



Asia
from
Burlington and
Burlington Lakeshore
to
Germany

“Fast ein Halbes Jahr in Deutschland”

Wow, I honestly can't believe that this February 21st will mark my six months on exchange. It's incredible how fast time flew by – I know that's the stereotypical thing that all past exchange students say, but I never believed it until now. My months have been packed with new and exciting things, places, people and experiences.

By this time, I've settled really nicely in Germany, and get along really great with my German host family and all my friends from school. And my language skills have improved so much since I first arrived here. One of the best ways to learn is by simply walking through the streets, having conversations with native speakers, and being surrounded by German everyday. My favourite thing is when I interact with people out in the town, and afterwards I realize that they probably didn't even know that I'm not from here.

Christmas here in Germany, Weihnachten, was an experience unlike anything else. There were similarities to Canada's Christmas but, really, the atmosphere was entirely new. From the time of late November to Christmas Day I completely fell in love with the German celebrations, and more specifically, the Christmas markets. Walking through Weihnachtsmärkte was like taking a stroll through a fairy tale book; the Christmas spirit found between the cozy, warm huts was tangible. My favourite thing to do on weekends was to visit the markets with my friends and buy some hot cocoa just to keep the pretty mugs it came in.

In Germany, the most important day of Christmas is the evening of the 24th, and I joined my host family to celebrate with all the aunts, uncles and cousins. It was a very intimate get-together, and as we all opened our gifts I felt incredibly grateful that I was so warmly welcomed into their family, and lucky enough to share the holidays with them.

It's really important to me that I never take this exchange for granted. So far it's been an experience of a lifetime, and I should always remember who helped me get here and who helps me fully embrace Germany – both Rotarians back home and here. Halfway through my exchange, I have no regrets and I look forward to what tomorrow and the rest of my year will bring.

Dankeschön,

Asia