

Dear Howick Rotary Club; Tracey; John,

Another month has come to an end, and I'm as happy as ever. I've gotten back into the school routine now, but it's beginning to dawn on me that I don't have much time left with these amazing friends I have made here. Nonetheless I enjoy all my classes and have made lots of new friends and acquaintances with my classmates, some of them don't even know I'm an exchange student, and neither do all my teachers. What a confidence boost! My maths teacher found out the other day, and told me he thought I was French from all the times we talked during class, which I absolutely loved hearing. These past 2 months I hadn't heard from Rotary much either since we had holidays, and so it honestly felt like I was living in France, with my family. Not on exchange, but really living in France. I find it so amazing how much my French has improved, and how much it does improve still, over several months, or just a few weeks. It's a crazy and incredible concept at the same time, the fact that I am really in France, living like a local, and living this life I have built myself over these past 9 months. Something even crazier, Rotary Report writing has actually made me discover my love for writing, and I have seriously thought about going into a Journalism/Communications course after I finish my last year of school next year. So a big merci to you all.



Art expos, hot chocolates, and a picnic with home grown fruits and veggies, me and my family went up to visit some friends for a weekend. We visited a couple of art expos, and I saw some really gorgeous pieces, using all sorts of materials. I made a vegetarian lasagne once again, this family also absolutely loved it, and even preferred it over the meat one. School has taken up most of my time



this month, but I have managed to see my other host families quite a bit – my first one on a Tuesday if I go to ukulele rehearsal, my second when I go to my host mum's flower shop after school, and my third when I see Ricardo, the exchange student from Peru, as they are his current host family. I also invited my second host dad out for



lunch the other day as I finished school early, which was a great time to catch up and enjoy pizza and mousse au chocolat. A game of risk with friends that still hasn't ended (looks like I'm winning though!), a lot of cat photos, time with friends, and op shop visiting, the monthly rotary meeting arrived.







I talked a lot with my 2 newbies in Sable, and I get along really well with the American girl – Nora. My host mum and I painted the wood around the outdoor toilet, which was so much fun! Soon enough, the first rotary weekend with the new arrivals came by, and I found myself having a really good time with all my new friends. The first day we did a whole bunch of activities together and had meetings in groups with our yeo's to discuss everything, and the second day we went to a castle (at Angers), walked 12km, took photos all together with our blazers and flags, and did some fun games in teams – my favourite was where we had to lead our partner (who was blindfolded) using only words – in French of course – to guide them over a bit of a ditch and some ducking and light climbing.



The weekend was absolutely amazing, and I made myself a really nice group of friends – 3 Americans, a girl from Finland, my Australian friend and me. The bunch this year in general is really awesome, though I did miss some of my oldies. I brought my ukulele along, which made for a nice two evenings with a bunch of people, all of us singing along and laughing.





I bought myself some new shoes which are absolutely in fashion here at the moment, so feeling especially French, and went to a cultural festival last weekend. School has been going very well, I even got the highest mark in my history test! English lessons are quite amusing, as the teacher is always asking me for my opinion and advice, but I feel like I'm genuinely making a difference in the English level of the people next to me as I help them with their accent and the speaking part. I haven't yet been able to participate during sport as I had a doctor's certificate releasing me of it, but I'm seeing a doctor tomorrow to get a medical opinion on restarting sport and training my legs at the gym again. I absolutely love art classes as I have

some really good friends with me and love working on projects. Recently we had a topic of disfiguring something in complete beauty, so I thought about what I find ugly in this world – I came up with pollution created by humans, so went outside and collected a bag of rubbish from the street and created art in the shape of a man with the rubbish (first by tracing me, which was pretty amusing), to show what we have done, and to turn the ugliness of man into something beautiful and to deliver a message. My art teacher is planning on displaying it in the hall for people to see. I am planning on taking the Delf French exam – which, if I pass, will give me a





certificate proving a certain level of French which I can use to get a job here in the future, and it looks pretty good on a cv too. I absolutely love my current family, my host sister and I get along so incredibly well, you'd say we were actual sisters – it honestly feels like it! We both adore the same kinds of food, are both vegetarian and love oats, we drink a tea in my bed most evenings with some home made healthy cookies that we make, sometimes watch a series together or just talk for ages, we love the same music and style so we share our clothes – I absolutely adore her and will miss her so much when I leave. My host parents are also so great, we get along really well and I feel so at home here. It's crazy to think that I only met them a month and a bit ago, it feels like so much longer! I have singing lessons and theatre with my host sister now, interact has started up again, and I go to ukulele every 2 weeks, so my week is getting pretty filled up. Mid October I'm invited by the Rotary governor to give a short presentation at a university with a few other selected past and current rotary students, and I'm also thinking of giving a presentation to my English class.



I can't believe I already leave in just over 3 months, this year has gone so quickly, and yet it's felt like a whole lifetime at the same time. This exchange has been so rewarding for me, and I have gotten so much out of it. It is amazing how much one can evolve and grow over just 12 months – how I have changed and matured so quickly, and learnt so much while at it. I think France was really a good option for me for an exchange, it feels so natural to speak the language, to talk to people, and to share their culture. I feel like I belong. I know for a fact that it is going to be one of the hardest moments of my life when having to say goodbye to all these important people in my life, not knowing when I will see them next. I have learnt so much more this year than I ever could have during the same year in New Zealand – things I can't even begin to express. The amount of life experiences I have gained, and the amount of values, morals and ideas I have been able to explore – it really has been a life in a year. I feel so much more openminded and understanding of the world – this year has shown me a lot of perspective, and I find it to have really shaped me as a young adult in this society. I feel more empowered, intelligent, perseverant, independent, patient, and prepared for what is to come. Above all, I just feel so grateful, this year means the world to me and I can no longer imagine my life without these people in my life. My families, my friends, the constant meeting of new people. It is all such an amazing experience. I couldn't have asked for anything more.

Thank you,

Madita