# Working for peace in Switzerland

This summer I had a chance to visit one of the richest countries in the world – Switzerland. I was surprised that the country has got four different names in its four official languages (germ. Schweiz, fr. Suisse, ital. Svizzera, rom. Svizra).

When you hear 'Switzerland' you imagine at once green meadows covered with flowers, herds of cows like in chocolate Milka commercial, Rolex watches and cheese… Yes, it is true – there are all these things there. Though I didn't like Swiss cheese (it's hard and stinks).

I realized long ago that travelling as a tourist is just wasting your money. Of course, you'll see all the local sights and people – but all this will be as you're watching at what is happening through the window or a glass wall. That's why I chose the volunteer programme this summer and specifically in Switzerland.

Living with people, working with them, making our environment better – all this things make you think about your life, the way you live and whether you do the right things or not.

Volunteering seemed to me and like to many other people in our country something weird. I didn't understand why a lot of foreigners do such things, why they work for free. Europe and the USA live in capitalism but still some of their people do things from the heart absolutely for free.  Once you try this you will never stop. It turned out to be amazing.  You learn, you live and you work for peace… Cultural exchange is a breathtaking process, indeed.

Our work camp was called "Waldenstein" (A forest rock).  The Farm "Waldenstein" is situated in Beinwil in the Solothurner Jura in the northwest region of Switzerland 30 km from Basel where the German language is spoken.

The Waldenstein farm is situated in the mountain region of Jura at the altitude of 700 meters above sea. It is situated along a natural-reservation and owns a large variation of plants and wild animals on the 25 hectares of land. The farm raises Scottish Highland Cattle and cultivates different fruits, berries and herbs.

During the camp the main work was taking place on the fields and forest of the farm: we collected hay on the meadows, ameliorated the paths in the forest, cleaned out the pasture from bushes and cleaned different big pools on the river. But the most exciting project was building an insect-hostel for wild bees and wasps - the biggest in the whole Europe! Some Works were physically demanding but we didn't complain - fresh air and food are the best reward!

There were five volunteers – a girl from Spain, one from Belgium, one from Switzerland, and one from Moscow. I learnt a lot about Switzerland, Belgium and Spain. In our free time we exchanged our life stories and came to know about different cultures.

The most wonderful thing was a two-day trip to a sixteen-hundred-year-old town Basel on the river Rhine. This amazing place represents the old European spirit as nowhere else. Middle-aged buildings in combination with bizarre statues and monuments made a vivid impression on me.

This summer showed me how exciting and useful volunteering can be. Not only for me personally but for the people, world and our planet.

I left a piece of my heart on the green meadows of Switzerland…

Alexander Yakovlev, gr. 4.741