

What does Xu Zhe, young audit manager in Deloitte Switzerland, thought about Switzerland before her coming? What was her first impression and, after more than one year, does Switzerland stand for more than watches, chocolate and Alps ?

God's Back Garden



Interview of Sofia Zhe Xu

Deloitte Switzerland

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Bio

Xu Zhe is the assistant audit manager in Deloitte Switzerland since January 2012, on a secondment contract. Now she is a member of Energy and resources sector audit team in Deloitte Geneva office.

Xu Zhe has been with Deloitte for six years. Before she worked in Switzerland, she joined in Deloitte in July 2006, as a member of the Deloitte China energy and resources sector services group. During the five years of audit experience, she mainly served for government-owned national petroleum in China.

She received her Bachelor of Accounting degree from Xi'an Jiaotong University. During her four years in University, she passed all the ACCA examinations (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) in 2006. She also became a member of the Chinese Institute of Certified Public Accountants (CICPA) in 2011.

You worked for Deloitte China before coming to Deloitte Switzerland. What did you think about our country before your arrival?

In China, some people get confused between "Switzerland" and "Sweden", as the Chinese translation of these two countries' names starts with the same character of "??". Switzerland is translated as "???" and "???" for Sweden. I often correct them by saying that Switzerland is the country with watches, chocolate and Alps. Being thousands of miles away from China, Switzerland makes itself known to Chinese through the label "Swiss Made" in the back of every watch.

I had never been in Europe before joining Deloitte Switzerland in January 2012. My first impression about Switzerland was a mix of historical knowledge, internet messages and media images that can be summarised as "small, diversified and beautiful". Switzerland is a quite small, landlocked country in central Europe. You have to zoom in several times to see Switzerland appear on the map. Then you will find this small country is bordered by France, German and Italy.

Most parts of the land are covered by snowy mountains. It is twice the size of Beijing, which is the biggest city in China, where I lived for 6 years. Before I came, I was wondering if I would feel bored if I had visited all Switzerland by my second assignment of eighteen months; the answer is "far from that!"

There are many diverse things to discover. The most typical example of diversification is the four different languages spoken in Switzerland. In China, we also have different dialects in different regions, but at least they are the same in writing. Therefore, at that time, I was curious about how this nation was formed without a linguistic identity.

As we all know, Switzerland is also home of a large number of international organizations. Not only diversified in culture, Switzerland also encompasses a great diversity of landscape. It is not deniable that

Switzerland is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. In China, when people talk about Switzerland, they give it the nick name of "God's back garden". One of my just-married friends told me that she will choose Switzerland as the place for her honey-moon, because she wants to spend her most sweet days in the most beautiful country in the world.

After sixteen months in Switzerland, I think I have to change my first impression about the country: Switzerland is small and organized but also diversified, inclusive and still beautiful.

« The customer relationship in Switzerland is more casual »

Did you feel a significant difference in the customer relation between these two countries?

Yes, I feel there is significant difference in the customer relations between China and Switzerland, resulting from the very different cultural approaches. However, due to my limited experience, my comments on this topic may be superficial. There are mainly three types of customers in China: government-owned companies, private companies and international companies. For international companies with mature management system and structure, the relationship is similar to the one in Switzerland. For government-owned or related companies, and private companies, the focus is more on localization. Generally speaking, I have a feeling that the customer relationship in Switzerland is more casual.

What motivates you to stay in Switzerland?

I plan to go back to China after my second assignment of eighteen months. Even though there are many issues in China, for example air pollution, food safety, etc., China is in the process of fast development and there will be many opportunities for us. I want to participate in that big wave, as China is my home country. In Switzerland, I like the good balance between life and work, and more than four months of skiing season.