

CHEZ LILLY & FÉLIX

SUMMER 2025 | VOL 1



CHEESE QUEST

An adventure exploring the many hikes
and cheeses of Switzerland

A train ride to the top of EU

Internship at EMPA

Kandersteg Via-Ferrata

Glacier hike with Alyssa

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NEW SEASONAL GEAR TESTED AT OESCHINENSEE LAKE

By Lilly and Felix

To enjoy our summer in the alps to the fullest, we wanted to get gear that would be comfortable, durable, and functional.

Living in the heart of the alps, we needed gear to support our adventure goals this summer. Both of us were looking to add a few items to our gear library.

Backpacks:

The criteria for our new backpacks was that they needed to be around 20L, Lilly needed a pack with a shorter women's torso, and we both wanted good support for long hiking days. A place to mount our hiking poles and water bladder was also a must!

Initially, we were wooed by the Mammut Ducan packs, but Lilly was disappointed by the lack of colour options in the women's sizing.

We were very happy to stumble on the Rab Protium during one of our (many) Transa visits. One of the staff members fitted the bags perfectly for us (a very adjustable bag) and it was a lot more comfortable than the Mammut Duncan packs for

both of us. In the end, we decided to purchase the Rab Protium! Lilly is very happy with the purple colour of the bag.

Trail Runners:

During our visit to the Transa Outlet we found our first pair of trail runners! Both of us tried on different pairs at the store and both decided to purchase the Scarpa Spin Planet shoes!

Miscellaneous:

We also bought a few other pieces of gear.

Lilly needed a few clothing items, including hiking shorts and synthetic shirts (as well as a cute Fjallraven hat)!



We also got hiking poles to share on our hikes when the terrain got a bit more technical.

Testing the Gear:

We got to first test our gear while hiking at Oeschinensee Lake. This is a beautiful 10km hike with views of a glacier lake (as well as the glaciers themselves!).

It was the first hike of the summer and we really enjoyed it. We only wish that we had brought our swimsuits so that we could swim in the alpine lake! All the gear worked great and supported our adventures :)



FÉLIX'S

Family Visit

By Félix

A train ride to the Top of Europe!



After over 6 months without seeing each other, Félix's family visits him in Europe!

It was a trip bound to happen as the family hadn't travelled to Europe all together, and now they had the perfect excuse to. They spent a week in Paris, then a week in Switzerland (mostly hiking). Lastly, they spent a week in London, before returning to Montreal.

We first met them at the intersection between France and Switzerland (and Germany) in Basel. We visited an unexpected museum centred around paper: Basler Papiermühle. We made our own paper, post cards, and calendars.

We did some classic hikes around the Lauterbrunnen region. We saw the imposing three peaks of the region: Eiger, Jungfrau, and Mönch. We got lucky when visiting the falls in the Lauterbrunnen valley, as it had rained recently.

They were our first guests to visit our cozy apartment, and we served them some tasty banana cookies along with some tea they brought from France.

The highlight of their trip was visiting the Top of Europe.

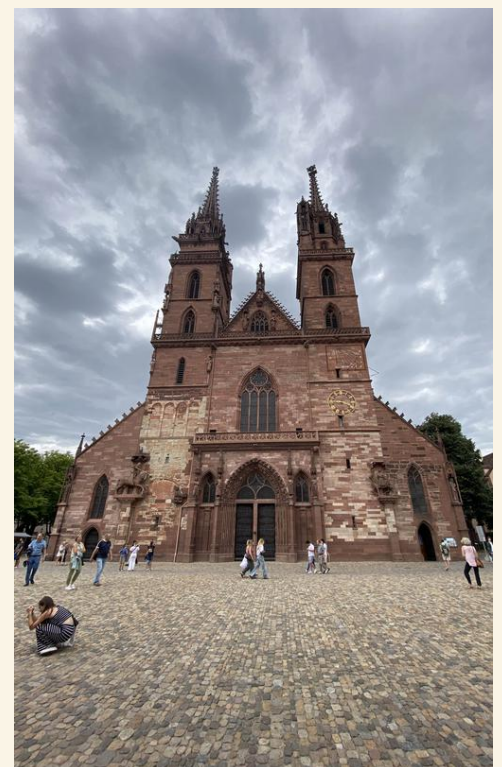
Hiking in Switzerland has been quite the contrast compared to North America. There is almost always cell service, a restaurant (and maybe a bar), and a cable car to bring you down when doing outdoor activities here.

An extreme example of this is the top of Europe experience. Over a century ago, some people decided to dig a tunnel through Eiger. And now, we can take a train that takes you up to an elevation just shy of 3500 m.

It is a bit expensive mind you, but the view is well worth every penny. It was during a heat wave in Bern, with temperatures at around 30 degrees, but here, it was close to 0!

The view was impeccable and we were able to hike in the snow in the middle of summer. We walked to the Mönchsjochehütte and back, and even saw fighter jets fly above us.

Since it is Switzerland, they also had to build a watch store there, which is the tallest one in the world.



