



Ethan

from Brampton
to
France

“My Extraordinarily Excellent Exchange...”

“...has been an amazingly awesome thus far.” These first three months have been blended into a blur of travelling, exploring and learning. I’m confident that the tales of my travels will be told, time and time again because my spectacular saga of astonishing anecdotes is awe inspiring and has only just begun. As you read on, I would like to warn you that the following paragraphs are potentially plagued, and you may become a hopeless host to the world’s most infamous insect - the travel bug.

This all started after a dinner at Zet’s in Toronto right next to the airport, I had a gyros as my last Canadian meal and then I was off for the airport. I was wearing my bright red Rotary blazer, a pair of dress pants and I had two full suitcases that barely, just barely, were within the weight limit. I got through security no problem and I had a pretty uneventful flight. It was definitely the calm before the storm. I landed in the Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, France and I’ve been going ever since!



I was greeted by my first host family and two other Rotarians at the airport. First impression was that they were pretty cool people and that opinion hasn’t changed since. I was taken to my first house and met my host brother, Victor, (also a pretty cool guy) I ate dinner then I went to bed.

That’s my first day.

The following week, I went to a 'football' game, got my subway card and went to Zuydcoote for my integration weekend. This weekend was where I met all of the other exchange students, and we have got a pretty good variety! There's Austria, a lot of Australia, a lot of Argentina, a pinch of Japan, a dash of Brazil and some USA sprinkled on top. So far, I've enjoyed meeting and spending time with people from all over the globe, it really is a unique experience - and that's just August!



while I've been here as well, and all them have been amazing. As you



September was full of new experiences; this is where my exchange really took off. I started this month by starting school. School in France is vastly different to what I was expecting. The two major differences are that in France school can run from 8:00am to 5:30pm and I stay with the same group of people for all my different subjects. I also have met some pretty fantastic people at my school; everyone has been really nice to me. I have made several friends and I have never had to eat lunch alone. Plus, as a bonus, I've bested some of my peers in math and science. In September I did my first couple of expeditions into my new hometown. Exploring Lille has been very interesting. I've gone to a lot of restaurants



My French language skills were pretty good when I left Canada – a big “THANKS!” to all my French teachers over the years. I can now have a conversation without difficulty on a variety of subjects and I have never been in a position where I had to use a translator to express my point of view. To sum up September, it was all about making friends, exploring where I live and improving my French.



October was an interesting month. I met a lot of new people, some my age, some older than me and I also did a fare bit of travelling. The first two weeks of October I kept on meeting up with the other exchange students on weekends and I started participating in class more. But, as per French law, the school has a two-week break after every six weeks of school. So, I had the last two weeks of October off. For the first 6 days of my break, I was vacationing in Portugal with my host family. They have a summer house in northern Portugal, and I had a fabulous time there. I did a lot of biking and jogging.



While in Portugal, I visited Porto; a very lovely city. I also tried surfing for the first time and while I knew it was going to be hard, it was still harder than I expected. The day after I returned to France, I was off to Mont Saint-Michel with the other exchange students. This trip was amazing! My district has about twenty-five exchange students and everyone went on the trip but we were only one of 5 districts present! This trip had 100+ exchange students attending, and everyone had a great time.

This trip was two nights and had a party each night. I'm telling you right now; I knew South Americans

could dance before this trip but now I know just how well they dance. I'm seriously looking forward to seeing what Aiden and Sean can do when they come back to Canada. The following week I made dinner for my host family. I made pea soup and 'ants on a log' - they were impressed. Finally, at the end of the month I went hunting with my host dad for wild boar and roe.

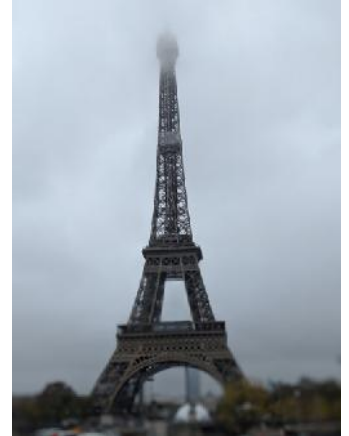


And that's October.



So far November has been a good month, it's only the thirteenth day but if we keep on going like this, we'll be fine. The first two weeks of school were regular school weeks but, between those weeks was a trip to Paris. My host family took me to Paris and while they stayed in a hotel, I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to stay with another family that lives in Paris.

During this weekend I went and saw all the important monuments such as the Arc de Triumph, the Eiffel Tower, Sacré-Cœur and all the stores of the luxury clothing brands in Paris (Louis Vuitton, Dior, etc.).



All in all, I have had a great exchange so far and I'm looking forward to what the next few months have in store for me!

Au revoir,

Ethan