



# Camila

from

Burlington  
Central

to

Italy

*“Oh the places you’ll go”* – Dr.Seuss

Just over half of my exchange is already gone and I can’t believe how fast the time has gone by. You’ll probably hear this from a lot of exchange students around this point of their exchange but it never really hits you until you’re here. With the arrival of the new South African and Australian inbounds in my district, it really opened my eyes towards the fact that I had officially become an “oldie”. All of these kids are just starting this great experience while so much time has already passed for me. If any future outbounds are reading this, like I was doing almost a year ago...get ready because time does by in warp speed during exchange.



Anyway, onto the good stuff! Just a few weeks after I wrote my last BeaverTale, I had the opportunity to go to Austria and Germany with one of my nonnas. It was insane to think that in just 4 hours, I was already in a different country- in Canada I wouldn’t have even left Ontario! We were able to see the *Christkindlmarkt* in Innsbruck which was unlike anything I had ever seen before. The entire city was consumed by Christmas and it was a beautiful sight to see.

We also visited one of the many marvelous and extravagant castles of King Ludwig II, *Schloss Herrenchiemsee*, and the nearby island where there was another Christmas market.

I'm so lucky that in these past 5 months I have had the opportunity to become a part of the Italian culture. In fact, over Christmas I went up to the mountains with my first host family, very close to the Dolomites! I was able to brush up on my snowboarding skills on some stunning slopes, which had just a slightly better view than outside of my bedroom window back in Canada. The town that we were staying in, Cavalese, also had a very unique tradition for the *maggiorenni* (people who have turned 18 that year). They made beautiful crowns with ribbons and flowers then rode around on a truck the entire day, making lots of noise and having fun to celebrate this important step in their lives. And in true Italian fashion, they would stop every once in a while to hand out mulled wine to pedestrians.

New Year's Eve was also a bit different here. I went out with some of the other exchange students in a larger city close to me called Brescia-however, the streets were completely empty except for us. It was really weird to see a kind of ghost town in comparison to North America, where everyone would normally be outside. We finally met up with some Italian friends, were able to defrost ourselves in a café, and slowly but surely people came out to celebrate the New Year. It was a bit chaotic as no one set up a big bright ball to signify the countdown like in New York-it was mostly a free for all. There were fireworks going off in about 20 different directions, everyone was saying "*Uno!*" at different times, and I was freezing, but it was definitely an unforgettable night.

In addition to these trips I was also able to visit Milan for the first time! It was absolutely breathtaking to step out of the subway and immediately see the Duomo di Milano right in front of me. And a bit weird to see a McDonald's right across the street from it. However, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II was also an incredible sight to see, even though my wallet shrunk five times in size just by looking in the shop windows. I fully intend to go back to Milan and explore more parts of the city, you definitely cannot experience it all just in one day.



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Speaking the language has also become easier to me, I feel as though I am so close to the finish line of being fluent-I just have to keep practicing more and more every day! I am also so lucky to be surrounded by a great group of people here including my friends, other exchange students, my host families, and the Rotarians helping me. I can't wait to see what the other half of my exchange brings me.

Lastly, after these 5 and almost a half months, one of the most important things I have learned is to really live in the moment. Seize the day, "*carpe diem*" in every sense of the phrase!!! Do not let one single day go to waste. And with that...

Alla prossima!!!

*Camila Izquierdo*