A unique church we saw in Basel



The face of Eiger during one of our hikes



Summer Internship at **EMPA**

By Lilly

My summer internship was at EMPA — the Swiss institute of material science.

With my previous internship experience being primarily in quantum optics, I wanted the chance to try something new. At EMPA I was able to do exactly that (in more ways than one)!

My research topic was post-process polishing for 3D micro-structures with biomedical applications. I learned a lot about experimental design and metrology tools.

This was my first time having an internship with such amazing views out the windows! My office was in Thun and I could see the Bernese alps, including Jungfrau and Mönch on a clear day!

That was not the only view I had — my office was also in a Swiss military area and I saw a few tanks from time to time!



My internship was in Thun — a beautiful city with a castle and a picturesque lake. A very unique internship experience!



A Swiss Adventure CHEESE QUEST

By Lilly & Félix

The Cheese Quest: Four cheeses, one prize with three months to complete an epic journey throughout Switzerland.

A big goal for us this summer was to complete the infamous Swiss Cheese Quest. Equipped with a passport, we have to visit all four cheese museums — Emmental (what us Canadians consider “Swiss Cheese”), Einsiedeln, Appenzellerland, and Gruyères — to receive a free Grand Tour Snack Box with free cheese and a Swiss army knife.

This knife is no average knife, it is purposefully designed for cheese! It has a fondue fork, cheese blade, wine opener, and a bread knife; all essentials for cheese-related gatherings.



Einsiedeln:

Our first visit was to the small town of Einsiedeln. We did not spend too much time at this stop and instead enjoyed a day exploring Zurich old town (which is relatively nearby)! We bought this cheese with a cute cat logo!

Emmental:

Our second visit was to the cheese museum closest to Bern — Emmental! This was another

quick stop where we enjoyed the views of local farms. We also purchased some Emmental and used it to make ham + cheese sandwiches for lunch the next week!

Gruyère:

A slight obstacle was in our way to visiting this museum — train construction! But it was worth the wait as one of our favourite stops of the quest!





“To our surprise, the Appenzell cheese factory was not where we expected”

Our day started by completing the 17 km “Sentier des Fromageries”. Once we were done, we were hungry and began our ascent to the medieval town of Gruyères. We saw the castle and stumbled into a spaceship at the HR Giger bar. This bar was designed by the artist who did the visuals in *Alien*.



Appenzell:

Appenzell was far from Bern, so we spent two days there to justify the long journey. It was well worth it! We spent a day hiking where we saw a cliff refuge along with a church in the mountain.

The next day was spent visiting the old Appenzell town along with completing our cheese quest. To our surprise, the Appenzell cheese factory was not where we expected. Instead of being in the old town of Appenzell, the factory was near St-Gallen. We just made it before they closed for the day!

St-Gallen was the cleanest town we had ever stepped foot in. We even saw McDonald’s employees cleaning up the town on a Sunday. For the cherry on top, we got to travel in first class on our return to Bern!



We made it!! Cheese quest complete :)

Kandersteg Via Ferrata



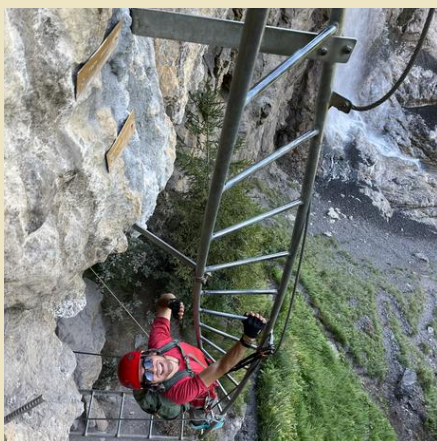
By Lilly & Félix

A once in a lifetime adventure in Switzerland that was quite literally breathtaking.



One of our goals this summer was to try a via ferrata. In the end, we tried two — one in Mürren and Kandersteg — and we did this all in one weekend!

The Mürren via ferrata is often considered one of Switzerland's most "thrilling experiences" and so we wanted to start with this one. It has a K3 difficulty (German classification), which implies that there may be long exposed passages, and that we should have a head for heights, and some endurance. It had obstacles like, overhanging ladders, a cliff walk, tightropes, and a suspension bridge.



We ended up finding the Mürren via ferrata a little bit too easy. It was a fun experience, but with our background, it was closer to hiking than rock climbing. We thought that we were ready for the Kandersteg via ferrata — a K4 difficulty.

The Kandersteg via ferrata is along a 350 m high wall with lots of exposure. Shortly after the start, the K4 difficulty becomes clear. The route has long sections between anchors. Very quickly our adrenaline was spiking. We had to decide if we wanted to continue.



After the first vertical climb, we had to traverse along these iron rods. Then we got to the infamous 180 degree turning ladder! This was a really cool point of the climb.

We also crossed rope bridges, overhanging ladders, and a zipline!

In the end, we completed the climb safely and we really enjoyed ourselves. If we come back to Switzerland for longer periods of time, we plan to get our own via ferrata kits!



