



Alumni News

Greetings from !!!

Zurich Switzerland !!



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*Class of 1976
Yr 10*



To:

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Hoi Diane

As I write this I am on my one week ski break! Favourite time of year for the children I teach! The snow fall this winter has created an amazing ski season! A long, cold winter here with close to zero temperatures during the daytime! As I watch the winter Olympics I can imagine what the negative temperatures feel like, having experienced them at some of Switzerland's famous mountains like Zermatt, The Matterhorn and Titlus.

Meeting my Swiss husband in Melbourne and moving to Zurich, Switzerland is something I would not have imagined when I finished my schooling at Mercy College and then went on to graduate as a Primary School Teacher.

I had worked in Melbourne as a Catholic Primary School Teacher for about twenty years. Resigning from my job in Melbourne was a big step. I had to be open minded as I was going to work in another country I didn't know much about and it was a big risk without first securing a teaching job.



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I moved to Zurich at the end of January 2002 and since August 2002 to now I have continued to teach in various International schools in the Zurich Region. My first International job was beginning an International school in Winterthur with a small group of people from different countries.

We began with 12 students and I had three students in my Grade One class. Only one student spoke English as he was from England, the other two were from Holland and Switzerland. I still see the family from Holland as I taught both children, they are now twenty two years old and nineteen years old. This has been one of the highlights for me teaching in International schools, as I have made many friends from all over the world.

I went on to teach at Inter-Community School and while there I took on a job titled Co-ordinator of Teaching and Learning, leading teachers in curriculum, but in the end while rewarding, I missed the classroom and putting into practise what I had learnt about curriculum.

I left this school to live on the other side of lake Zurich and I took on a new job at Zurich International school. Getting to ZIS where I work, is a scenic train ride beside the Zurich lake with the Alps as a backdrop, but as I now have moved again and live in the city of Zurich it takes me fifty minutes to travel to work on public transport. I am lucky that the public transport here is well taken care of; clean and always on time!

I have loved moving and living in different areas of Zurich, experiencing the country, enjoying views of the Zurich lake from our balconies. Now living and loving city life with the Zurich Opera House, a short tram ride away and the lake a five minute walk. I had been teaching overall for about thirty five years and finally decided to resign.

So since August 2015 I have taken on short term contract work at Zurich International. This school year I am working fifty percent in Learning support, teaching children who are in a mainstream school but might need a different way of learning due to a diagnosis like dyslexia, refusing to speak (elected mute), autism or some problem with their working memory. This has meant that I am experiencing different areas of teaching and it is keeping me 'alert and on my toes.' I love the creativity and intelligence these children display.

Students are the same wherever you teach. They have the same basic needs, to learn and be valued as a learner. If there is a difference it is that in one class there are many different nationalities to teach, some with English and some with no English or limited English. What these children all have in common is that both parents or one parent has accepted a job in Zurich and so they have moved here either from their own country (their first move) or another country, some parents move many times to different countries with their work.

We have counsellors in our school to help children navigate these moves as sometimes it is stressful for them to leave their extended family and friends either in their home country or the country they have left. I find these children very knowledgeable about life in different countries and very open about making different friends and saying good bye to different friends made every school year. At the beginning of a school year in August we have a big group of new students from all over the world begin and at the end of the year in June we have another big group leave, either for their home country or another country.



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At the moment we have more than 55 countries represented in our school community. As part of their stay here in Zurich, they must learn the language of the canton and as the school is in the German part of Switzerland, they learn German during the day but English is the teaching language at ZIS.

Zurich is the largest city in Switzerland and though it is expensive to live in, it has ranked among the top ten most liveable cities in the world. I love living in a city with a history going back to the Romans who in 15BC called it Turicum.

Walking around the city is beautiful and offers historic churches, museums and buildings with many stories. The lake and bridges over the lake also give Zurich its special place in Europe. I live in the German part of Switzerland so Swiss German is spoken and although I have found this difficult to learn, I can speak Italian, one of their official languages. French and Romantsch (Latin based) are the other two official languages spoken in Switzerland.

I think the best part about living here is experiencing all the traditions/festivals that date back centuries. I am looking forward to Sechselauten on April 16th where the Zurich Guilds celebrate the end of winter and welcome spring. The Boogg is built (a huge snowman) and at 6pm is burnt. It is said the faster the fire reaches the snowman and makes its head explode (it is packed with fireworks) the better the summer will be. That's the legend anyway. Horse drawn wagons, bands and people from the guilds carry beautiful flowers and give them away to everyone watching the parade.

The seasons here are well defined and each season has its own tradition/festival. There are Rabeliechtli festivals where the last vegetable pulled out of the ground (the turnip) before the long, cold winter begins is carved and candles put in it. The idea is to celebrate light going into the winter. In a village I lived in called Richterswil, there were over 10,000 carved turnips displayed around and when the village lights were turned off, the village looked like something out of a fairytale. The floats in the procession are all lit using turnips. Just spectacular! The Christmas festivals and markets are also fun to be part of and I have enjoyed buying and decorating a real Christmas tree and lighting it with real candles. Another favourite tradition is watching the farmers bring the cows down from the mountains as winter nears. They are decorated with flowers and after the procession, a big party begins. I do miss our Melbourne beaches and as Switzerland is landlocked, the lake and rivers are our swimming places during the summer season. The water is very clean and the areas on the lake they turn into a 'badi' (swimming place) are very scenic. I feel very fortunate to be able to work in and enjoy what Zurich has to offer and travel from Zurich to different countries in Europe.

I try to come home to Melbourne once a year but it is usually in my Winter break in December/January and only for three weeks, so it becomes a whirlwind visit. I don't come back in June/July, my summer break, as I like to enjoy summer rather than go through another winter. We are hoping that when we stop work here in Zurich that we would spend six months in Melbourne and six months in Europe. I miss Melbourne, especially my family and friends and I am looking forward to the day when I can spend more time with all of them.

Tchuss, Addio, Au revoir, Bun ans vair!

Anna Parente