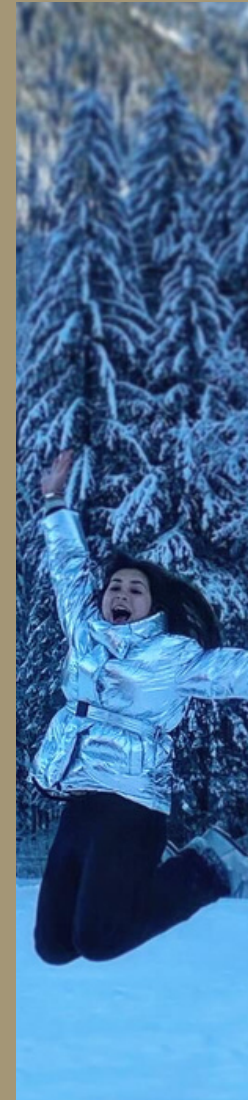




SURVAL MONTREUX GIRLS' SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND



Winter 2024 News

Challenge, Own, Lead



Warm Greetings from Surval Montreux

It has been another busy term in Surval life. Looking back, it is amazing what the girls have crammed into an 11-week term! Students have continued to embrace their Surval experience in full, to grow and flourish and broaden their horizons.

The highlight of the Winter Term for most students is undoubtedly winter sports, from Thursday skiing, to ski weekends and ski week. Many students were beginners at the start of the season and have advanced to being very competent skiers or snowboarders. But skiing is about so much more than the technicalities of the sport. Weekly skiing provides a healthy routine for girls who come back invigorated from time spent in the fresh air surrounded by stunning Alpine scenery. It provides the means through which students build new friendships, and look out for and support each other - overall it builds team spirit across the school community through shared experiences, fun and collaboration. It helps girls become more independent as they take responsibility for getting themselves organised for skiing each day. It builds resilience when girls push themselves out of their comfort zone, overcome potential anxieties, and work through tiredness, sore feet or bad weather to persist in the activity. In short, skiing is a key player in supporting the growth and development of the girls during their time at Surval. It is, therefore, unsurprising that skiing has remained one of the core activities that binds Survaliennes together across generations.

For many girls, our residential trips programme is a key factor in their choice of Surval and provides a breadth of opportunities beyond the curriculum to broaden their horizons, challenge themselves and develop a sense of adventure. Alongside our busy programme of ski trips, our inaugural trip to Boston to join the international Model United Nations conference held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was a huge success. The four girls who stepped up to join this displayed Surval's values - Challenge, Own, Lead - from start to finish, were a credit to themselves and the school and came back full of their sense of pride in how they owned their voices in the committees.

As I write, a group of twenty-two girls has just headed off to Paris for a weekend's language and cultural immersion trip, putting their French language skills to the test in preparation for DELF exams next term.

By the time you receive this newsletter a group of twelve students will have flown off for the Spring Break to Tanzania to support the work of the charity Better Lives in the Kindwitwi community. Over recent months the students have worked hard to hit their fundraising target and taken part in training sessions to prepare them for this new service project. This project is very different to most other school trips, taking the students well outside their comfort zone - and the impact and rewards are potentially much greater. The impact on students' personal development is just one side. The sustainable impact on a community is equal to this and will, equally, leave students with a deep understanding and commitment to service and belief in their capacity to make a difference on the global stage. I have no doubt that the experience will be life-changing, empowering, challenging, and impactful - both for students and adult leaders accompanying the project.

'Creating Powerful Stories, Transforming Futures.' We remain true to Surval's tagline of providing the most impactful experience possible to students. During their Surval education, students build a portfolio of rich experiences which help set them up with memories, learning, interests and skills for life. I am, as ever, very grateful to parents and colleagues for providing and supporting these opportunities.

I wish all Surval families a healthy and happy Spring Break,

With very best wishes

Nicola Dudley
Principal, Surval Montreux



Read our Principal's latest reflection piece on Experiential Learning here!



SURVAL MONTREUX
GIRLS' SCHOOL IN SWITZERLAND

Our final week this Winter Term was marked by...



