



# Sudu

from Milton  
to  
Switzerland

## *“Home is where the heart is...”*

Home can be anywhere. It will always be a place where you feel the deepest affection. Necessarily, it does not have to be the house you grew up in. Instead, an environment you have a significant emotional attachment to. For me, home is here, in Switzerland.

To believe that I have already been in such a wonderful country for nearly 10 months is quite difficult to wrap my head around. I have seen and done things that not even the people who grew up here have experienced. Some days, I get so caught up with the daily events in my life that I do not notice my departure date slowly lurking around the corner. Knowing that I will soon have to say goodbye to a place I truly love brings me sadness.

I often get asked if I look forward to returning home. However, I am already there. To hear such a statement has made me realize how lucky I am. For me to find comfort in a foreign country where I previously did not know anyone beforehand, is incredible. Having the chance to travel individually as a youth has helped me in numerous ways. For instance, I have been able to see things from a different perspective with a fresh mindset.

If I have learned anything this year, it's that I will never be 100% ready for what life throws at me. I have learned to make things happen on my own and to accept that at the end of the day, it's my life, my choices, and determination that will get me to where I want to be. Sometimes, being alone in such a beautiful place gives you the freedom to figure everything out alone.

One day, I do plan on returning. I am not sure when, but I know there will always be a place for me to stay. A home where I am warmly greeted with open arms.

As I sit in class, frequently glancing at the clock, I realize how my time here is fleeting. One day, I will step out the doors of my Gymnasium (High School) and won't return as my 17-year-old self. Soon, I will not be walking up the steep hill to my host family's house after a long day of school. Or even hearing the bells worn by the cows as they graze... I'll truly miss the little things that I have learned to admire as time went on. Even if I missed my train by a minute, I do not mind waiting longer for the next one. Despite me becoming a typical Swiss, one who always must be punctual (especially when it comes to methods of transportation), I have learned to laugh it off. When will I get another chance to experience this again? This is a question I frequently ask myself. Things like this do not happen on a daily occurrence. At times, you must make the best out of certain situations as you learn to embrace every day as it's your last.



In life, there will always be moments where you have to depart even if you wish not to. Yes, it may be bittersweet, however at the same time, I am full of gratitude to have even gotten the chance to experience this. Doing an exchange has been one of my best decisions. Even with the year-long process of applications, interviews, and events, the end result has brought me joy. I know for a fact that if I got the choice to do this year again, my answer would be “yes” without a doubt. Now with the warmer days ahead, I look forward to cherishing my last moments.

With the sun on my face and the laughter of loved ones surrounding me, I cannot wait. For the next while, I will only be found on a train as I head towards my next adventure. Whether it is traveling to a new city, or even getting to see the mountains once more before I return to the Great Plains of Ontario...





A little advice for future RYE students:

During your time abroad, do not expect each day to be sunshine and rainbows. Some days, you will deeply long to be surrounded by the things and the people you have known for your entire life. Or in my case, even wishing to wake up to the sound of my dog snoring instead of the cats scratching at my bedroom door.

Doing such an exchange for the span of a year takes enormous emotional strength. Yes, there will be occasions when you have your ups and downs. As often mentioned by previous exchange students, this will be one of your toughest years. Yet, when you look back, the memories you have made will only bring you pure happiness.

To see myself grow into the person I am today has left me speechless. Self-growth will happen without realization. Please do not be afraid, especially of what's to come. Instead, take each day one at a time. As well, remember to be grateful for the opportunity you are given. Appreciate every moment. Stop and look around you. Be thankful for all you have and where you are because this time next year, nothing will be the same.

Words cannot express what Rotary has done for me within the past couple of years. I have met people and created lifelong memories that will forever have a special place in my heart. Something that was once mentioned to me by a Rotarian was how behind every exchange student, there are nearly a hundred of others supporting them. This reminds me of the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." The person I am today is because of those who have stood proudly by my side as I went through a year of self-growth and unforgettable moments. Thank you again, for everything you have done. You are changing the lives of future generations.

Till next time, Tchüss!

Liebe,

*Sudu*