



# Camila

from  
Burlington  
Central  
to  
Italy

## “Dall'Italia con amore”

It's been almost a year since I had my first Rotary interview, a year since I made a choice that has changed my life greatly. When I chose to go on exchange, I had no idea what continent I would be going to, much less what country. Now I've been in Italy for nearly two and a half months and I am so glad that I took the leap and decided I would live and study abroad for this year.

When I saw my family and friends for the last time, it didn't really sink in that I wouldn't see them for an entire year. I was more nervous that customs would stop me because of my Rotary blazer with metal pins galore, not to mention the fact that I had to be careful not to jab someone with my ukulele which was sticking out of my bag (not one of my brightest ideas, I'll admit). This nerve-wracking moment of realisation happened right before I walked through the sliding doors at the airport in Milan, tired and jetlagged nonetheless, about to meet my first host family. It's a very unique feeling to have one thought in your head mean two completely different things (#1 I can't believe I'm here!!, #2 *I can't believe I'm here*). And although it may be difficult to get used to the different culture and people here, I don't regret a single thing...except maybe not doing more pre-exchange Italian lessons, but that's worked out ok. This country is absolutely beautiful and the lifestyle is so different to Canada, I don't know how I'm going to survive without the coffee machines at school and the gelato!!

Apart from my food expeditions, I've also travelled a bit since I've been here and seen many beautiful places. Within my first few days here, my host mom took myself and another RYE student, Marilu, to a nearby castle (because they're as common as schools here) which had a SPECTACULAR view of the lake that I live on, Lake Garda. I've also visited an island just a

bit west of Italy called Sardinia. Here, we had a three day multi-district orientation which included most of the exchange students all over Italy. These three days were absolutely fantastic, I met so many new people (which means pins for my blazer!!), and was able to visit the extraordinary beaches of Sardinia. More recently, I've visited Verona, home of the famous Romeo and Juliet, and Venice, the city on water. I just fell in love with Venice and I absolutely recommend going there at least once to see this amazing city with your own eyes – pictures and videos do it no justice, but here's one anyway, of Canal Grande in Venice:



And Piazza delle Erbe in Verona:



Now, during my time here I haven't *just* been traveling, I've also been going to school and playing some volleyball with a local team. My school is just ten minutes away, with a stunning view of the lake once again (which makes early mornings just a tad easier). In Italy, the school system is very different from Canada for a few reasons: teachers move classes between periods instead of student, there aren't any school teams or clubs, and lastly because students choose a study stream to go into (Linguistics, Scientific, Human Sciences, Classical, etc.) as opposed to choosing their courses and having a personalized schedule. I am in the Linguistic stream which means that I take courses such as German, French, English, Art History, Italian, and others. However, since I am no superhuman (as fun as that would be) and don't already speak German, I switch to several classes where I take additional Italian, French, and English. I go to school in Salò, which is town nearby my hometown of Gardone Riviera. I also play with the local volleyball team in Salò and the people there are very kind and welcoming.

Being part of Rotary had already given me so much before I had even left for exchange, like international friends and ways to get involved in my community back in Canada. Now that I am actually on exchange and having all of these amazing experiences, I can't even begin to thank Rotary enough for this amazing opportunity and life here that I have created. This all wouldn't have been possible without the Rotarians supporting me, both from my sponsoring club, Burlington Central, and my host club, Salò e Desenzano del Garda. Thank you a million times over for believing in me and helping me on my way to Italy!!! And thank you to all my family and friends who listened to all my Italy chatter and went on several shopping trips to get "necessities" for my exchange. For all of you, I will be forever grateful!!

A presto,

*Camila*