



# Kailin

from

Guelph Trillium

to

France

## *“Coucou”*

It’s hard to believe it’s already February and I’ve passed the halfway mark of my exchange! From conversing in French to exchanging bisous each time I greet someone, life in France now feels normal.

Time flies, and I’ve changed from my first host family to my second host family. I’m still living in the French countryside, although this time my host family lives in the forest rather than on a farm. Along with having wonderful new host parents and two host sisters, I also have a ten month old host puppy named Olaf! Yes, Olaf named after the snowman from Frozen. He’s an energetic “boule de poils,” which is French for “ball of fur.”

Twice a year, my Rotary district in France organizes a “repas exotique,” which is a fundraiser dinner where all the exchange students in the district make a traditional dish from our country. Over 300 people came to the “repas exotique” in November to sample dishes from around the world! I made Nanaimo bars, which turned out well, especially considering it was my first time making them. For the dinner, each country was assigned a table, and we were free to decorate our tables however we wished - the Canadian table was decked out with Canadian flags. Many students also dressed up in traditional outfits from their countries. It was a delicious evening, filled with laughter and conversation.

Another noteworthy experience I’ve had with Rotary was a weekend where I did nothing but make crêpes. Literally! My host Rotary club in France organizes an annual “Marché de Noël,” which is a Christmas market. This year it took place in the

Abbaye de Belval, which is an old monastery from the eighteenth century. There were thirty-five vendors present this year, selling Christmas gifts that ranged from cheese to books to jewellery. Another exchange student from Japan and I were tasked with making crepes for the Marché de Noël, which took place over two days. We used commercial crepe machines and made hundreds of crêpes!

Considering how France is renowned for its cuisine, it should be no surprise that the French are serious about good food. I once spent an afternoon making waffles with my host sisters and host grandmother. My host grandmother had a waffle machine with interchangeable moulds, which permitted us to make different types of waffles. Using a traditional family recipe, we made "gaufrettes," which are thin waffle cookies. We also made traditional waffles, which we dusted with powdered sugar and ate for our afternoon "goûter."

The goûter is an afternoon snack, and is usually eaten after school. In France, it's unusual to snack outside of meal times. There are four main meal times - breakfast, lunch, dinner, and the "goûter." One of my favourite goûters is a baguette with Nutella. The bread in France is amazing, and paired with chocolate spread, it makes for a delightful afternoon snack.

School is going well. I'm starting to do homework assignments and receive grades on tests, which provides me with another opportunity to improve my French. One of my favourite classes is theatre. In France, the school year is divided into trimesters instead of semesters. For the first trimester, my theatre class studied Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. In French. I'm accustomed to studying Shakespeare in English, so it was interesting to have a chance to study it another language.

Our theatre class was split up into small groups, ranging of two to four students, and assigned scenes from the play, which we worked on throughout the trimester. I was in a group of four girls, and we worked on Act IV, scene i, which is the wedding scene between Hero and Claudio. I played the role of Hero, and succeeded in memorizing all my lines in French! At the end of the trimester, we put on a mini play and acted out our scenes in front of students from the school.

We also studied scenography in theatre class. As part of the curriculum, we looked at paintings for inspiration, and one of the paintings we studied was a painting from Monet's *Parlements de Londres* series. When I visited the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille, which is the largest French museum outside of Paris, I saw one of the original paintings from the series in real life, which was a really neat experience!

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Four months remain before it will be time to return Canada, and I know that these four months will fly by like the past six months have flown by. Exchange has been a fantastic adventure thus far. Thank you to everyone who has supported me in making this journey possible!

Cordialement,

*Kai*