

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 46 (2019)
Heft: 6

Rubrik: Imprint

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Gaining life experience in Switzerland

What to do after finishing compulsory education or high school? Often the best answer is to take a year out. There is a plethora of gap year opportunities to choose from in Switzerland.

Go to university? Do vocational training? Or look for a job? Many young people ponder these questions once they have left school. Making the right choice is not always easy, which is why gap years are a popular option in Switzerland.

Bridge-year courses

Bridge-year courses, of which there are many, used to be referred to as the “tenth school year”. They are run by the cantons and can vary considerably in nature. On average, a bridge-year programme will last six to 12 months. Many help to fill gaps in schooling or provide guidance on choosing a profession. This will often include helping people to find apprenticeships.

Voluntary work

In return for doing voluntary work, you will receive free board/lodging and possibly a small amount of pocket money. Many volunteers like to work on farms. Agriviva is a body that organises agricultural placements for some 1,500 young volunteers from around the world each year. Swiss Abroad also take advantage of these opportunities. For example, Yaycia Robinson from Australia spent this summer working at a family farm in the canton of Solothurn. “I definitely want to be working with animals in future,” says Robinson, who developed a particular affection for the cows.

Internship

Internships provide an in-depth insight into the world of work. From hospitality and healthcare, to media and construction – almost all professions offer work placements. Most of these are advertised on various online platforms. When applying for an internship, you must provide a CV, cover letter and references – just like you would if you were applying for a permanent job. Interns are treated as employees and usually receive a small wage. To gain admission to a university of applied sciences, you normally need to have been on a work placement for several months.

Movetia offers a language assistantship programme that allows students from abroad to gain initial work experience by helping out for a year as a language assistant at an upper secondary school or vocational school.

Young Australian Yaycia Robinson (left) with her “Agriviva parents” Stefan and Maria Marti, alongside “Fuba” the cow. (Photo: Julia Spahr, “Schweizer Bauer”).



Au pair

Working as an au pair for a family with children can be an interesting experience for young men and women alike. Although the remuneration is nothing to write home about, you not only receive free board and lodging but are also given enough spare time to attend language courses and get to know Switzerland better.

Language courses

Intensive language courses allow you to immerse yourself in the language of your choice. Numerous private schools in Switzerland offer language courses for every level. We recommend that you aim for a course that earns you a recognised language certificate.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

Information sheets on the relevant options are available to order free of charge from education-suisse by email (info@educationsuisse.ch). Education-suisse also has a Facebook page, which now also includes a closed group for all young Swiss Abroad who are currently furthering their education in Switzerland.

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IMPRINT:
“Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 45th year of publication and is published in German, French, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 418,000, including 223,000 electronic copies. Regional news appears four times a year. The ordering parties

are fully responsible for the content of advertisements and promotional inserts. This content does not necessarily represent the opinion of either the editorial office or the publisher.
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EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Sandra Krebs
TRANSLATION: SwissGlobal Language Services AG; LAYOUT: Joseph Haas, Zürich; PRINT: Vogt-Schild Druck AG, 4552 Derendingen
POSTAL ADDRESS: Publisher, editorial

office, advertising: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, Tel.: +41313566110, Fax: +41313566101, Postal account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9. Email: revue@aso.ch

COPY DEADLINE for this edition: 21. October 2019

All Swiss Abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation receive the magazine free of charge. Anyone else can subscribe to the magazine for an annual fee (Switzerland: CHF 30 / abroad: CHF 50). Subscribers are sent the magazine direct from Berne. www.revue.ch

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