



ST. SOMETIMES
SWITZER
LAND

AUGUST 2013
V142

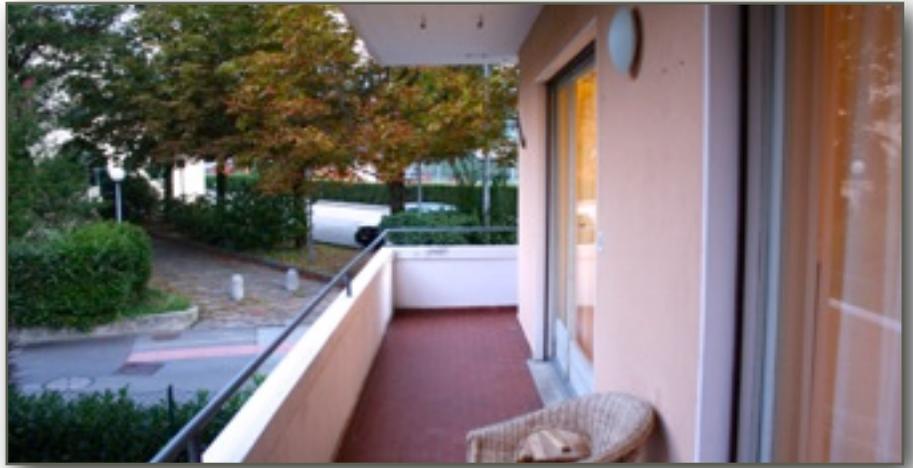
Living in a Dream!

How can I start? From the moment I landed on September 18th, I have been living in a completely different world.

I am writing this while sitting at a little restaurant across the street from my new, extremely expensive apartment. There is a Weizen Bier sitting next to me, jazz in the stereo, and a beautiful Italian waitress taking care of me. Wow. The life!

If you follow my St.Somewhere issues, this will certainly be a different and fresh tone. I am overwhelmed by the beauty and elegance of this country. It is like I have fallen into a dreamworld compared to the poverty and struggles of my past countries!

Switzerland is simply the first of the 1st World countries. Hopefully my job will live up to the life outside of school. It is still too early to tell. So far so good. My first impression of school is impressive. I like it a lot. Professional!



Quiet Please

The Swiss are known for quiet time after 10pm. That is what I was told immediately when I arrived here.

The picture above is taken on my balcony. I have a two bedroom one bath apartment that happens to be next to the pre-school building called Focolare. My school is located just a twelve to fifteen minute walk up a mountain.

I have arrived safe and sound in my new country. To be on the safe side, I am going to use aliases and talk about this school in general. Working at a school in Switzerland is a lot different than developing countries so keeping a digital newsletter a little more on the

DL - down low - will probably save me some would-be headaches down the road.

No problem. I just have to be quiet after 10. That means no raging parties by the pool. Not that I have a pool. Nope. Gone are the days of poolside weekends and diving in the Caribbean all the time. Now it is hiking up and down mountains, teaching a homeroom again, and tasting some of the finer things in life.

Switzerland is living up to what everyone talks about. The people, the cars, the views, the languages, the culture; when will the honeymoon end?

So far, after a short three weeks in country and one week of school, my favorite part of living here is the church bells. They ring every hour, half hour, and play a song once in a while. The ol' hunchback is working 24/7 but I am willing to bet he earns more than I do!

Swiss Life!



Beauty

I walk by a church every day at least twice - sometimes six times. The bells in the bell tower ring a series every hour, a short clinger on the half, and a melody of bells every once in a while. **Mountains**, **cows**, **goats**, and **Maseratis**! I had to look up the church to find out the following:

Gentilino

Church of S. Abbondio

In the Early Middle Ages, Gentilino belonged to the royal court of Agnuzzo, which was donated in 818 by Emperor Louis the Pious to the clergy of Como. During the 11th Century it belonged to the monastery of S. Abbondio in Como. The union of the monastic estates in 1335 probably led to the creation of the Concilium Sancti Abundii which included Gentilino and Viglio as well as Montagnola and the surrounding villages. In the early 18th Century, the village wanted to buy the monastery's rights to the village. However, this triggered a long-running dispute, in which the Canton was eventually involved.

It is believed that the church of S. Abbondio was the center of a medieval parish, which became a sub-parish in the 11th Century. However, the first written record of the church dates from 1140. The current appearance is due to an enlargement in the 17th Century.

