



Caitlyn

from Milton

to

France

'A year to never forget.'

Despite encountering some difficulty during my exchange year, the majority of my experiences have been nothing short of incredible and unforgettable. From the warmth and hospitality of my host families to the support they provided whenever I've needed it, I've been fortunate to feel truly at home in my host country France. Even when I was sick they cared for me as if I was one of their own children. It's a level of support that I wish every exchange student could experience on their exchange.

One of the most memorable moments that I will never forget from my exchange is going to biggest zoo in Europe (Pairi Daiza) with my host family for my birthday! I saw all of my favorite animals and even got to pet a deer in "Canada land". My host family bought me a birthday present from the zoo which will be a cherished keepsake. It was amazing to feel loved just a few weeks into my exchange, especially since I was struggling with homesickness at the time. Some of the other things that helped me overcome my homesickness other than the visit to zoo, was participating in family activities such as games and movie nights and even routine chores and helping in the house. Although I spoke almost no French during this period, it was the time where I improved most as a person.



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Another top memory of exchange is from the Rotary trip to Mont Saint Michel with the other exchange students in the north of France. Despite the physical challenges of navigating the sandbanks and fighting against the waves during our sea walk, everyone remained in great spirits and kept smiling. At the end of our day was a party (organized by Rotary) where everyone had an amazing time eating, dancing and playing games. Although I may not recall the names of all 100 exchange students who were with me, the memories of that weekend at Mont Saint Michel will forever hold a special place in my heart.

My amazing swim team members here in France will be another lifelong memory. It was an amazing group that always pushed me to exceed my limits especially since I was one of the only 2 girls on the team. It felt so nice being with people who had a similar interest to me. The entire team cheered me on when I was finally able to understand what they were saying during practice. Swimming helped me through a lot of things on my exchange, but I think my teammates helped me most and will definitely be people I keep in touch with once I return home.



The last memory I want to talk about is the Eurotour which I just finished not too long ago. We visited 10 different countries in 14 days (11 if you count France). We got hours to explore major cities in countries none of us would have thought to ever visit before the Eurotour. I made friends with many exchange students that I hadn't met before since it was my district and another district on the trip. Although I definitely didn't get to talk to and create friendships with some of the 44 students on the trip with me, I have pictures with them, and pictures are worth 1000 words. The bonds created will be

forever with me. I wish I could relive the trip for the rest of my life! One of my favorite counties we visited was definitely the Czech Republic. Prague was very beautiful, and I will 100% go back someday soon! Possibly with all my friends from my exchange!

Now for things I've learned on my exchange and oh boy there are a lot. Firstly, just because you want something doesn't mean you are automatically going to get it. You have to work hard at it in order to achieve what you would like for, example French. On a similar topic, grades aren't everything. Just because you have great grades doesn't mean you are going to enjoy what you are doing. If you are doing something that makes you happy (in my case swimming) you will enjoy what you have done even if you only get 13/20 on a test. Another life lesson I have learned is to never say no to trying food and or trying new activities. You may find something new that you love. Like in my case it was discovering a whole new country!



I want to thank every single person who has helped me through my exchange that a made it a success, such as my host district YEO and my home district YEO in addition to both my rotary clubs. My exchange year has been a year that I will never forget and a year I have learned and gained so many things from, including friends.
Thank you.

Cait Burke