



Asia

from

Burlington and Burlington Lakeshore

to

Germany

“Herzlich Willkommen”

When I first arrived in Iserlohn, Germany I only had a vague expectation of what my new life would be like. But I’m glad I didn’t stop to worry about that because nothing I could conjure up would be anywhere close to how amazing my exchange actually is. In only three months I have had so many new and exciting experiences that I never would have had if I hadn’t chosen to go on exchange.

On August 21st my host family greeted me in Düsseldorf Airport with a huge German flag and sign, reading: “Herzlich willkommen!” Before arriving I knew them only through emails and photos but already they feel like real family to me. They like to introduce me to German culture, through trying new foods, listening to music, and learning more words. Together, we’ve been to many festivals in nearby towns and we really have a fun time.

My school here in Germany is called Gymnasium An der Stenner and it has been really great for me. It’s interesting to see the differences, but sometimes I miss the routines of Canadian school. I have many different classes that often change rooms or, when the teacher is sick, are just cancelled, and it can be a bit confusing. Other than the new schedule I have met a lot of cool students at my school, and it is easy to find friends because everyone is so incredibly friendly. We can sit and chill in the school during our breaks, or we can walk to the city centre, only five minutes away, for food or shopping.

During the two-week autumn break in October, I had the opportunity to go on the most amazing trip around Germany with Rotex. The first day, about fifty of us exchange students piled into a coach bus and started on the 10-day journey that would introduce us all to new ideas, unbelievable experiences and lifetime friends. We drove to the major cities of Germany, including Hamburg, Munich and Berlin, and visited the most popular tourist sites such as Schloss Sansoucci, Rothenburg ob der Tauber, and the fairytale castle, Schloss Neuschwanstein.

Together, we all saw and did a lot of fun and awesome things, but I think my favourite city would have to be Hamburg. I really enjoyed the architecture and the interesting combination of city and harbour– the weather was also surprisingly beautiful. Other highlights include the Berlin Wall, story times with Rotex, and dancing and singing through all of Germany's streets. At the beginning of the tour we all barely knew each other, but by the end we all became so close and now we're more like a huge, international family.



The German culture and lifestyle isn't completely different than Canada's, but I still discover new things every week. It's the best when people teach me common phrases or suggest foods to try and places to go – it all helps me understand and experience Germany better.

My first months here have been really great and I haven't experienced much homesickness – I'm too busy trying to do as many things as I can. But there's so much left I want to do and I know for sure that as I continue learning German and meeting new people my exchange will continue being just as awesome.

Thank you to everyone who supported my dream to go on exchange and who continue supporting me across the ocean. And, of course, thank you so much to Rotary for this life-changing opportunity. I wouldn't be living in Germany right now if it weren't for all of the Rotarians who believed in me and who put so much hard work into Rotary Youth Exchange.

Vielen vielen Dank,

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