

MIDTERM REPORT

A YEAR IN SWITZERLAND

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1 Introduction

This report is submitted as a Midterm report for A year in Switzerland Scholarship program. This report mentions the procedures that I took for the program, from the application until the internship search. The focused theme for the report is the comparison of how sustainability is considered in the tourism industry in Switzerland and Japan.

2 Background

Since high school, I am deeply interested in tourism. Therefore, I studied tourism and hospitality in the bachelor program, and I continued studying tourism in my Master studies in Switzerland (Lugano) from 2018 to 2021. Before I left Japan, I had a great chance to participate in an event of JSS¹ and SCCIJ². Since then I am amazed by the strong bond between Switzerland and Japan.

During my study in Switzerland, I had countless wonderful experiences and learned how the relation is close between Japan and Switzerland. These facts strongly convinced me to stay and gain more experience in Switzerland after my graduation. Thus, I decided to apply for the program.

¹ The Japan Swiss Society

² Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan

3 Steps for the program and living in Switzerland

3.1 Timeline

I had been planning to apply for the program while I was in the Master study. Therefore, after I finished my thesis defence at the end of 2020, I started to prepare the applications.

Dec-20	Finished Thesis
Feb-21	Applications for the program
Apr-21	Accepted by the program
Jul-21	Cancelled the language course (ILS)
Aug-21	Started language school (EACAP)
Oct-21	Finished B1 1/2 ① course and cancelled B1 1/2 ② course (EACAP)
Nov-21	Started new school (Migroschule)
Dec-21	Completed the school (Migroschule)

3.2 Phone contract

Making a phone contract in Switzerland is not difficult if you have all the required documents. Most of the telecommunication companies ask you to provide your permit in Switzerland. When I arrived in Switzerland in 2018, I could not obtain my permit for a while. Thus, I made a contract with Sunrise³, since they do not require a resident permit. If you need the contract as soon as possible, even you do not have the permit yet, you can ask Sunrise.

In case, you prefer to see other options, Mobil Zone⁴ which provides telecommunication services (including Phone, contracts, TV and so on) helps you to find a suitable contract for you.

3.3 Health insurance

Having insurance is mandatory to stay in Switzerland. I have used four different insurance companies since 2018. These are lists of the companies with pros and cons;

³ https://www.sunrise.ch/en/residential/welcome-page.html?cid=SEA_202004JN10312&gclid=CjwKCAi-AxJSPBhAoEiwAeO_fPz0qlZtN9XC0Wu_PdouJMkwrhPfBaKAfQeDDp3vvk5NnK_y3-KCn0BoCcms-QAvD_BwE

⁴ <https://www.mobilezone.ch/de>

- t@biho たびほ海外旅行保険・留学保険 (Sep 2018-Oct 2018)

I believe it depends on the cantons, however, I would not recommend going to Switzerland with having Japanese international insurance which covers Switzerland. I joined this insurance before my departure. However, the Canton of Ticino (where my University locates) did not accept this insurance because all the required coverage lists which are arranged by the canton of Ticino are not covered by the t@biho contract. Thus, I had to cancel it and join the local one.

- GroupeMutuel (Oct 2018-Dec 2019)

I joined the contract of "Health insurance for students from abroad" which was recommended by the University. I am satisfied with the coverage as well as the services. However, I had to change the insurance company because of the contract between them and the University.

- Swisscare (Jan 2020-Sep 2021)

I changed to the "International Student contract" from Swisscare. I was happy with their coverage and the services, however, this is a private insurance company that is not recognised by some cantons (More details in point 2 below). This fact made my permission application complicated.

- Atupri (Sep 2021-Present)

Since I graduated from University thus the status of living in Switzerland has been changed and I needed to change the insurance as well. Now, I am using Atupri. I do not have much experience with this contract yet, but I believe this is a suitable service for me at this moment. I found it on Comparis.com⁵.