Our Celebration Assembly

Our special Celebration Assembly recognised the hard work done over the term by all of our students. We celebrated their achievements in the classroom but also outside with our Ski Awards delivered by our Ski instructors to congratulate the girls on challenging themselves and showing resilience on the slopes. What a term it has been!

Our Charity Gala Dinner

Our final week was marked by one of the highlights of the year for our Events and Etiquette Club, the Charity Gala Dinner. The evening was a dream come true. Themed around Tanzania where 12 girls traveled to support a local community, it served as a fundraiser to collect money to purchase essential materials once they were onsite. The whole school came together for an evening around positive impact and the power of giving back to others.



Whole School Workshops

By Ms Shirley Mitchell, Vice Principal

One of the many benefits of our Core Curriculum at Surval is the flexibility it allows us to focus learning on important current issues and those topics relevant to our students. It is precisely because of this that on a Friday afternoon, our school library regularly becomes a whole-school classroom, with girls tackling serious issues through group work, collaboration and discussion.

It is important that we, as educators, create safe spaces for our students to challenge perceptions and ideas and I have found that it is through these lively debates that most of my learning takes place as I am allowed a glimpse into the world in which our students are living through their eyes.

We set the scene for these whole-school workshops by launching into all things female. Led by our Head of Enrichment Jess Byrne, the girls learned how to be confident in and to understand their bodies and to support each other in doing so. There was a real focus on debunking myths (if you don't know what 'bicycle face' is I can definitely recommend a Google!), empowering them to break down the barriers they face in sport simply by being women, and shining a light on things like sports bras and pelvic floors. At the end of this session, I was struck by how much easier my school years would have been if I had this information and a safe space to ask questions. The feedback that came next showed they had truly appreciated the opportunity this environment gave them.

Another powerful afternoon was spent discussing the effects of smoking and vaping and the unique danger this poses for women. School nurse Natalie Bosmans was on hand to offer the science behind the chemicals and both the short and long term effects smoking and vaping has on women. Whilst the long term effects of vaping are largely unknown at this stage, more research is being done and new information is being discovered continually. Perhaps unsurprisingly, none of it is positive! The girls were given advice on how to break the habit and where support can be accessed both in and out of school should they want it.

Next we dove into the world of generative AI in an all-girls context. Whilst I could wax lyrical about this topic extensively, this session was very much led by the students. Through a series of primers, the students delved into their own experiences with AI and predictably, this led to lengthy discussions around their experience with social media, both positive and negative. Some incredibly honest conversations followed and there was a real atmosphere of respect and value toward each other which was heartwarming to witness. This topic is, of course, an ongoing one and the conversations continue long after the workshops finish, another reason why it is vital that we open these issues for discussion within the Surval community.

Most recently, we gathered as a group to mark International Women's Day 2024. So much education took place on that day. With such a diverse and multicultural cohort, we opened the session by speaking of what International Women's Day meant in each culture and how it was celebrated. Hearing the stark contrast between the experiences of different nationalities was eye-opening, and I was so grateful to witness the articulate, passionate and empowered way each girl spoke of her own experience. The reason those conversations could happen is because every Surval girl knows that her experience is valued and that when she stands, it is in a room of other girls who will support her and listen without judgement, giving her the confidence and the security to stand up and speak out. I saw the future of female leaders before me that day and I felt the future looking brighter than ever.

These opportunities to come together as a whole community, to respect and support each other, are as much about nurturing empathy and respect as they are about the subjects we are delivering. Another benefit of our deliberately small environment in action. It also helps our students form the lifelong bonds and friendships that our alumni of the Survalienne network speak of so fondly when they visit.



Surval Culture

Adventure and Positive Impact: Our Service Trip to Tanzania

By Victoria, French Language and Culture student

Since I knew I was coming to Surval, the most appealing trip to me was the Tanzania Service trip. I found it a great surprise that the school wanted to encourage girls to do community service, and at the same time take us out of our comfort zone which going to Tanzania will definitely make us do. We knew doing this trip was not going to be easy, so we had training weekends.

Our first night out, we slept on tents just outside Surval in a green area that is really nearby. In this first training, we learned how to build our tents, how to cook our own dinner, and general rules of camping outdoors.

