

Study Tour Proposal for Spring Break 2009

Destinations: Switzerland, Germany, Turkey

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Switzerland

Rationale


Switzerland, a tiny land-locked country and a country lacking in natural resources such as oil, is still a very prosperous one. Switzerland's GDP was estimated at US\$419 billion in 2007 with one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. Switzerland's prosperity is based on labor skills and technological expertise in manufacturing, as well as earnings from services such as tourism and banking¹. Mercer Consulting continues to place Zurich and Geneva, top on its list of best cities in the world in which to live based on the quality of life.



How does Switzerland manage to have it all? The company visits in Switzerland represent a good cross section of the top industries in Switzerland, helping answer this question. In Zurich, students will be able to experience first-hand what makes Switzerland so successful in diverse industries such as banking, tourism, manufacturing, and hospitality. In Geneva, students will get to see the major international organizations such as the United Nations , Red Cross, or World Trade Organization offering a perspective of what these organizations do.

Company Visits

Financial Services/Industry

 Switzerland is best known for its banking industry, especially private banking. Two large banks - the United Bank of Switzerland (UBS) and Credit Suisse Group - control around two-thirds of Switzerland's banking sector¹. In recent years, the banking industry has faced some challenges, namely competition from Singapore and other countries especially in wealth management and some changes in secrecy regulations that made Swiss banks famous in the first place.

A visit to one or both of these banks would be a unique look into the banking industry Switzerland, the challenges facing the industry, and the measures banks are taking to remain competitive.



On a greener note, a visit to First Climate, now a leading international company in carbon trading would give students a chance to hear about a new market that is gaining a lot of importance around the world.

Technology/Manufacturing

Companies like ABB and Sulzer would provide a look into Technology and Manufacturing in Switzerland. ABB is a global manufacturer of electrical parts and machinery and a major player engaged in solving today's energy challenges.



SR Technics services airplanes of many major airlines.

¹ Australian Government: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, http://www.dfat.gov.au/GEO/switzerland/switzerland_brief.html, accessed Apr 28, 2008

Marketing

Students would be able to learn about marketing luxury goods by visiting the watchmaker IWC. This company has international business traditions dating back to the 1800's having started as an American company, which produced watches in Switzerland for the US market.

Polaroid Eyewear markets polarized sunglasses all over the world and is based in Zurich. This subsidiary is actually in the process of merging with an US parent company that recently acquired it. This company visit would provide a good overview of marketing practices in Europe vs. the US and provide insights into growth opportunities in Eastern Europe.



Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Switzerland is famous not just for its beautiful Alps, but also for its hospitality industry. Students from around the world come to Switzerland to study hospitality. Visits to top hotels like the Grand Dolder, and hospitality schools would give the study tour participants an idea of what it takes to attract tourists and be known for the best service.

International Organizations



Geneva is truly at the heart of international affairs being the home to various organizations and NGO's ranging from the World Trade Organization to the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development to Amnesty International. Students would be able to learn what some of these organizations do, their impact in the world, and the challenges they face.

Cultural Sites to Visit

The old town or the Altstadt in Zurich is a lovely pedestrian area with cobblestoned streets. It's easy to get lost in its narrow, windy pathways and come across an antique bookstore that looks like the kind of place Indiana Jones would have found an ancient treasure map in.

A cruise on the Lake of Zurich is a relaxing and pleasurable way to check out some Zurich sights and to see how the rich live along the 'Gold Coast'.

A hike up Uetliberg just outside of Zurich affords magnificent views of the city. On a clear day, the Swiss Alps are clearly visible at the far end of the Lake.

The Alphorn, a very Swiss instrument that is 3-4 meters makes an interesting sound. We hope to get a special Alphorn demo from a professional player in Zurich.





Germany

Rationale

Germany's Bavarian region is rich with history, culture, and business. Martin Luther started the reformation in Germany, the famous, annual "Oktoberfest" celebration draws countless beer-loving sojourners from all over the world, and renowned companies such as Lufthansa, BMW, Daimler, and Deutsche Bank are headquartered in Germany. Germany remains one of the top producing countries, with a GDP of US \$3,833 billion, one of the highest behind the U.S. and Japan². Currently, Germany is the world leader in solar energy generation and interestingly has a climate very similar to that of Seattle.

Company visits in Germany represent various industries, including technology, manufacturing, and hospitality. Company visits will provide students with the opportunity to learn more about a German perspective on business on a local, EU, and global level. Cultural visits will expose students to both good and bad times in German history, including the dubious Castle Neuschwanstein, the ominous Dachau memorial, the light-hearted celebration of beer and German cuisine at the Hofbrauhaus, the modern, progressive people who make Munich an exciting city, and a venture into the local Bavarian Alps where Bavarian tradition still can be found.

Company Visits

Financial Services/Industry

Germany is host to many global financial institutions. Visits with Deutsche Bank, Germany's leading bank with branches around the world, and to Allianz, a leading insurance and financial services provider headquartered in Munich, will explore issues in global banking, international finance, and insurance.