Facts which I recommend you to know about:

1. I recommend joining the Swiss insurance contract, not the one for Studying abroad.

As I mentioned above, some cantons do not accept insurance contracts from Japan, even it covers Switzerland. In most cases, you need to join health insurance within 3 months after you entered Switzerland. I believe you can find your suitable contract within

⁵ <https://en.comparis.ch/>: This is a useful website when you want to compare any kinds of prices in Switzerland. You can compare almost everything from Insurance to Tax in Switzerland.

this period. If your language school has a visa supporting service, I would recommend asking about it.

To conclude, as long as you don't have any health issues, you don't need to worry about getting study abroad insurance before the departure. In the case you want to be sure, I would recommend having travel insurance (short term coverage) so that you can cancel it easily once you found the one in Switzerland.

2. Some private insurance companies are not recognised by some cantons.

As previously mentioned, in the case you obtain not recognised health insurance, the process of the permit application becomes a bit complicated in some cantons.

What I mean by not recognised health insurance is; All residence of some cantons such as Basel-Stadt, Basel-Landschaft, Aargau, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Uri and Glarus need to have health insurance following Federal Act on Health Insurance (KVG)⁶. Some private insurance companies such as Swisscare are not under KVG. In this case, the canton asks you to provide the document which proofs that the contract is recognisable as the one that is in accordance with KVG. You can ask this document the insurance company and they will provide it for you. However, this process is complicated and takes some time. Therefore, I strongly recommend you to check with your city hall or the migration office, before you join the insurance if the one you are interested in is under KVG. You can find more details about this here;

<https://www.kvg.org/en/compulsory-insurance-content---1--1034.html>

3. Dental routine treatments are not covered by health insurance.

These treatments are not covered by health insurance and it is costly compared to Japan. I strongly recommend you to check your condition with dentists in Japan, so that you can avoid taking treatments in Switzerland.

3.4 Language schools and learning German

My initial plan for the language school was to start an intensive course (A2 language level) from July 2021. The target was to complete the B1 level. I contacted language schools that only accept face to face classes in the canton of Aargau.

⁶ <https://www.kvg.org/en/compulsory-insurance-content---1--1034.html>

I expected the duration of the course (whole level: ex, A1/4-A4/4) is between 16 to 24 weeks depending on the language school and progress of the study. I planned to complete the B1 level until January 2022. However, thanks to the school system which allows students to jump some levels depending on their performance, I have completed the course a month earlier (in December) than my initial plan, therefore I spend the extra time on internship search.

Regarding the language schools, in the end, I had to change schools twice. Sometimes, schools cannot hold the specific level of classes due to the lack of the number of registrations. Unfortunately, often the announcements were short notices (just a couple of days before the class starts). Thus, I appreciated the school list that I had made at the beginning of the program, so that I could find the new school easily.

This is the list of schools that I participated in with pros and cons;

- EACAP (Aarau): I appreciated their system which judges students' performance during the class to put them at the correct level. Also, students come from all over the world and the German language is the mutual language in the school. This environment encouraged me to use German more often. On the other hand, while some language schools support students' Visa applications, EACAP does not have this service. Regarding their class style, I was disappointed because of the number of independent works/exercises that we did during the class. I preferred to do more practice on speaking or learning grammar, instead of working independently especially in the class.
- Migroschule (Baden): I liked classes there very much. First of all, it provides flexible options. In other words, they have different types of language courses, in the levels, length, starting dates and paces (part-time to full time). Second, high quality of learning materials, good learning styles, and speed of learning in the course. I took an intensive German course, most of the exercises are done in groups and often answers were presented by students. Based on those activities, we often discussed many different topics, which forced me to think and speak in German. Moreover, we learned almost 2-3 different grammar rules in a week. We practised through exercises with groups in a class, as well as independent works at home. Thus, an intensive course from Migroschule teaches a lot in a month. The only thing that I can mention about their con is that they don't provide a visa application support service.

