



Ginny

from

Bolton

to

Poland

“Reading the World”

As I come close to the end of my exchange, I am constantly reminded of how much I have found out about myself. I am learning more about the things that are truly important to me in life. I have also learned that when you know people from across the globe, it makes the world not seem as big as it really is. I am forever grateful for every experience whether manageable or quite challenging, each one of these experiences has helped shape my exchange to what it is today.

These past two months have been extremely busy with meetings and trips. One of these trips that I have come back from is the Euro Tour; it was an unforgettable journey through seventeen countries in seventeen days. We started in Germany, however we only stayed in the hotel because the attractions we had planned to first visit were in the Netherlands.

We arrived in Amsterdam around noon, and we were overjoyed with the fact that our tour that we had dreamed about for months was actually beginning. I was aware from before that the city had quite a few bikes, but seeing multiple ‘bike parking lots’ made me realize just how many there actually are. We toured around the city, which oddly reminded me a lot of my city in Poland, called Gdansk. We also visited the wax museum where each person got scared at least once when they turned around and George Clooney was standing directly behind you. Another thing that portrayed just how unique the city was when after our guided tour we came across a mass amount of people in the main square. The peculiar part we could notice from a distance was huge white things flying in the air. As we got closer, we were able to identify that those ‘white things flying were actually pillows and feathers all up in the air. Being the exchange students that we are, we sprinted directly into the middle of this massive group of people. This is something I will never forget!

The next day we made our way to Brussels, where we ate lots of chocolate, waffles and fries; all of the things Belgium is famous for. I cannot imagine the amount of weight gain that would have happened if my exchange took place here with all this original and tasty food... but at least it is delicious.



After that we went to Paris where we had a beautiful boat tour to start off our time there. We visited many museums, churches, monuments, and of course the Eiffel tower. Then we visited Versailles, Chambéry and Carcassonne, each place with it's own massive castle or palace.

One of the most anticipated places finally came, Barcelona. The weather was even better than I expected, and that made everything that much more enjoyable. We visited the Camp Nou Stadium, Sagrada Familia Cathedral, the Barcelona Beach, St. James' Square and finally a traditional flamenco show. Then it was the Principality of Monaco, with again, beautiful weather and a beautiful view. I could tell we were most definitely in Monaco when on our way to an ice-cream stand I passed by two Ferraris and a Lamborghini.

And lastly, we arrived in Italy, visiting the leaning Tower of Pisa first. Then we spent time in Florence, Rome, Naples and Venice over the course of one week. The one city that attracted me the most as a tourist was Venice as it so distinct and nothing like I had ever seen before with the gondolas everywhere and streets replaced with canals. And Venice concluded our unforgettable tour.

We took a break from speaking Polish for close to three weeks due to being in different countries with different languages. I thought this would degrade my Polish skills, but in fact taking a break made it that much easier to pick up when I got back. I am grateful it did because we also recently had our second and final Polish language test which went very well.

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Now I am at the point in my exchange when people start asking about return tickets, which is an extremely harsh reality. It puts a final date on the country you have grown to love and call home. And of course it does not mean that you will never see this country ever again. Rather this date signifies the end of something incredible, and at the same time, the beginning of something new.

I came across an inspiring travel quote that reads, "The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page" (Saint Augustine). And on that note, I would love to thank Rotary International for helping me to begin to read my 'world book' and not to just be satisfied by reading just a page or two.

Thank you and keep reading the world one page at a time,

Ginny