After, we had our training weekend, where we went to a snowy mountain where we met Jack, the expedition leader who is going with us. On this night, we spent time at a Chalet and we faced all kinds of challenges. Do not let the word chalet fool you! It was a very humble chalet with just the basics to pass the night. Outside we practised our survival skills, teamwork and camping skills. We had to cook dinner and breakfast with a budget for 15 people. But thankfully, after that weekend I can say we were all ready to start our journey off to Tanzania.

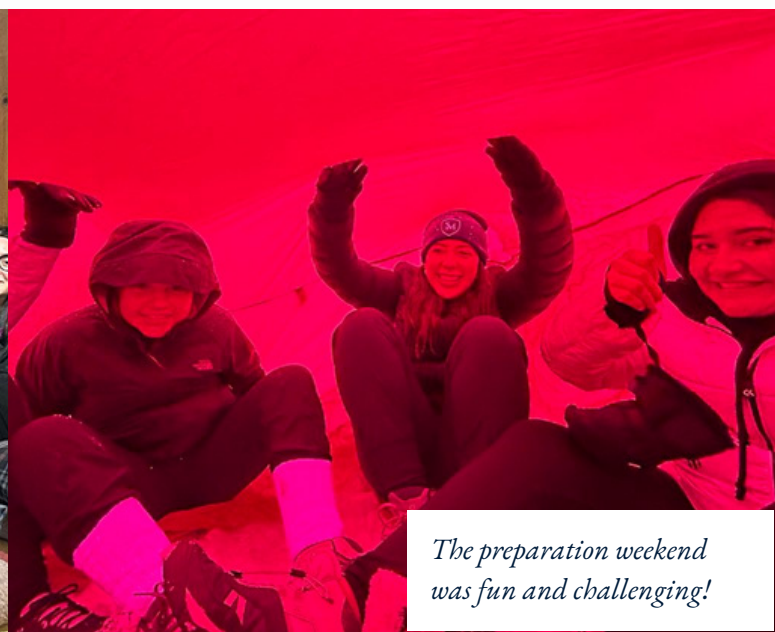
Before we boarded the plane, we had to fundraise 6'000.- CHF. Thanks to our teamwork, we have fundraised 7'134.- CHF but hopefully we will get much more at the Gala Dinner that the Etiquette and Events Student Voice is so generously hosting in honor of Tanzania. We got there through multiple projects, such as: bake sale in Villeneuve, brownie sale on the slopes, express delivery, chopped fruit, wearing our own jacket for Thursday ski, a 3k run in Montreux and all sorts of amazing ideas the team organized.

We are now days away from our long-awaited trip and, by the time you read this, we will be in Tanzania. The excitement just grows as we start to pack and see all the equipment we bought. When we first saw these items, we did not even know what half of the equipment was for, but our training has prepared us. That is what makes this trip so special: stepping out of our comfort zone, experiencing something we have never lived before.

I am so excited and cannot wait to share all the fun anecdotes I am sure we will have at the end of the trip.



The girls learned to work as a team!



The preparation weekend was fun and challenging!



Watch our Ski
Week video!



Challenge - Own - Lead

Surval Montreux, where 'extra' is understood as essential.

By Mrs Jess Byrne, Head of Enrichment

When choosing a school, often parent choice is driven by Academic credibility and Pastoral support, with the 'extra' Enrichment opportunities considered as the 'cherry on the cake'. But at Surval Montreux, we consider all three elements to be equally critical in providing a world class education.

There is no doubt that the trips and winter sports programme sets us apart from a standard educational experience; quite simply, we ski and travel more with our students than any other school. However, despite the easy excitement this type of opportunity creates for our girls, it is the moments in between which are most likely to leave a lasting impact on the personal growth of our girls.

In support of ensuring this essential personal development, a unique data-informed approach has been implemented at Surval, tracking student engagement in Enrichment activities in the same way we do Academic Attainment and Pastoral Wellbeing. This data looks at both the consistency and breadth of engagement between all optional activities, including after school activities, music lessons, service activities and of course attendance on trips. This triangulation of data gives staff and students a clear and measurable picture of personal development and engagement.

Every girl at Surval is unique. And just like our tailored approach to academics, we firmly believe in ensuring that their individual interests, likes and dislikes are catered for. When we create programmes which strike a chord with every student, we essentially teach students how to create space in their lives for themselves. Space which brings them both peace and identity, and which will be there to support them throughout their life.