Some things that helped me regarding the language schools are;

- 1. Start studying German even before the placement test.**

So that I could jump some levels which saved my time.

2. Make a language school list.

This helped me a lot in finding a new school when schools cancelled the courses.

Regarding my German learning, as I started from the basic level, it was challenging for me to study High German in Switzerland where Swiss German is spoken. It is difficult for me to realize how my German has been improved in ordinally days. On the other hand, I found it is interesting and convinced me to learn Swiss German in the future. I have been trying to listen to the radio and watch TV programs in German as much as I can.

3.5 Permission (Case of the canton of Aargau)

Since I had been enrolled at University until June 2021, I had a student permit until September. As soon as I received an expiring notification of my permit from the canton of Aargau (August 2021), I registered the extension/renewal request through the city hall. Until now, I still have not received the official permit yet, however, Mr Saurer (Chairman of the SJCC Scholarship Found) is supporting me as well as the process a lot, and hopefully, I will receive the Working permit soon. It is difficult to obtain a working permit, especially for people from third countries (Non-EU/EFTA ⁷nations). Mostly, a working permit is registered by the employer. Therefore, in general, unlikely to obtain a working permit without being employed. On the other hand, the majority of companies in Switzerland require candidates to have already a working permit/right to work in Switzerland. This is the most difficult situation for me to find an internship and permit in Switzerland.

While I am waiting for my permission, I hold a Visa D. This is a temporary visa for 3 months. Usually, people who are waiting for a renewal visa/permit from the migration office can request this visa. Normally, if you need it because of waiting for a reply from the migration office, it is free of charge.

3.6 Internship search

As I mentioned above, finding an internship is quite difficult for me. Some companies explained to me why I was not selected. Two reasons are mentioned; Lack of German language skills, and not having a working permit. From these facts, I recommend you to achieve at least a B2 before you start your internship.

⁷ Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland

However, I am trying to enlarge possibilities as much as I can. My main job search resources are on the internet such as LinkedIn and Job.ch⁸. Sometimes I use Englishjobsearch.ch⁹. I appreciate this website since some companies expect candidates to have a professional level of the German language, even the job descriptions are written in English. Thus, I found the site is easy to find open jobs which English speakers candidates would be appreciated.

Since I am interested in contributing between Japan and Switzerland, I contact directly to the companies which have a strong relation between Switzerland and Japan. I have sent emails with my documents to ask if they have an internship opportunity, even they don't have opening positions on their career pages. Most of the time, I sent my documents to their HR or sometimes contacted a person from the department in which I am interested.

I also expand my connections in Switzerland by attending some events. Especially, SJCC and Japan Club Zurich¹⁰ (スイス日本人会) often hold events throughout a year. Another way to meet people is to become a member of the Japanese community in Switzerland. Depends on the community where you join, however, most of the communities often provide good opportunities to meet people through events or newsletters/advertisements. I am a member of Japan Club Zurich as well as Aarau Nihonjinkai. I have met many Japanese and Swiss people who are connected between Japan and Switzerland. There, I could exchange a lot of information which you can't even find on the internet. Not only about the information, but also getting to know people who have/had the same difficulties and situation in Switzerland actually helps me mentally and motivates me a lot.

I am also very much appreciated warm supports from SJCC members for my job search in Switzerland.

⁸ <https://www.jobs.ch/en/>

⁹ <https://englishjobsearch.ch/>

¹⁰ <https://japanswiss.ch/>

4 The focus of the report: Comparison of how sustainability is considered in the tourism sector in Switzerland and Japan

During my stay in Switzerland, I have realised that there is a significant similarity between Swiss and Japanese tourism attractions. Both countries have rich in nature and it is one of the most important tourism resources to attract inbound tourists. Also, I feel that awareness of sustainability in Switzerland in the tourism industry is higher than the Japanese one. Therefore, I decided to research this topic, and find differences in way of managing the tourism industry to contribute to their sustainability.