---source: Wikipedia

4th Grade



Mr. Lemonade

I am done with week 1. There were thirteen smiling and nervous faces looking at me just a week ago. No one could believe it when I told them it was OK to call me Mr. Lemonade if they couldn't pronounce Lemoine. Most opt for the drink over the French, even though all of them speak at least two languages. The first language spectrum includes: Russian, British, Icelandic, German, American, Italian, and Croatian. This will be a fantastic year.

A Dynamic School

There are 750 kids at this school. It is the founding [school](#) of the three: [Switzerland](#), England, and Puerto Rico. The prek-6 Day school has been around since 2005, but the grades 7-12 boarding school was founded in 1956. Yes, there is a lot of history and pride on this campus.

We have three parts to our campus. The prek-1 school is down the mountain about a twelve minute walk. Grades 2-4 are located in a separate building across the street from the main campus. The main campus itself is a sprawling area going up a mountain side with so many steps I will probably lose my target 50 pounds in the next month.

There are three sections of up to 15 students in each of the elementary grades. My class is one of two American classrooms, but there is also an Italian section. It's fantastic to work with a grade level team again.

I teach American History, English Language, Spelling, Science, and Geography to my homeroom class of 14 students. Then the mixing starts. The three classes mix into two groups for music, art, and PE that are taught both on the main campus and our elementary section. (That involves crossing a busy street. *More on this later.*) Then the students really get mixed up!

We teach Singapore Math. This requires students to be tested and put into ability groups. It is amazing to ask a fourth grade new student to cross a busy street (with [Swiss](#) police at the crosswalk) and find one out of thirty buildings. It helps that each building is painted a different color.

We also teach Reading Mastery. It is a method of scripted, frequently assessed reading that reminds me of teaching PADI scuba diving. Once again, the students are split into ability groups in

the beginning of the year and travel to different buildings on the two campuses.

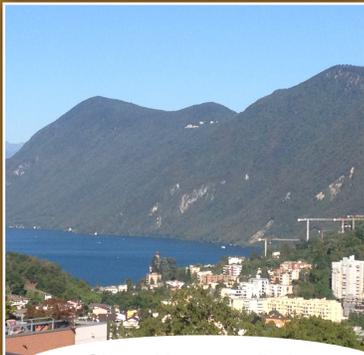
The prek-1 classes are pretty self contained in their building down the mountain, but the students are bussed up to the main campus for PE and music. It is a wonder how all of this is organized.

The sprawling school and its campus are in Lugano for one reason: BEAUTY. Beauty is a theme that resonates throughout the philosophy of the school.

(Below: a water fountain on the main campus)



BEAUTY



City of Lugano Below



The PreK - Grade 2 classes



Classrooms on Campus



Mountains in every view.

Going Through the Armor Room to Get Food

No, the title is no joke. In order to get in line for the buffet style three squares a day (that I pay for), I have to walk through the armory room. According to a Wikipedia entry:

The most notable campus building is Villa De Nobili, a 17th-century mansion that still contains the suits of armor placed there when the building was owned by the Marchese De Nobili, Italian Ambassador to Switzerland. It houses dormitories, classrooms, administrative offices, and the school's dining room.

Recent additions to campus include a new gymnasium and sports facility, the new M. Crist Fleming Library, and the Aurora classroom building. The Palmer Cultural Center (theater complex) was completed in October 2009, followed by Fiammetta (classroom building) in January 2010 and Lanterna (classrooms, faculty apartments,

