



Cameron

from

Milton

to

Switzerland

“Open your Eyes to the Amazing World Around you!”

Wait, it's already November? Three months ago I started a life changing experience that is Rotary Youth Exchange, and it has changed my life forever. Ever since I signed up for this program, time has been flying by faster than ever before! It definitely isn't easy to describe this mystical, exciting, and wonderful adventure I've been having here, but I'll try my best!

I remember preparing myself for the experience, counting down the days before leaving and the mixture of emotions running through me. I constantly ran so many different scenarios through my head of what could happen, what my next year of my life could be like, or how I was going to cope with leaving all my friends and family behind in Canada. It all seemed so foreign, and I mean that literally!

The airport was definitely an experience, as I didn't have to impatiently wait through the painful process of airport security by myself! I ended up on the same flight as another Outbound from our neighbouring district 7070 going into Switzerland, along with another girl from 7090 going into Austria! So we said goodbye to our lovely land that is Canada, getting some "Timmie's" for the last time and boarding the plane.

As I arrived I was greeted by my host mother, one of my host sisters, and one of my host brothers. They took me back to our home which is right in the valley of a bunch of the Swiss Alps! I was able to take in the awe that is Switzerland through the hour drive home from the airport, gazing in awe of all the Swiss Alps. After arriving home, I met my host father who was waiting for me. Then a few days later my other

host brother got home from a trip in the French part of Switzerland. He had just returned home that summer from exchange in Idaho! And then after that my other host sister got home from being in Turkey for a two week excursion, so I guess you could say my host family loves to travel. They are all an amazing group of people and I will definitely miss them.

Learning the language has definitely been a difficult experience, however it has also been a fun and interesting one! I love those little moments when you learn a new word in your language and you realize where certain sayings in English come from! An example of this is the word 'kaputt' which means broken in German, and when I learned that word I thought it was so cool to think about how so many of us say that word in English, not knowing the German origins. So far my language has been coming along amazingly, and I feel like I'm just at the turning point where I can say pretty much everything I want to, and get my idea across.

School has been a blast here. Here they have it so you're with the same people in every class, throughout your entire time in high school. That has made it super easy for me to make friends here. You become very close to the people in your class, and because of that they welcomed me with open arms. They are constantly asking me questions about Canada, Toronto, and all the things we do differently! All my classmates can speak English well, so whenever I don't understand something they can say it in English to help me to understand. I have also joined Theatre here in my school, and there I have made another amazing group of friends. There they also help me with my German, and we laugh together at my thick English accent when I am reading my lines for our play.

Rotary is also very different here. They don't like to have their exchange students at the meetings too often, so they only allow me to come to two meetings a month, and usually they are a lunch. I normally go with either my counsellor, my youth exchange officer, or my youth exchange officer's wife. I have a really good relationship with those three people in rotary, and they are always willing to do something with me, or take me somewhere. I definitely feel like if I were to have any problems, I could comfortably go to them.

Travel here in Switzerland is amazing. You have access to everything, as public transportation here is amazing and easy. So far I have visited some of the bigger cities here in Switzerland. Just last weekend I went to Geneva with my host sister, and two weekends before that I went to Bern with my host brother. Last month I also went to Germany to go to an amusement park called "Europa-Park" which has sections of

countries, along with food, music and culture from there. You could definitely tell that you are in Europe with all the different cultures and languages around you all the time.

People say that you change on your exchange, and I disregarded that most of the time thinking, "wow I definitely won't change all that much," yet I have only been here for three months, and I can already see myself viewing the world in a different way. It is definitely interesting to see myself growing up in this amazing experience, and becoming so much more aware of the world around me.

I would just like to thank both the Rotary Club of Milton, alongside the people behind District 7080 for giving me this amazing opportunity of a lifetime. This amazing group of people spend so much time giving us an indescribable experience that you need to live to know it. I don't think I can put into words, how grateful I am to them for changing my life forever.

Dankä vielmals! Thanks a lot!

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