4.1 Introduction

Nowadays, “Sustainability” is a keyword all over the world. Especially after the SDGs¹¹ are approved by the united nations, “Sustainability” became a strong word globally. The goals are made to make the appropriate and right decisions in any kind of industry to improve life, sustainably for future generations [11]. To follow these goals, 17 frameworks guide and measure their contributions to the development.



Figure 4.1 17 Goals in SDGs [11]

Sustainability is also important in the tourism sector because this industry strongly connects to other important parts such as local people, economy, environment, culture and so on. No doubt, sustainability principles in the tourism industry refer to the environmental, economic and social-cultural aspects, thus, it applies to all types of destinations [1]. According to the UNWTO, tourism can be one of the strong industries which have a rule in bringing sustainable solutions for people and the planet [11]. In this chapter, contributions of the tourism industries in Switzerland and

¹¹ Sustainable Development Goals

Japan are shown in the theme of protection of nature, as well as how SDGs are considered in their development.

4.2 Situations and solutions in Switzerland

Switzerland attracts many international tourists from all over the world. As the figure below shows, Nature is the most popular reason for tourists to visit Switzerland.

Motivation Factor	Share of Entries "Very Important"	Share of Entries "Rather important"	Share of Entries "Rather unimportant/ unimportant" (cumulative)
Nightlife	2.9%	7.7%	89.5%
Comfort	16.8%	29.8%	53.4%
Partner	40.7%	30.0%	29.3%
Family	46.1%	19.1%	34.7%
Nature	47.0%	33.2%	19.9%
Culture/ Sightseeing	24.4%	27.2%	48.4%
Liberty	21.0%	30.8%	48.1%
Body	2.0%	6.3%	91.7%
Sports	17.4%	16.7%	66.0%
Sun	17.4%	16.7%	66.0%

Figure 4.2 Motivation Factors in the Swiss travel market [1] p.18

Therefore, nature is the key resource for Swiss tourism, and it is important to consider the protection in the industry. To bring solutions for this challenge, one of the main focuses in the Swiss tourism industry is environmental protection [5].

4.2.1 Solutions for protecting nature

To protect their Swiss nature, Switzerland tourism promotes sustainable tourism on their website. Sustainable tourism information such as nature-based tourism activities, accommodation that is strongly related to the locals, as well as sustainable restaurants and so on are advertised on their website. This promotion aims to increase the awareness of people mainly tourists about the environmental protection of Swiss nature. So that they can preserve the environment and this allows them to attract more generations to visit [6].

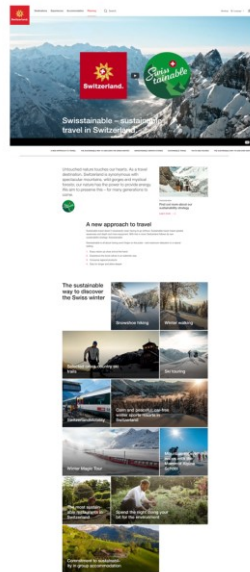


Figure 4.3 Webpage of Switzerland Tourism: Promoting Sustainable tourism [6]
Moreover, Switzerland tourism developed a strategy called the “Swisstainable strategy” [7]. One of the most important dimensions of the strategy is about “Environment”. Some main responsible in this dimension are;

- “Acting on a long-term commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of the natural environment [7]”
- “Respecting sensitive natural habitats and protected areas, and minimizing damage to the landscape [7]”
- “Reducing waste and resource consumption and focusing on environmentally friendly mobility [7]”

4.2.2 Solutions and targets for other sustainability topics

To measure their contribution to sustainable development, two frameworks from SGDs are put in their minds;

SDG 13: “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts [2]”.