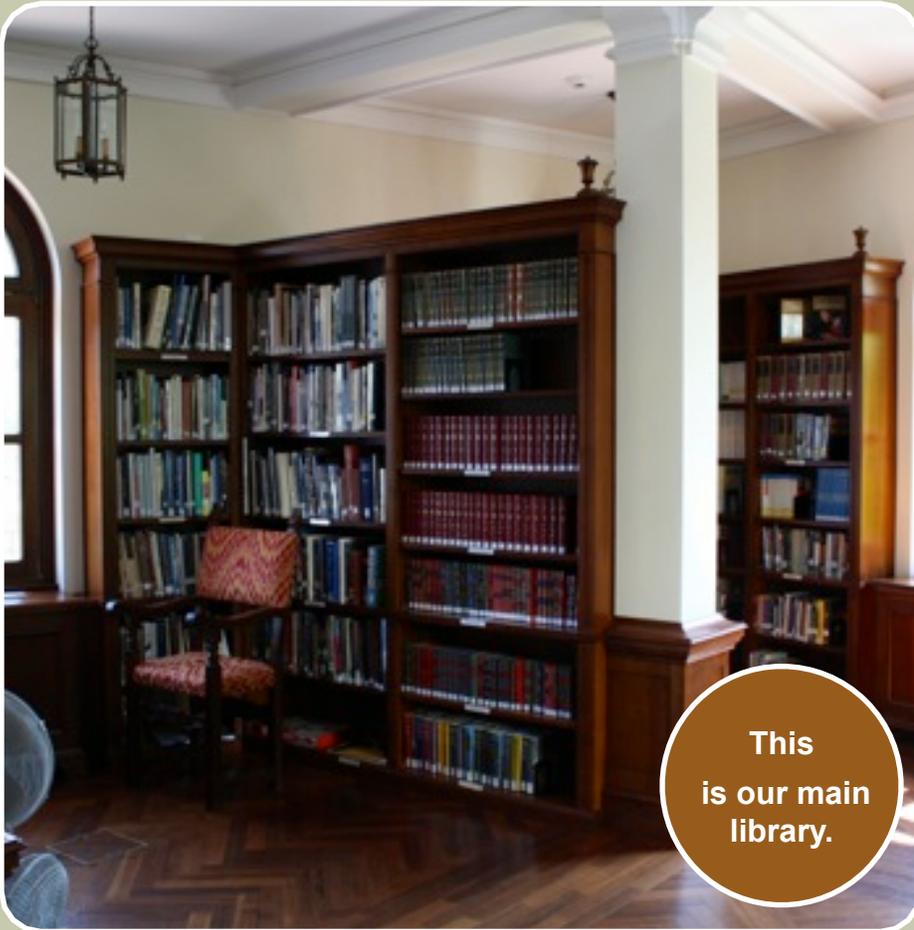
dormitory rooms and a new Health Center) in August 2010. The Ferit Şahenk Arts Center was open to students on September 2012, with the official opening celebration scheduled for May 2013.

I feel like this is a small campus on the east coast of the US - with a whole lot of Roman statues here and there.

All Mac School

The entire campus is Mac. There is not a single google netbook or Windows machine to be found. I cannot believe it. My room is a pilot program for iPads and we run apple TV's in each of the 3rd and 4th grade classrooms. Cool!





This is our main library.



What I see at breakfast

CAMPUS



Beauty is at the core of the School's Mission!

I have never been on such a beautiful campus in my life. Yes, the University of Vermont was a sight, but this takes the cake.

Lugano, Switzerland was chosen as the site for the main school precisely because it is beautiful. I still wake up, after a month here, thinking that someone should pinch me.

Swiss Hikes

The first few weeks at any international school is labeled as the “honeymoon period”. The school shows off its culture by taking you to the most famous sights, the local restaurants, PTA dinners, new faculty dinners, and much more. This school is no different.

Within a few days of arrival, after a few meetings, we all piled into several school mini-buses. (These are buses that are available to teachers if they aren’t being used for student trips.) We were taken into the mountains for an afternoon of hiking, swimming in mountain streams, a visit to one of the highest bungee jump stations in the world (the Contra Dam where *GoldenEye* was filmed-also known as the Versasca or Lucarno



Dam, is a bungee jump at 225ChF(\$245) at 220 meters high.) **I will be doing this next year. First I have to see what my school health insurance covers.

Our group may not have gone off the dam on bungees, but several of our teachers DID jump

off a very high local bridge into freezing cold water. My teaching partner-Sarah, the HS econ teacher - Stephen, and HS Art History- Blaire all made the jump. Impressive! I figured that my old age made it a bit risky to take the plunge. I was playing it “safe” because I really want to be in tip top condition for my first few months of teaching in what I consider a paradise. Instead, I took a lot of photos and shared them with the brave divers.

This is a fantastic cohort of new teachers. I can already tell there are going to be some great travel buddies amongst the newbies. This is my kind of new teacher group.

I need to publish this late issue. Look for future issues from Switzerland. Wish me luck as a 4th grade teacher. It will be a big change for me.

-Greg Lemoine