



Cameron

from

Milton

to

Switzerland

“Time here feels infinite, but I know it is not.”

My first half of my exchange is already over, which I find a crazy thing to think about! I’ve spent more days here than I have left, which is both a very sad and crazy thing at the same time. That however does not mean that I am running out of experiences to live through, as I am still trying to make the best of every second of this amazing country!

People say that you change throughout your exchange year, and at first I didn’t believe them. I thought that it was all just a giant overreaction, but was I ever wrong. I think I have become a much better person since I have arrived here, and Switzerland has helped me grow into a much better person. As I first arrived here, I was more of a follower. I was the kind of person to stay quiet in a room, and wait until someone spoke to me, and made the effort into talking to me. Now I have turned that around. I have become the kind of person to show off my personality to others as brightly as I can, and try to meet as many new people as possible. As I first left, I didn’t like talking to new people all that much until I got comfortable, but now I feel like I can talk to anyone about mostly anything, and I really enjoy it! I feel like I have really gained my independence as a person, which was my goal for this year. I wanted to become my own person, with my own personality, and a reason for people to remember *me* and not the people who I was with.

As for German, that’s definitely coming along well. I’m starting to understand, and even speak the dialect here, which the Germans and the Austrians say is the

hardest dialect of German to understand, but I have finally broken that barrier in the language. In German I can pretty much describe and say anything I want at this point, with only the occasional mistake of grammar or the wrong verb choice. I feel like I have really developed myself into my Swiss friend group, while still keeping my Canadian spirit intact. Now that I have gotten a lot better at German, I have started to learn a bit more French as well, as they teach it here in school and I realized how much time in French class back home I had wasted! I am now trying my hardest to catch back up in French, and I feel it would be a very good language to have back home. After learning one new language, learning more French feels a lot easier than I remember it being when I was learning it in school. I think part of that is the desire to learn a language, as they never really come unless you really do want to learn the language.

In November we went as a group of exchange students to see the Matterhorn, which was super cool! We got to take a lift to the top of the smaller Matterhorn, and see tons of ice glaciers and a Museum entirely made out of ice. This was the first weekend where all of the exchange students were together in one place, and since then we have become very close to each other. We are always trying to find an opportunity to see each other, in one of the big cities here in Switzerland.

In the month of December I visited Germany twice, the first time was with my first host family who took me to see a Christmas festival in Augsburg, just outside of Munich. There I was finally able to speak normal German with the people in the streets, which was definitely nice. I saw a bunch of old churches and the old city, and experienced the German culture.

Then we get to Christmas. Most people say that this is when the homesickness kicks in, but strangely enough I didn't really feel its effect. I guess I was just too engrossed in Switzerland that I forgot to get homesick! I celebrated Christmas on Christmas Eve with my host family, and cooked them a steak and some family recipes of mine. We then exchanged gifts and soon went to bed, it was definitely more of a relaxed Christmas but it was definitely nice. Soon after that, I was off to Germany again, but this time I met Darren where he was staying, just outside of Cologne. There I stayed with his host family, and I got to see the beautiful city of Cologne, something I am never going to forget. Seeing the city light up at 12:00am on New Year's was definitely a sight engraved in my mind, hopefully for some time to come.

January was a relatively quiet month, as I went back to school and did my normal routine. I went out skiing quite a bit, as I live about 15 minutes from the biggest ski resort in my area, which is still lots of fun. I'm trying to take advantage of living in the Swiss Alps as much as I can, as I know I will miss it when I am back home. I also took a

few days off of school, because of my Theatre here, and I got a lot closer with the people there, and they are some of the nicest people I've met here, always willing to include me and accept me as one of their own.

Now to February. I have certainly learned to flaunt my Canadian spirit in these last few weeks. We have a carnival here in Switzerland, where everyone dresses up for a week and parties in the streets, and I dressed up showing off my Canadian pride. We needed to wake up at 2:30 in the morning, to catch an extra train to the main city to see the carnival opening at 4:00am, which was definitely interesting and tiring. It was interesting to see these crazy streets so early in the morning, with people who just woke up and are going hard partying in the streets. It was definitely a fun experience and one I won't soon forget.



Time is flying, and I think that's mainly because I'm having so much fun, I don't know how I'm going to survive when I come home to a boring old *normal* life, it's not going to be easy I can tell you that. I would like to thank Rotary for the amazing experience that they have given me, as it has changed me as a person and made memories for a lifetime. They are an amazing program that has been changing people's lives everywhere in the world for the better.

Thank you for reading,

Cameron