Figure 4.4 SDG 13 [2] p.19

The target here is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% of their 1990 level by 2030 [2]. As to explain the situation of Switzerland, they have already achieved their targets for 2015 in the building sector (-26% versus only -22%) and industry (-17% versus only -7%) [2]. However, they could not exceed the target of stabilizing emissions from transport compared with 1990 (+4 % versus 0%) [2]. To cope with the challenge, the actions are implemented in water management, dealing with many kinds of industries including tourism, and data is collected at two-year intervals [2].

Another SDGs is mentioned in the tourism sector is SDG 8: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all [2]”

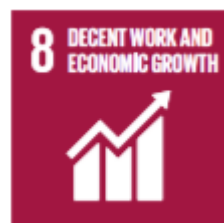


Figure 4.5 SDG 8 [2] p.14

The main focus here is to promote free economic activities such as perusing a competition friendly, open the economy, facilitating imports, eliminating trade barriers, maintaining and developing the bilateral path with the EU [2].

Also, the government is maintaining good working conditions and enhancing the potential of the domestic workforce, including the participation of women, professional integration of young people and apprenticeship market, as well as encouraging participation of older people and valuable groups [2]. These integrations are executed in the Swiss tourism industry [2]. According to the FDFA and FDET (2018), the labour productivity in the tourism sector has been increased in 2018 by 13 % since 2000.

4.3 Situations and solutions in Japan

Thanks to the many promotion campaigns conducted by the Japanese government, such as the “Visit Japan campaign”, the number of international tourists in Japan had been increased until 2019. The table below shows the 5 most popular motivations to visit Japan.

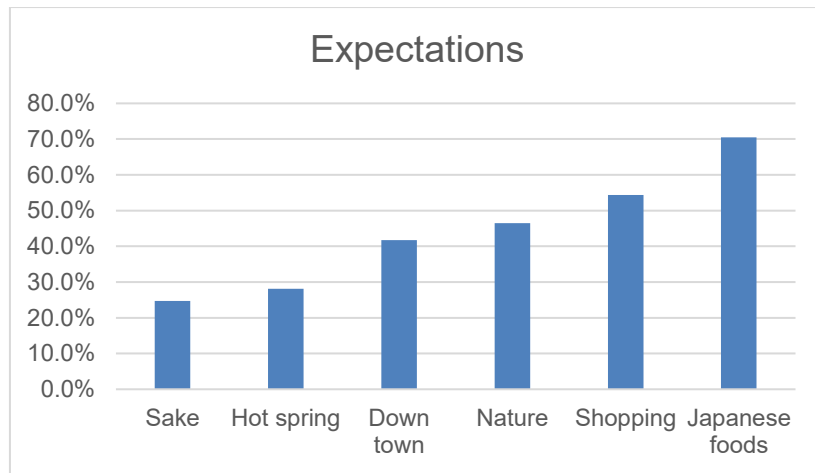


Figure 4.6 Expectations of inbound tourists in Japan

(Data from:[3] p.24)

As the table shows, Japanese nature resources are one of the important attractions for international tourists, just like Switzerland. Doubtless, this is one of the crucial topics for Japanese sustainable tourism development [4].

4.3.1 Solutions for protecting nature

According to JNTO (2021), in 2021, JNTO ¹² formulated a new policy to contribute to SDGs and sustainability more than ever. The main reason for this formulation is to manage all negative impacts and changes by tourism activities [4]. One of the main three areas of focus (mentioned in 4.3.2) for the policy is to protect the natural environment [4]. According to JNTO (2021), the government took some actions such as promoting the development of sustainable tourist attractions, including decarbonization and the reduction of plastic waste. Moreover, they share much information on how nature can be protected by tourists and people from the tourism industry, through digital advertisements, seminars, events as well as tourism operators [4].

4.3.2 Solutions and targets for other sustainability topics

As is mentioned above (4.3.1), JNTO developed their new policy. In this strategy, not only the nature protections are targeted, but also protection and promotion of local cultures and economies, as well as community development, are objected [4].

