



Camila

from

**Burlington
Central**

to

Italy

“Loading ...99%”

In reality, I’m only at 83%, with 58 days left in Italy, but every moment here goes by so fast that I already feel like I’m in those last few days, slowly reaching 99%.

This past weekend I went to help at an outbound orientation and when the Rotarians began to hand out papers to the new host families, saying a little bit about each arriving exchange student, I realized that I was in that same position just a year ago. Every time I think about how far away those months feel, I get nostalgic about this country that I’ll have to leave in two short months. I’m definitely excited to go home-to see friends, family....my dog- but whenever I think about stepping on that plane I get a little knot in my throat. I’ve learned so much about myself, about being on my own, and I guess about life in general. It will be interesting, to say the least, to return to Canada and pick up right where I left off last September, when I have grown so much as a person.

Now that I’ve gone on my brief Italian life guru speech, I figure it’s time to update everyone on what I’ve been up to...since I’m *really* bad at uploading pictures to Facebook. In April, I was lucky enough to travel around Italy with my host family, to cities like Florence, Rome (twice in the same week!), Assisi, Sanremo, and the region of Tuscany. My schedule basically consisted of pack, travel to a new city, see all the monuments, go home for 2 days, repack, and repeat. Travelling through Italy is really unique since each region has its own dishes, landscapes, and accents, not to mention dialects. Also it was cool to tell people “I’m sorry I can’t go...I’m at my house in Tuscany that day”.



The second time I went to Rome was through a trip that my Rotary District organized for all of us exchange kids. During the trip I was pleasantly surprised that I didn't trip on the Roman streets because for some reason, me and cobblestones streets just don't seem to get along.

In Sanremo, a seaside town near France, my host sister competed in an international dance competition, with over 20 other countries dancing, singing, and putting on fashion shows. And in the hour before my host sister had to dance, with an eyeshadow palette in one hand and eyeliner in the other, I officially became a Dance Mom, applying makeup to 12-18 year old girls with a speed that Usain Bolt himself would be surprised by.



Apart from my adventures in other parts of Italy, I also enjoyed my time closer to home. On the lake on which I live, Garda, it's becoming more and more beautiful as the days pass and the temperature rises. I was so lucky to be placed on a lake, just like I am in Burlington. Also the panoramic view of the lake and mountains in the background from my school make the mornings just a tad easier.

And to the new Outbounds who might be reading this, because I know last year I was reading EVERYTHING I could about exchange: Enjoy your exchange to the fullest! Live every day like it's the last day you're there, and even if that means that you need to stay home and do nothing a few times a week, do that too. Exchange is about learning who you are and what you need, and when times get hard just remember that this year is what YOU make it.



Lastly...I've left a bit of my heart in all the places I've visited, with all the people that I've met during this year, and when I leave in July, I think I'll leave the biggest piece yet here in Italy. Home truly isn't a place, but the people and the experiences that you have there. This whole year has been an adventure that I thank Rotary for so much, and I am so happy that exchange is an opportunity that is continuously offered all over the world.

Thank you to everyone who supported me throughout this year, and made my exchange as great as it was!!

Migliori auguri,

Camila