



Ethan

from Brampton
to
France

“My exchange is going extremely well!”

Welcome back valued readers to Ethan Mumford’s Beaver Tales. This time we’re going to be talking about December, January and February up until Valentine’s Day - we have an action-packed three and a half months, so sit back, grab some popcorn and get ready to read.

I finished November and started December with a quick hunting trip down in Alsace. We went wild boar hunting in the mountains by Kaysersberg – Vignoble. That’s near the black forest in Germany, I didn’t visit Germany, but I could see it from out of my window. I had a really good time; hunting in France is done on a much larger scale than the hunting I’m used to doing in Canada.



I went on a morning and an afternoon hunt that both included around 50+ hunters and 15+ trackers. As I’m not legally allowed to fire a gun in France, I was a tracker. The way a hunt in France works, all the hunters stand in a huge ‘U’ facing outwards. The trackers (like me) walk from the open part of the ‘U’ all the way to the end of the ‘U’. Which sounds pretty easy but, it’s very important that all the trackers walk in a straight line, which can get pretty hard sometimes. Especially when you’re walking over, along and across mountains.



The night after the hunt, I was lucky enough to visit a restaurant with one Michelin star. The following day, I visited the Kayserberg Christmas Market and it was phenomenal.

My hostess showed me the market and I was impressed.

Also, she bought me some treats from the region - what a lovely lady!



December was an interesting month as well. I started rock climbing in my advanced gym class and started swimming in regular gym class. The most abnormal thing happened to me on the tenth of December. 10 Australian girls randomly showed up at my school on a short-term exchange program. I became acquainted with most of them and befriended some during their three weeks at my school. The weird part is, I found out about them by hearing them speaking English with an Australian accent in the lunch line at school and it threw me off for the rest of the day.

About a week later, all the exchange students in District 1520 got together for our Christmas party and gift exchange. During this weekend I visited the Arras Christmas market and explained to the Australians that have never seen snow, the concepts of ice skating, snowball fights and snowmen. Apparently, it's very common to go to the beach on Christmas day in Australia.



After this weekend I switched host families. Over the course of my exchange, I will have three different host families. I'm with my second family right now and they are wonderful people - just like my first host family. I am really enjoying seeing the similarities and differences between different families in France.



Not much happened until Christmas break. But once Christmas break came, it came with fury and force. My family and I left to skiing in the Alps for a week at a ski station called 'La Joue Du Loup'. I really enjoyed seeing snow because I was starting to miss the snow. I did a total of five days of skiing, one day I hiked to the top of a nearby mountain and put an inukshuk on the peak. We stayed in a cabin with my third host family and some family friends from Guadeloupe. It was awesome seeing the mountains! The highest peak I could go skiing on was 2500m above sea level. On the last day, I made pancakes with maple syrup for everybody for breakfast and then we started the 10-hour drive back home. The following day, I went to a New Year's Eve party with a bunch of other exchange students from my district and from a neighbouring district. And that of course, rounds out December.

January was an interesting month because it was calmer than most other months. I started with going back to school. Shortly after that, the Australians that suddenly showed up at my school left. The following week two new exchange students from Germany arrived at my school, who are both very nice people. The week after I started rock climbing in an indoor facility in Lille in the evenings. I usually go 2 times per week right after school. Rock climbing gives me some exercise and fills the time between school finishing at 3 pm and dinner at 7 pm. Believe me, I've offered to help prepare dinner, but it is often not needed. The following week the two German exchange students left along with all of the exchange students in my district who came from the southern hemisphere and suddenly January was over.

I started February with meeting all of the new exchange students from Australia, New Zealand and Africa. I am still getting to know the new students but so far, they all seem pretty cool. On Valentine's day I handed out Valentine's Day cards to my friends and they were all blown away! Apparently, they don't do Valentine's Day cards in France, but they loved it!

As you can tell, my exchange is going extremely well! I am having a wonderful experience and I'm looking forward to the rest of my exchange.

Au revoir,

Ethan