Technology/Manufacturing

"German engineering" is a phrase often associated with solid, reliable, innovation in industrial processes and durable goods. BMW world headquarters is located in Munich, and a company visit to BMW aims to look first-hand at both manufacturing and brand management.



Loyalty Partners is a brand loyalty company that uses technology to track and report data to companies about their customers. A company visit here would look at managing data across an international setting.

A visit to the European Patent Office in Munich would look at relevant issues surrounding introducing new products in the EU marketplace.

² The CIA Worldfactbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gm.html#Econ>, accessed April 29, 2008

Tourism/Entertainment/Hospitality Industry

Munich is home to FC Bayern Munich, the local home football association. A visit to the Allianz Arena, FC Bayern's home stadium, will explore the international sport business.



A visit to the local favorite, Hofbrauhaus, to study the business of running an international brew house would provide students with an interesting and enjoyable exposure to two reasons that make Bavaria a favorite region for many.

A long-shot company visit is with the BMW/Sauber Formula 1 team based in Munich. Formula 1 competes with the Olympics in terms of overall worldwide viewing, and an opportunity to learn about running a sporting team in the world's elite auto racing circuit would be a rare privilege.

Cultural Sites to Visit

Castle Neuschwanstein "Mad" King Ludwig II's famous "Sleeping Beauty" Castle virtually bankrupted the Bavarian region in the late 1800's. Now the castle is famous as a tourist destination with a guided tour and opportunity to hike to a nearby waterfall.



Dachau The Nazi concentration camp just outside Munich where countless prisoners of the Holocaust perished. A significant amount of business and commerce pre-World War II was destroyed by those following Hitler's propaganda, and many of the victims were stripped their rights and sent to concentration camps such as Dachau. Now a museum, Dachau remains as a statement against human cruelty and extreme ethnocentricity.



Hofbraeuhaus One of Munich's most endearing and famed "must go to" tourist destinations where beer is served by the liter and the food is traditionally Bavarian.

Garmisch/Partenkirchen Home of the 1936 Olympics, Garmisch and Partenkirchen, two villages that now form a blended town, are a quaint example of Bavarian Alpine living. In good weather conditions, students can hike up the Partnach Gorge, a national monument formed by crashing waterfalls and a small river. During the winter, ice sickles can grow to several stories tall around the gorge, and hikers can walk behind these monoliths through carved out sections in the rock along the gorge trail. The area is also home to the highest peak in the Bavarian Alps, the Zugspitze, a 9700 foot peak with excellent winter skiing. A gondola whisks visitors from the mountain base at 1000 meters to 3000 meters in a matter of minutes. On a clear day, the top of the gondola affords an incredible view as though one were at the rim of the world.



Turkey

Rationale

In contrast to the Western, European Union lifestyle experienced in Munich and the modern pace in Zurich, the visit to Turkey will offer students a view into the first Muslim country attempting admittance into the EU: Turkey. Located partly in Europe, partly in Asia, Turkey is a gateway to Middle Eastern cultures and offers an alternative view of business. The heart of the ancient Byzantine Empire, Istanbul is becoming a modern city and hosting international business and sporting events.

Company Visits

Manufacturing

Proctor & Gamble, a world leader in manufactured products and brands, has its regional headquarters for Central Asia in Turkey. P&G operates with a multinational, global work model, which would be interesting to study in this developing country.

One of Europe's larger aluminum producers, Assan Aluminium operates out of Istanbul. A company visit would expose students to raw materials manufacturing, supply chain management, logistics, and operations.

Koc University is a private institution that aims "to serve humanity by increasing the number of people who can be of service to the Turkish nation." The school has a joint exchange program with the UW MBA program and would give students a chance to visit the campus and talk with current students, staff, or faculty about business issues the school finds important to the region and world.

Cultural Sites to Visit

Dolmabahçe Palace Sultan Abdülmecid (1839-1861) built the current palace, employing leading Ottoman architects of the time. Now open to the public, the sprawling, 110,000 square meters home displays French Baroque style gardens and contains state offices where the sultan conducted government affairs.³

Ancient Troy or Efes ruins A visit to the ancient ruins of Troy or Efes would connect the modernity of the trip back to Western Civilization's ancient roots. Troy, a powerful kingdom of its time, was famously defeated by Spartans and their "Trojan Horse." The once thriving port city of Ephesus now lies miles from the sea as the port filled with silt during the Middle Ages and the sea receded.



Turkish baths: The baths are a very relaxing and cultural experience. If time permits, we will make an optional visit to Turkish bath giving students a chance to relax before getting back to school.

³ Enjoy Turkey website, <http://www.enjoyturkey.com/info/sights/dolmabahce.htm>, accessed May 1, 2008.

Tentative Two-Week Itinerary

Day 1 – Depart Sea-Tac Airport for overnight flight to Munich

Day 2 – Arrive in Munich. One company visit, a visit to Dachau, and an evening at the Hofbrauhaus

Day 3 – Munich: Two company visits and free time in the old city

Day 4 – Munich: Two company visits and travel to Garmisch/Partenkirchen

Day 5 – Garmisch/Partenkirchen: hike the Partnach Gorge and/or the Zugspitze. An afternoon trip to Castle Neuschwanstein

Day 6 – Travel to Geneva from Munich. Free time to explore Geneva.

