

# AFS Exchange Programme - 4D Vivienne Rueegger (陳迦梨) From Switzerland

你好! My name is Vivienne Rueegger and I am 16 years old. It has been an amazing opportunity for me to be an exchange student in Madam Lau Kam Lung Secondary School of MFBM in Hong Kong!

Before sharing everything about my exchange year with all of you, I need to tell you that going on an exchange program has been an unforgettable experience and an irreplaceable memory to me.

How else would I be able to learn so much about life?



As you see in the background, I travelled to Macau: I love to travel and visit new places! How else would I be able to try the best egg tarts?

But what is worth observing and discovering has to be seen from the other side after some time.

The reason why I came to Hong Kong is I wanted to understand and experience a culture, which is way different from the one I know. Hong Kong differs in food, school, lifestyle and actually in everything. It is a different world. I am very happy to be one of the exchange students this year in Hong Kong!

I remember suddenly getting butterflies in my stomach. My eyes could barely follow how fast everything on the outside flew by - with every second faster and faster. I couldn't see the shape of the trees and houses anymore and the colours were fading away.

It was 21st August, 2015 when I left Switzerland.



This is a picture from the AFS activity here in Madam Lau Kam Lung Secondary School. We had a lot of fun with the local students as well as with the exchange students we invited.

In my home in Switzerland I live with my Family in Zurich. This is not the capital city but the one with the highest population. But, what is the definition of home?

For me, Hong Kong and my lovely host family are like another home – as well as my friends and the AFS family. I had the chance to build up a life in one year, make friends from all over the world and so, the past 9 months have been completely different from the lifestyle I had in the previous years.

My local host family and my friends helped me a lot with adapting to cultural differences, like developing the skills to eat properly with chopsticks and wearing a uniform to school.

Some differences in daily life were very obvious from the beginning. We can compare it with the sight of an iceberg: The top, which is clear to be recognized and then, hidden underwater, the rest of the berg: the bottom.



In the background: The Big Buddha which I visited just a couple of days ago with my friends. I love it!

My ears felt blocked; it was like the feeling of diving underwater. But I wasn't diving.

Instead, I was almost about to fly over the horizon; for a moment, I only felt my seatbelt - but not the seat in which I had been waiting for the last hour. The speed of the airplane for the take off made not only me but also other passengers lift up in their seats.

Soon, a few seconds passed and I was feeling my seat again. The houses, trees and streets became the size of toys – the lights became the size of little glittery dots, which perfectly into an artwork of the night landscape of my home country.

This artwork in front of my eyes diminished slowly in size, everything distanced itself more with every second and the plane changed to a horizontal position. It wasn't the first flight in my life – and the light glow of sweat on my forehead began to dry.

It was late evening when I left my home country Switzerland – the hours before I had spent packing the some last minute things and saying goodbye to my friends and family.

As I was still losing myself in the sight, I realised that a new adventure of which I had dreamed of for a long time and of which I had counted the days until the departure was becoming a reality – My cultural exchange in Hong Kong!!!

If someone had asked me how I felt at that time, I couldn't have managed to put my feelings into words: To be honest, I felt the entire range of feelings a human being is born with. Mostly, I was extremely nervous because I didn't know what was expected from me. But I was so excited. I couldn't believe it at all. It seemed unreachable and suddenly I was thrown into my dream and it was becoming a reality! Describing this feeling is still beyond words.

Now, I have stayed in Hong Kong for almost nine months and the prickling feeling of excitement in my stomach has never really left - my friends and my host family have all left a very special place in my heart since the first meeting; in general, it is almost impossible to think of going back to Switzerland and again, I can't describe the weird emotions I have towards the last remaining few weeks. But there is a quote that says, to enjoy and treasure every moment.

"Life is available only in the present moment. If you abandon the present moment, you cannot live the moments of your daily life deeply."

A big thanks to my Class 4D for giving me so many nice memories and being always helpful this year.

