midstay program at Zurich**

The midstay program in Zurich was so much fun! Switzerland is not a place I was planning to go while on my exchange in Europe and so I am really glad that it was the location chosen for the trip as it gave me an opportunity to explore somewhere new I hadn't thought of going to before. And it was great to finally meet the other EuroScholars.

The academic part of the trip was really interesting. I loved seeing the buildings of the downtown campus, the architecture is very unique. And then the visit to the science campus was good as well. The opportunity to present our own research was useful in that I think it helped me understand better the goals and purpose of my research project, because I really had to think about what I had done and why I had done it. It also gave me much needed practice with public speaking. Listening to the other EuroScholars' presentations was also really interesting and I loved how different everyone's projects were. The presentations by the PhD students were also informative and visiting their labs was a nice bonus as we got to see some of the research facilities at the University of Zurich for ourselves and learn a lot more about the ongoing research there. They were very enthusiastic about their research and it got us excited too.

Visiting Bern was my first time on a long distance train so that was fun! It was also nice that it was an ESN trip and so we got to meet some other students. They were super nice and made sure to include us in everything even though we were the newcomers. The tour of parliament I found especially interesting, as Switzerland's parliament is set up very differently from the system I am used to back home in Canada. It was also neat to see a different city and Bern looks very different from Zurich.

The final day when we went sightseeing was I think my favourite day. Going up the river to Lake Zurich on the little boats was super cool! And finally it was sunny and warm! Then walking through Old Town and visiting all the main tourist attractions was fun as well.

I think that because we had contacts in Zurich who were taking us out to dinner, sightseeing, etc. we got to see a lot more of Zurich than a typical tourist would. I love visiting any new place and Zurich was no exception. The great central location of our hotel also made possible some sightseeing on our own. I would like to thank the staff at the international centre at the University of Zurich for putting together such an awesome program for us and making it a really great experience.

And of course we cannot forget the volcano erupting and the craziness that ensued when all European airspace was closed, adding pretty much a whole other trip in trying to get back home to Finland!! For the record, it took me and Courtney 6 trains, 2 taxis, 1 bus, 1 subway, and 1 ferry to get back from Zurich to Helsinki!! But what an adventure, and definitely something I will always remember.