Day 7 – Geneva: Intercultural organizations

Day 8 – Travel to Zurich: One company visit, City tour of Zurich

Day 9 – Zurich: Two company visits, optional - climb Uetliberg to catch the sunset

Day 10 – Zurich: Two company visits, Alphorn demo in the evening

Day 11 – Travel to Istanbul. City tour including market and Topkapi

Day 12 – Istanbul: One company visit and Dolmabahce Palace, optional evening Turkish bath experience

Day 13 – Izmir: day trip to Efes ruins or Troy ruins

Day 14 – Travel back to Seattle

The Student Leaders and Their Qualifications to Lead a Tour

Stacy and Veena share a passion for European cultures and international business. Coming from different backgrounds yet having similar interests, Stacy and Veena bring complimentary strengths and experiences to the study tour.

Veena Prasad Qualifications

Planning and leading a study tour involves a lot of project management skills. Veena has worked as a Project Manager for years and is well aware of what it takes to plan an endeavor and execute against that plan to make it happen. These skills were handy not just at her job at Procter & Gamble but also in planning her weddings that took place in Switzerland and India!. She also coordinated a lot of the logistics for her international guests attending both weddings, including booking hotel rooms and plane tickets. Her international guests were treated to a 3 day trip around Karnataka state in South India, taking them to places they would never have known about as tourists and enabling them to meet locals many of whom had never seen foreigners before.



Veena is very familiar with Germany and Switzerland. She has lived in Germany for 2.5 years and in Switzerland for 2 months but has visited the country very often. She speaks German, which should come in handy in Germany and Switzerland. Since her husband is from Switzerland, she has many personal contacts there that will help obtain company visits.

Turkey is on Veena's top destinations list. She traveled there a few years ago where she met up with friends. Five years ago, she took an unpaid leave of 3 months from work and traveled around the world to places she had always dreamed of seeing such as the plains of the Serengeti, Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and the Australian outback. She considers taking the trip as one of the best things she has ever done in her life. She simply loves to travel and is passionate about being able to introduce people to new places.

Veena is culturally sensitive and has put together intercultural communication workshops for her colleagues at Procter & Gamble in Germany. These workshops were found to be very useful as her colleagues there worked with people from around the world.

Veena believe that her love of travel, her knowledge of the destination countries and cultures, and her project management expertise will enable her to be a good study tour leader.

Stacy Gary Qualifications

Stacy's qualifications include a passion for European culture and languages, training in intercultural communication, and extensive European travel and work experience. Stacy first visited Europe in 1989 and fell in love with the balance between the historically quaint yet progressively modern charm found in much of Europe. Cultural artifacts such as totally different cars, fashion, food, and lifestyle attracted Stacy back to Europe many times since, and Stacy now has friends in several European countries. Additionally, European languages intrigue Stacy, and he has a working ability in French and basic Italian. Stacy has a master's degree that focused on intercultural communication, and he is acutely aware of "ugly American" stereotypes that sometimes create hostility towards American travelers; Stacy's travel abroad philosophy is to blend into the host culture and to objectively learn from it, recognizing that others view you as an ambassador from your country, school, and/or profession.

Stacy has accumulated almost a year's worth of time traveling and working in Europe, covering 14 countries and experiencing many interesting situations, making Stacy familiar with European systems and well acquainted with how to deal with unexpected events that may arise. Furthermore, Stacy understands trip logistics and operations.

In 2005, Stacy was a professional, European tour guide, leading groups ranging from 15 to 65 people on tours through destinations in Bavaria, Austria, Italy, Paris, and the UK. In fact, the Germany section of the trip was a standard part of Stacy's Bavarian tours. Such broad experience and familiarity with the European landscape give Stacy an edge in leading groups to Europe.

Stacy's goals for the trip are to provide a forum for learning about European business issues, especially in the developing global economy and to facilitate students' experience of European culture that would result in a better appreciation for global business, European culture, and a heightened understanding of current European issues.

Exchange Rate and Budget Concerns

The U.S. dollar has fallen greatly against the Euro and the Swiss Franc, making Europe an expensive destination. In order to keep costs reasonable, we plan to use “budget” accommodations in Munich and Zurich and avail of the excellent public transit rather than hiring a van for company and cultural visits. Beyond this, we have the following ideas to keep costs down as much as possible:

- Buy plane tickets as much ahead of time as possible
- Purchase multi-stop ‘round the world’ tickets to include stops at most of our destination cities to minimize expensive train rides in Germany and Switzerland.
- Take a night train from Munich to Zurich or Geneva to pay for travel and accommodation at the same time
- Look into group discounts for train tickets in Switzerland
- Eliminate one of the destination cities. This would reduce the airfare or the train ticket cost.

We are concerned about the increasing exchange rates. For planning purposes, we have forecasted costs as seen currently and using higher dollar exchange rates for next year. The difference could be as high as \$500. Our proposal would be to advertise the study tour at ~ \$2500 + airfare.