

This orienteering trip to Switzerland and Sweden was an amazing experience. Before this trip, I had never met the Junior Team, traveled without help from my parents, or been to Europe. Katie and I learned a lot about international travel including late planes, missing layovers, and lost luggage. When we finally met up with the team in Switzerland, our adventures together began!

First off, I really enjoyed the people. Everyone already knew each other and were so tight. Since I had never met any of them, except for Julia of course, it took me a little while to ease into the friendly group setting. But once I got to know them a little better, I became tight with them as well. The moment I got home from the trip, I instantly started missing all of them.

While in Switzerland, we bounced from hostel to hostel, orienteering along the way. Just about every morning, we took a drive to the location of our training. On the way there we would peer out of the car windows and take billions of pictures like such tourists until we got tired and fell asleep. When we finally arrived, it was time to orienteer!

Each training course was unique. We did some sprints in little towns and some longer courses in the forest. Once, we even took a gondola and a ski lift up and up to our start and raced down the mountain. I personally enjoyed the sprints, not because I was fast or good at it, but because it was new for me. I am used to forests or dead grassy hills and sometimes a college campus. It was a change orienteering in a small Swiss town where it was very easy to run right past the little alleys. I definitely learned a lot about the variety of terrains in Switzerland.

After a wonderful week of enjoying the beauty of Switzerland and training, we all had a long, frustrating travel day to Sweden. Between the flight and the airport losing our luggage and train problems it ended up not being the best day. Luckily, everything worked out in the end. We finally arrived at the huge campground for O-Ringen in which we stayed in a train car. The room was very small and it was way too easy for us to trash it with all of our stuff.

The first day of O-ringen went well for the team. However, it was not such a good day for me. Toward the beginning of my race I injured my knee once again, causing me to take an extremely loong time to finish up the course. I ended up having to use crutches for a few days so I wasn't able to participate in a couple of races. Also, during this week everyone was getting the flu. So the day I got off the crutches I got sick. Because of these mishaps, I wasn't able to compete until Friday. On this race I ran slowly to avoid hurting my knee again. As a result I did not make any large errors and was pleased with my run. In spite of these problems, I was still so lucky to have the experience of being at O-Ringen. It was interesting to run around in the marshy, swamp-like terrain because that was entirely new for me. Trudging through the mud made it easy to get distracted. So this orienteering terrain taught me to pay extra close attention to the map despite what was going on around me. It was also cool to see our team pleased with their results most days and it was a super fun environment staying in the camp ground with thousands of people from around the world. We traveled home with Julia on a very tiring 11 hour flight. Once we arrived home, I was already missing Europe and wishing that I was still there. I hope to return next summer! This training and competition experience greatly improved all of my skills and I hope will help me towards my goal of one day making it onto the Junior National Team. Thank you BAOC.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Petersen