

## Ridding the CERN from Concerns

Having ventured to CERN with 18 students who are studying, or are about to study, A-Level Physics, we have learned a number of valuable lessons that next time, will make the whole process much easier.

Here are my recommendations / thoughts:

- Stay in Switzerland, not France, because of safety and ease of travel with the free public transport pass and free journey from airport to accommodation.
- Visit CERN October-March if possible because of accommodation availability, flight options and if with AS Physics students, relevance to the course and exams.
- Try and get a morning tour – allow for 8 hours at CERN to absorb the full experience.
- You must visit the restaurant at CERN, as well as the Visitor Centre and Microcosm exhibitions.
- Take one more staff member than the accepted ratio suggests.
- Request an exclusive tour if you have close to 24 students going: do get members of public joining you if not.
- Make students aware of the expense of Geneva. (£3 for a 500ml fizzy drink for example).
- Take a memory stick (at least 2 GB) – plenty of resources offered as we were on the tour and over lunch too which would make excellent teaching resources.

*Things I would consider more carefully*

### ***Accommodation***

Having visited CERN in July, the availability of the CERN hostel (or any hostel in this case) was very limited and we could not be accommodated. CERN suggested July-September is difficult to get rooms at their hostel. Going in autumn–spring provides you with more flight options, for example Easyjet fly out of Birmingham up to mid-April for ski season. Be wary when booking flights with Easyjet, I tried to book 20 in one go, but the system timed out before I was able to input all the information requested and so I started the process all over again.

The CERN hostel did send us a spreadsheet of information of local hotels that offered shuttle services to and from the airport and also CERN.

<https://espace.cern.ch/hostel-service/Lists/Hotels/AllItems.aspx>

We booked a hotel in France – they had these shuttle services, and room rates were very reasonable. On arrival though, they refused us use of these shuttle services as it is not intended for groups, just individual customers. Staying in France means you also forfeit the right to free public

transport, and we found buying relevant tickets for busses and trams in France for Swiss travel difficult!

So, stay in France to save money on accommodation, but be warned, getting anywhere is difficult and if you are there for a couple of days, any monies saved maybe lost in travel expenses and time. Ascertain the hotel rules on their shuttle service. If you have a coach or minibus available, then go for a stay in France – 100 Euros per night for a twin room was great value compared to quotes from comparable Geneva hotels.

### ***Time of year***

We visited in July 2013; the weather was amazing, very warm, great view of Mont Blanc. However, as touched upon, the hotels were busier. CERN host student summer programs and reserve their hotels for them. It transpired that flights were less frequent to Geneva from some airports during the summer. I would go earlier in the year if possible for a couple of reasons; 1. More options of travel and accommodation. 2. More relevant to the AS course we study as the exam would be in June.

### ***Geneva***

Our school is in a socially and economically deprived area of Birmingham. A major issue we had was the students not bringing enough spending money with them. With many having not been abroad before, the concept of spending over £10 for food for one meal was difficult to comprehend. As a consequence, we will be in future collecting spending monies of students during the year, and converting them to Francs later on.

The exchange rate was approximately £10 = 14 Swiss Francs.

A McDonalds meal was 7,90 Swiss Francs

A 500ml bottle of coke off the high street, 3, 50 Swiss Francs

### ***CERN***

Couple of things about CERN. The Microcosm exhibition and Visitor centre are both excellent. We got to CERN at 8.30am, and we were ready to leave about 4pm. I would whole-heartedly recommend having lunch in the restaurant. It is really good value and quality, but it gave our students the chance to talk to scientists and ask questions about CERN which at times they were unable to do during the tour. We met up with the University of Warwick Particle Physics group for our lunch, and the students that went with us found this probably the most useful part of the trip.

### ***Staffing***

Unfortunately, one of our students was taking ill during the tour and was dealt with by the CERN medical team. She was later transferred to the University of Geneva hospital. This meant the second member of staff with me was with her for most of the day. We had Year 13 students CRB checked to act as responsible adults if the need did arise, but taking a 3<sup>rd</sup> member of staff may have some real substance to it.

### ***Medical Issues***

Make sure students have EHIC cards, and they carry passports with them at all times. Though the EHIC card was of no use at the particular hospital our student went to, most hospitals accept them. One word of warning, our student who was ill was issued a 2000 Swiss Franc medical bill, invoiced to her mother as they would not accept our school's travel and medical insurance. The insurance company have reimbursed the student's mother this end however which was good.

### ***Racism***

Geneva seemed a very safe and clean city whilst we there. We were able to walk around easily and it was simple to navigate through. Whilst in France however, the students of Asian descent were spat at in a McDonalds. The tension was very high and hostile towards us as a group. Something I did not even comprehend when planning, but guess I would consider now.

### ***CERN***

The tours that are organised are not exclusive. Up to 24 people are allowed on one tour, and hence if your school party is not at 24 in total, then any member of the public can join the tour. I guess this is especially important if running a trip for under 16s, but still a possible issue if you are unlucky.