



Ella
from
Palgrave
to
Thailand

“I used to think that a year was a long time.”

This is my last month of my exchange. It’s amazing how quickly time has flown by. It seems like just yesterday, I was getting off the plane in Bangkok. I used to think that a year was a long time. And now I realize how short it really is. So many amazing things have happened, and Rotarians are completely right when they say it’s a life in a year.

Just a few days after my last Beaver Tale, I went on the Rotary trip to the south of Thailand. It was so hot! I am quite pale skinned, and I was so burnt in the first few days. We visited so many amazing places, and saw incredible things. In the first few days, we had such a unique experience-- we held onto each other’s lifejackets and were pulled through Morakot Cave, getting to see how amazing the cave is, and to the beach that lay in the center. It was just so amazing and so much fun.

Another cool thing we did was actually on the exact same day. We were taken to four different islands all in the gulf of Thailand. The beaches were so beautiful and amazing. But my personal favourite part was when we stopped to snorkel and kayak. We stopped for a couple of hours, and all the exchange students, myself included, had the opportunity to jump off the boat into the water below. We all took turns jumping off. I jumped with two other students. My friend did a backflip off the boat. After that I snorkelled with several of the exchange students. The water was so clear and the fish were just so magnificent. My American friend and I played a game: when you saw a pretty fish, you would scream underwater.

We got to go to so many amazing places, and see so many things that are native to Thailand. We went to the James Bond island, and we got to take pictures! One of my favourites was with the other Canadians. We also got to visit Phuket Fantasea, an amusement park of sorts where you can experience Thai culture in so many amazing, interactive ways.

The last night was incredibly bittersweet. We were at a hotel, and we spent time in the pool, talking to each other about our exchanges and how we would miss each other. It was really hard to leave them, knowing that I might not see these people for a few years. I will miss my exchange family so much when we're apart. But I do get to see most of them again on the 20th of May!

After the trip, I moved host families for the last time. I moved back in with my first host mother, and the first night I was back, there was a small get together at the farm. We had Korean barbecue, and I sang karaoke with my host brother.

In April, I celebrated Songkran festival. Songkran is the Thai New Year. It's three days of water fighting! The first day, I celebrated with my family. We blessed my mother and my grandmother, and then I got to celebrate with the workers on the farm. The second day, my YEO took me into town to celebrate there. I walked through the streets, and I was completely soaked. It was a lot of fun, and an experience I would definitely want to have again. The third and final day of Songkran, I went with the YEO's daughter into Bangkok. Songkran in Bangkok is absolutely crazy. I went to Khao San road, and it was a massive water fight. Later that night, we went back, and I was completely soaked in a matter of minutes. It didn't matter who you were, you got sprayed.

After Songkran, I got fitted for a traditional Thai dress. This was for a festival in my town. I got to have my hair and makeup done, and I walked in the parade with my host Rotary club. It was super hot, and my face hurt from smiling so much. But it was a lot of fun, and I was super proud to represent both my club and my country.

That same night, I was entered into a beauty pageant. I won 1500baht. It was my first, and I'm not sure if I would do it again, but the other girls were very supportive of me and helped me out when I wasn't sure what was going on.

I am busy up until I leave. I am visiting Phuket, and going to Bangkok with Rotary. I have had such an amazing time, and I feel so lucky that I was given this opportunity. Though I have twenty days left, I intend to keep fulfilling all of the B's.

May 2016

Over this past year, I have grown in so many different ways. I have matured in ways my peers back home will never have the chance to. I am so grateful to Rotary for giving me such a unique experience. I have had the time of my life here, and it breaks my heart to have to leave it.

Thank you to everyone who has supported me on my incredible journey: my mom, my dad, my sisters, the Rotary club of Palgrave, district 3340, the Rotary club of Phanatnikhom, my friends all over the globe. I can't thank you enough for all you have given me. It means the world to me and I owe so much to you.

Thank you everyone. See you soon.

Ella