



Ginny

from

Bolton

to

Poland

“Opportunities to Experiences”

Dzień Dobry,

Something difficult for me to hear, whether it's said in Polish or English, or said by my friends or even people I have just recently met, is "Whoa, you're already half way!" This is so difficult to hear because not referencing to one of those sappy travel quotes or anything, but exchange doesn't come with a defined start and end, rather what you make of it defines the journey you are setting for yourself, and I want my exchange in Poland to continue for many years even after I must return to my other home (Canada). I plan to travel back many times to visit my friends and host families, as this country has opened so many doors for self discovery and learning about myself in new situations.

In less than a month I will be changing host families, which will be my first change. For most exchanges, people typically have three to four families, but this all depends on the number of families available to host. Thus, there are only two families available in my area, so I will be switching with another exchange student. I have many emotions about this switch since I have been with this family for such a long time, over five months, and I have become really close with all of them and a developed a great friendship with my host sister. In yet, I am also excited to have new family dynamics and create more relationships with my new family. I have already had the opportunity to get to know my second family which is very nice because it makes it a little easier switching knowing that I am already familiar and can trust them. With my future host family, along with the other exchange student living in their house right now, we have gone to museums, shows in Old Town, and have done a lot of cooking together. One of

our last cooking times was spent inventing, or maybe just redefining, a new type of pierogi. The student from USA had a can of pumpkin left over from our Thanksgiving dinner we put on for family and friends, so we decided to test out "Pumpkin Pierogi". So instead of potatoes, or meat or blueberries (my favourite ones), we placed pumpkin in the middle. The result was something magical, well I would say every pierogi I have eaten was magical as well, but this type especially because we designed and created them ourselves.

I got the chance to see all the Exchange students once again before Christmas at our 'Christmas of Different Nations' meeting in Wrocław, Poland. It was amazing to see everyone again and hear about their last four months as well. Even though we were all staying in different cities all across Poland, we all had pretty similar stories or things we had encountered in the last four months. During this meeting we had a tour of Wrocław, visited Książ Castle, and a WWII ammunition factory within a mountain as well as our first Polish test, that everyone passed! It was a busy weekend, but the best part was being able to see everyone all together again, which sounds generic- however exchange friends are so unique and each and every one of them mean so much to me!

I also had the pleasure of spending six full days, eight hours a day snowboarding on the Austrian Alps. This is something I have never done before, and I find myself saying this more and more as my exchange progresses. What made the trip even more successful was the people I was surrounded by: my fellow exchange students. No matter where we are, whether it's on a 15 hour bus ride to Austria or riding a gondola up the Alps, we have the best time together. Each country and each student that comes from every country are unique and wonderful to be around. The friendships we made, the slopes that we rode, and the laughs we shared all amounted to an unforgettable experience.

Each day was spent enjoying each others company as we tried to capture each moment as for many, it something beyond unique. I was able to create closer relationships with many of the other exchange students as well because it was a much smaller group that went than we have had at our other meetings. Particularly, one student that reminded me so much of my real brother in Canada, and he mentioned that I was quite similar to his sister as well. After a lot of discussion, we figured that we are actually twins separated when we were born and living in different countries... we were satisfied with this explanation.

In addition, each night we had a short trivia game that we played against the other Polish people who were on the same trip with us. The trivia was mainly recognizing different people or places all around the world. And seeing that we had a group of international students from all around the world, we did quite well. Many

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nights we also “enjoyed” the sauna that was available for us. This is something that I had done before in Canada, however nothing close to the temperature the Mexicans, Brazilians, and Columbian had this sauna up to. I lasted a good 30 seconds and I was out and the other student from Canada made his way out shortly after... It’s just not for us...

I’m looking forward to the Euro Tour that is coming up soon, as this will be the first time in four months I will be able to see all of the Polish exchange students together. I am continuing to enjoy each day exploring new parts of the city and enjoying time with my friends, accepting that my time is short, but if I make the most of it, it really isn’t measured in time, rather experiences. Thank you Rotary, thank you Canada, and thank you Poland for these opportunities you have allowed me to create and enjoy to amount to the best experience of my life!

Dziękuję,

Ginny