Whilst at Surval, we don't enforce enrichment activities on every student in the same way we do with academic timetables; this does not mean the skills they develop in these are any less essential to their future success. Indeed, we believe so strongly in the value of these activities, it could be questioned as to why we do not make such activities compulsory; however, there is one clear difference: These are the activities we need the girls to find in their future, to seek out for themselves when they need them most, when the rush of life demands they create their own space. For extracurricular activities to be truly successful, they must demand girls to self-motivate and commit, because they enjoy it. Nothing else. This in itself is a life skill. This is where the 'extra becomes essential'.



27
days of skiing

48
hours of curriculum
skiing

3
full residential
weekends

1
dedicated ski week

4
Winter Camp weeks

3
Saturday ski
excursions

8
different premier
resorts

1:7
instructor ratio



My experience as a first-time skier

By Joanne, French Language and Culture student

On the 11th of January I stepped on skis for the first time at Villars with Surval. I remember being nervous that I would not be able to enjoy this sport. During the first session I kept on falling which discouraged me slightly. Shortly after we had a ski trip in Gryon. Before going on the first run of the day, I was really scared and was hesitating to go down the slope. Mrs Byrne then saw me and told me that I shouldn't be worried and to do it at my own pace. I remembered her words throughout the whole day we skied. In the afternoon that day I noticed myself improving. After that day I realized the beauty of skiing and how much I really liked it.

We then went to Verbier on the 29th of January where I did my first red slope. I had only done 3 ski sessions before! I had really good ski instructors looking out for me and giving me amazing tips to improve. Because of that I was able to do my first red. We had our Ski Week from the 28th January to 2nd February. During that week I did my first black. We had many more ski trips and days that were really fun. I did my best to not miss a second of skiing. I would attend all of the ski season because of how much I enjoyed it.

I really didn't want ski season to end. Looking back at this season with Surval I have really improved and made the most out of it. I'm definitely going to remember it forever.



Joanne enjoying sunny weather on the slopes



Joanne and a friend having fun in Glacier 3000!

Our Spring Trip to Paris



The girls made some great memories in Paris!



The view from the Eiffel Tower was simply stunning.



Wandering around the streets and spotting Sacré Coeur.



The girls enjoyed a stunning day in Disneyland Paris!



They made the most of the gift shop too!

MIT MUN in Boston

By Ms Shirley Mitchell, Vice Principal

3,697 miles. That is how many miles 4 Survival girls flew on a frosty February morning to take part in the annual MIT MUN conference in Boston Massachusetts. There were nerves, excitement, trepidation and at times, downright fear, but that all soon melted away like the February frosts the moment they walked into the committee rooms of the MIT campus. The school girls that had boarded the plane had become the change-making women of the future. Standing in front of all other UN representative countries to challenge motions and argue policy. They spoke from the heart and the mind and the hours of preparation they had done served them well. Their speeches were reasoned, founded in fact and well researched. Mrs Premand had indeed prepared them well in the term leading up to their departure. Witnessing each girl discover her ability and command a room was an experience like no other. The pride and self discovery they were feeling was visible in their attitude, their confidence and their participation.

Whilst we were in Boston, we were lucky enough to be able to visit and tour the Harvard University campus which was truly a sight to behold. Inspiration took hold and thoughts turned to Ivy league applications and how anything is possible now they were open to their own potential, empowered by this remarkable experience. Before we (reluctantly) boarded the flight to go home, there was one more thing we had to experience...lobster rolls! A traditional Boston delicacy and a well-deserved treat after 4 days of changing the world!



I signed up for MUN even though I didn't really know what to expect. I had heard of it before and I knew it would be a lot of fun, but I had no idea how much I would learn.

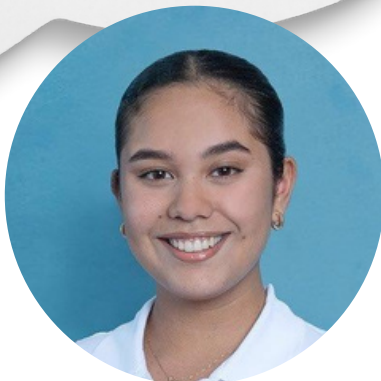
It has really changed the way that I am thinking about my future and what I can achieve.