Aletsch Glacier

Adventures during **ALYSSA'S VISIT**

By Lilly

Alyssa visited Switzerland for a week! We went hiking in the alps, visited new cities and found a very special treat!

Alyssa's visit to Switzerland was filled with many new memories and experiences. From trying raspberry croissants, Längasse high tea and currywurst to exploring cities including Thun, Zürich, and Interlaken. Here are a few of our favourites!

Our favourite adventure from Alyssa's visit was our panoramic hike of the Aletsch glacier! This is the largest glacier in the Alps and it was an absolutely amazing view. The hike was (at the time) our longest distance hike at 15km. It involved hiking along boulder fields and 1km of elevation gain/loss.

It definitely was not the easiest hike, but it was absolutely worth it!! All three of us really enjoyed ourselves.

The landscape was very unique. At the beginning of the hike everything was very dry and hot, but after we hiked the pass we had a big change in scenery with our first view of the glacier! Thankfully, the temperature dropped a bit at that point too.

After such a long day of hiking, we wanted a break from the trails and decided to go on an SBB adventure! Since Felix and I had the summer GA travel card, we could travel unlimited by train in Switzerland. Our travel card also allowed for us to get a day pass for Alyssa and we definitely took advantage of that.

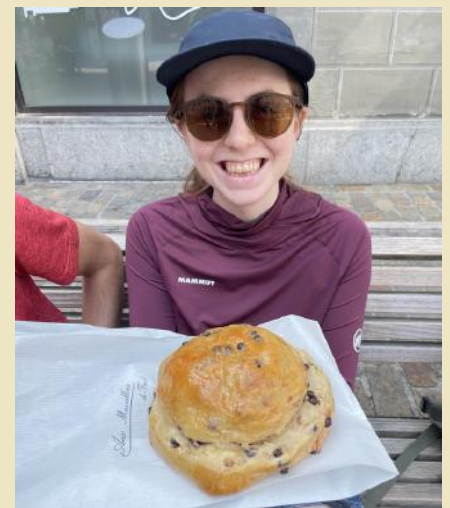
First we went to Lucerne, which is a charming city with historical architecture.

As we were walking along the streets, we saw a building with funky windows and medieval art. While I was distracted looking at the architecture, Felix noticed inside was one of our favorite bakeries!

We saw Aux Merveilleux de Fred!! We first had the cramiques from this bakery in Brussels and it was a big surprise to see it here in Lucerne. Of course, we had to buy a cramique and share this amazing bakery with Alyssa!

We also got to try some Swiss chocolates and see the Lion statue (which was way bigger than I anticipated).

After finishing our brief tour of Lucerne, we then got on the train to go to Interlaken! The train ride between these two cities was really scenic. We saw the alps and lots of alpine lakes. Once we were in Interlaken, we enjoyed a cup of Chai/Matcha (which we enjoyed returning to a few weeks later). Then we returned to Bern!



Cramique!!



The lion statue in the city of Lucerne

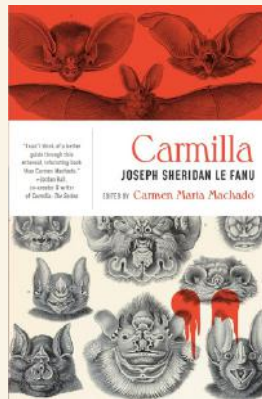
QUARTERLY BOOKS

By Lilly

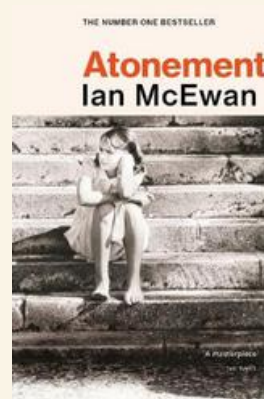
Read by Lilly & Félix



Lilly ★★★★★
Felix ★★★★★



★★★★★
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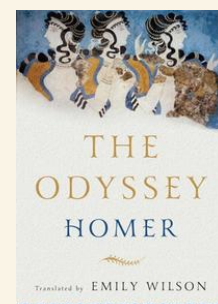
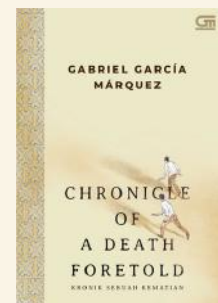
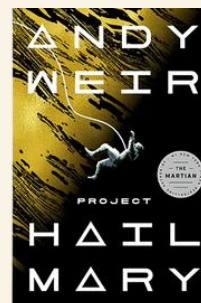
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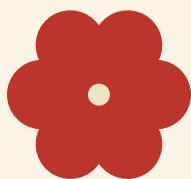
BUDDY READS:

Felix and I read 4 books (971 pages) together this quarter!
On average, we gave them a 3.75/5 rating.

Our favourite book from this quarter is *Le Petit Prince*. It was an unexpected gem! It is a middle grade novel about a prince who leaves his home asteroid to explore other planets — ultimately arriving on Earth. It features friendship, and childhood imagination through lyrical and humorous prose.

ON OUR TO-READ LIST:





CHEZ LILLY &
FÉLIX