¹² Japan National Tourism Organisation

To manage their targets, some SDGs are recognised which are lined under the priority areas. These areas (in total 8 areas) are created to understand what Japan should focus on in particular among the goals of the SDGs [9]. In this section, only 3 areas are mentioned that are important in the Japanese tourism industry.

1. Priority Area 3: “Creating Growth Markets, Revitalization of Rural Areas, and Promoting Science Technology and Innovation [8]”

Related SDGs in the tourism sector;



Figure 4.7 Priority Area 3 [9] p.28

The main target in this area is to increase a nominal gross domestic product through a productivity revolution, innovations, venture creation capability, creation of new promising growth markets and regional revitalizations [9]. The tourism industry is strongly related to this target because it is believed to have the rule to realize a tourism region that is "good to live in and good to visit" [8].

Some solutions for sustainable cities and communities are already implemented such as "Project to Fully Enjoy National Parks", which aims to stimulate local communities through a cycle of protection and utilization of national parks [8]. Another solution, to build an environment where all foreign tourists in Japan can travel comfortably and stress-free, the government supports them by renovating accommodation facilities, guest rooms and common areas such as sight-seeing spots and tourists destinations to make them barrier-free [8]. In addition, the government is promoting the local acceptance system with the cooperation of local governments, NPOs, and other related parties [8].

Regarding the work, industry and economic growth, the growth rate of Japanese tourism direct GDP, as well as a proportion of total GDP, are neither decreasing nor increasing [8]. Thus, some devices and policies will be implemented by 2030 to provide jobs and promote local culture and products [8], which are believed to help to increase tourism as well as a proportion of total GDP.

2. Priority Area 5: “Energy Conservation, Renewable Energy, Climate Change Counter-measures, and Sound Material-Cycle Society [9]”

Related SDGs in the tourism sector:



Figure 4.8 Priority Area 5 [9] p.35

The principal goal of the area is to contribute climate change issue by promoting innovative technology in the environment and energy sector [9].

For consumption and production, the government introduces some accounting tools to monitor the economic and environmental aspects of tourism sustainability [8].

3. Priority Area 6: “Conservation of Environment, including Biodiversity, Forests and Oceans [9]”

Related SDG in the tourism sector;



Figure 4.9 Priority Area 6 [9] p.42

The essential target in this is to promote the conservation of biodiversity and to maintain and improve the ecosystem services provided by the natural environment, such as forests, rivers, and oceans [8].

The subject of marine conservation is mainly mentioned in the tourism sector. It is because the problem of the marine environment strongly affects fisheries and tourism [8]. To cope with this challenge, Japan formulated the “National Action Plan for Marine Plastic Litter” and the “Resource Circulation Strategy for Plastics” in 2019 [8]. By doing so, they promote the reduction of marine plastic litter, also increase people’s awareness and understanding of the condition [8]. Moreover, they introduced the Law Relating to the Prevention of Marine Pollution and Maritime Disaster, to prevent pollution, as well as to preserve the marine environment [8].

4.4 Summary

Through this research, I could learn that both countries consider nature to be an important tourism resource and engage to preserve their nature. Two tourism organisations are implementing similar solutions which are promoting information about sustainability to tourists and people from the industry.

The findings are not only this but also other sustainable topics such as climate change, work and economic growth, social development are found as important topics for the industry both in Switzerland and Japan. However, there are some differences in their focus. Switzerland points out the Nature topic in general and works growth. On the other hand, Japan sees technology and community development. However, Nature topics, climate change and economic growth are the same focuses between them.

I also realised that information about sustainable tourism development in Japan has more available than in Switzerland. I believe this is because of the Tokyo Olympic 2020 which highlighted the tourism sector by the government. I assume that having Tokyo Olympics was a great opportunity for Japan to re-realise tourism and its impacts. However, I believe that the awareness of this sustainability topic in Japan is still more minor than in Switzerland, especially in the tourism industry. I strongly hope that both countries will stimulate each other on contributions for the sustainable development, and take this as an opportunity to build even closer relations.

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