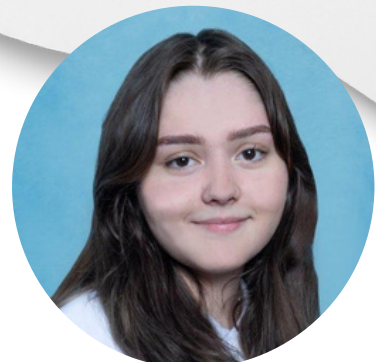
I was so scared when we were on the plane, I thought I wouldn't be able to participate and that I would feel like everyone else knew what they were doing, but after the first session, I just couldn't wait to go back the next day and do it again!



I cannot recommend this enough, it was an incredible experience and has given me the courage to try more new things that usually I would be afraid to do. Knowing we all felt the same way was very helpful and definitely made me feel better.



Before we left I thought I had made a huge mistake signing up, but when we were in the airport waiting to come back I didn't want to leave! I am much more confident now that I have had this experience, it made me so excited to try more new things and see what else I can achieve.



Academic successes in the Winter Term

By Mr Thomas Byrne, Head of Academics, Teaching and Learning

The Winter Term is always a busy one at Surval Montreux. Aside from Ski season and preparation for trips and expeditions, students complete an enormous amount of academic work during the 11 weeks of term.

This term, I have been proud of the academic progress made by the girls. As I take time each week to analyse our students' academic data, I receive a clear impression of the actual progress made by Surval students and I am happy to share that with you now.

Our data tells us that engagement, organisation and attitude to prep have all improved, showing how the girls have settled into academic life at Surval. What's more, the average GPA has been improving all year and is now 5% higher than it was in December. None of this happens without the hard work of students and teachers and I am very proud of their efforts during the course of the term.

A Surval education prepares girls for life beyond school and we have seen evidence of that this term through the range of university offers received by our Grade 12s. They have worked all year preparing application forms, essays, personal statements and interviews to help them earn places at excellent universities around the world.

This year, girls have received offers from:

Northeastern University; American University of Paris; IFM Business School; Geneva School of Business; Webster University; University of Amsterdam; Baylor University; UMass Boston

As a community, it is important that we celebrate these outstanding offers, as they reflect the hard work of students, teachers and parents to prepare Surval girls for entry to some of the best universities in the world.



Surval's Student Council

By Ms Shirley Mitchell, Vice Principal

The Surval Student council have been very busy contributing to the leadership of the school and providing a voice for the students. Made up of the head of each student voice, they represent the views of each girl and allow every voice to be heard.

Maiia is head of the Events and Etiquette Student Voice and has successfully led her team in executing our spectacular whole-school formal events such as the etiquette lunch, the St Nicholas's dinner and most recently, the Gala Dinner in aid of the Tanzania project.

Victoria leads the Charity Student Voice in their commendable endeavours including weekly volunteering partnerships with a local food bank as well as providing support to an organisation which offers childcare to families who would otherwise be unable to access it.

Valeria heads up the Digital Media Student Voice who are responsible for keeping the Surval community up to date through their newsletter 'The Surval Star'. Reporting on the important events and issues within our environment, she is the roving reporter of the school.

Carmen is the newest head of the Sustainability Student Voice. Their latest endeavour to create a more 'green' Surval, saw them heading out to buy houseplants to provide to every member of the community in order to positively impact mental health and wellbeing as well as our environment.

Individually, they are achieving great things, and collectively they are contributing to the leadership and direction of our community. By consulting on whole-school policies, engaging in mental health first aid and safeguarding training and representing the voice of the Surval community, they are experiencing what it means to be a true leader in their society: the good, the bad and the oh so very rewarding.



Our Charity Gala Dinner



The girls traveling to Tanzania fundraised throughout the evening.



The event was organised by our Events & Etiquette students.



Everyone had a wonderful time coming together.



Boarding Life at Surval

By Ms Shirley Mitchell, Vice Principal

One of the benefits of a Surval experience is whole-school boarding. Unlike many other schools, 100% of our students board full time. This allows them to experience the unique bonds formed from living together and working together exclusively. Whilst our enrichment programme and extensive trips calendar allows plenty of time to form smaller friendship groups, the whole school community remains intact by nature of this common thread.

I have often spoken with people who believe the boarding day is much like a day at home for day students, and while there are of course some similarities, it is the differences that truly offer up the best opportunities.

Once the academic day is over, the dedicated boarding team is on hand to take up the mantle and dive right into the pastoral programme. This is different every day and can include anything from cooking and baking, helping with homework, art club, yoga, coaching and many more activities. One of the most utilised skills of the boarding team is actually conversation. The end of the academic day marks a mental shift in the minds of the students and often they just want to sit down and chat. The boarding team at Surval all live onsite which enables a family atmosphere to thrive. Boarding staff are the first people the students see in the morning and the last people they see at night. They are who the students call if they are ill in the night or feeling homesick or just want someone to talk to. They live together, eat together, watch movies together and laugh together. They provide the continuity of care which allows our students to feel safe and secure and helps them to know that there is always someone there they can call.

We recently celebrated World Boarding Staff Day which was a fantastic opportunity to recognise and appreciate the people who dedicate themselves to this integral role which provides for the amazing social and emotional wellbeing of each girl in their care.



Tanzania Service Trip



The girls planted banana trees for the community's gardens.



They bonded with the children in the village.



They donated sewing machines to the women.

AI in the all-girls environment

By Ms Shirley Mitchell, Vice Principal

It is impossible to consider education in recent years without applying the impact of AI. More recently, the impact of this on girls in particular has been heavily researched with some interesting results. AI has the potential to positively impact girls in education, specifically in the all-girl environment, but is enough being done to implement this?

An all-girl environment offers unique opportunities for fostering confidence, collaboration, and creativity among female students. By harnessing the power of AI in these settings, educators can address gender disparities in STEM fields and empower young women to thrive in traditionally male-dominated industries.

Here at Surval we provide a supportive and empowering atmosphere where girls are encouraged to pursue their interests without the constraints of gender stereotypes. Research suggests that girls in single-sex schools tend to exhibit higher levels of confidence, engagement, and academic achievement compared to their counterparts in coeducational settings (Riordan, C. A.1990). By embracing AI technologies into our environment, further enhances these benefits by catering to individual learning styles and interests.

Whilst much has been done in recent years, women remain underrepresented in STEM fields. The subject gained huge momentum initially and funding was targeted, training rolled out to teachers and pilot programmes introduced. However, this largely gave way to a coeducational focus, rather than the initial focus on girls as was originally intended. All-girl environments present an opportunity to address this imbalance by cultivating a strong foundation in science, technology, engineering, and maths from an early age. AI tools, such as interactive learning platforms and virtual

laboratories, can make STEM subjects more accessible and engaging for girls, sparking their curiosity and passion for these disciplines (National Science Board. 2018). In an all-girls environment such as Surval, where our students are learning in a second language, this becomes an even more powerful resource. These collaborative tools enable our students to work together on projects, exchange ideas, and solve complex problems in innovative ways. In the Surval environment, these technologies can encourage teamwork and peer mentoring, fostering a sense of camaraderie and collective achievement among our girls. By promoting collaboration and creativity, AI empowers them to develop essential skills for success in the digital age.

There is, however, a down side; much the same as humans, AI algorithms are not immune to biases, including those related to gender. Thankfully, in our environment, we have the opportunity to mitigate these biases by providing diverse and inclusive learning experiences. By teaching students about the ethical implications of AI and encouraging critical thinking, we are empowering our students to challenge stereotypes and contribute to the development of more equitable technologies (Buolamwini, J., & Gebru, T. 2018).

Incorporating AI into our Surval environment holds immense promise for empowering young women and narrowing gender gaps in STEM fields. By creating a supportive learning environment, fostering interest in STEM, promoting collaboration and creativity, and overcoming gender biases, we are harnessing the transformative potential of AI to cultivate the next generation of female leaders in technology and beyond, another example of a truly powerful story we are creating at Surval Montreux.



Survival



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programme for
2025!

Camps



To our Summer
Camp!



Join our
Summer Camp
for loads of fun
and adventure!



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