



Kierra

from

Tillsonburg

to

Australia

“From the True North to the Land Down Under”

It's been three months and twenty-four days since I've left Canada and let me tell that it has been a life changing experience. I still remember looking out the window to the beautiful Australian sunset as my last plane landed in Adelaide and realized that this would be home for the next eleven months. After a twenty-four hour plus journey I finally landed in Adelaide on July, 23rd at 5:45pm. I was then greeted by my councilor who gave me a mini tour on the way to her parent house in the Adelaide hills where we going to have dinner and spend the night. Before I knew it was six am and I was on the drive to Naracoorte which would be my new home town for the year. We stopped at a place that was filled with native Australian animals like kangaroos, wallabies and kolas! It was an amazing experience to see so many new animals that I've never even dreamed of being so close to.

After finally arriving in Naracoorte at 9:30pm, my councilor and I ended up getting pizza from the local pizza shop and headed back to her place for the night as tomorrow was going be a long day. My councilor had to leave for work in the morning so I waited for my host mum to come and pick me up and I was so excited to meet her and for her to show me around my new house and then my host dad's work. He was what we in Canada would call a fire chief. After many hours of unpacking and meet and greets we headed to my school to register for classes. This is where I met my host brother, Hamish who showed me around school my school which seemed so big, but everyone seemed so kind that I knew school the next day would be amazing.

I attend Naracoorte High School; the school had students ranging from year (grade) eight to year twelve. The school only has three hundred students so you get to know people fairly quickly especially in my ancient studies class which only has five other student in it. I was going to be studying in year eleven with some of my classes being in year ten. In my year

eleven classes I'm taking English, ancient studies and photography and for year ten I'm taking home ec and outdoor ed. My classes have been amazing and I've learned so much as I haven't taken any of those classes besides English before. I was so scared about making friends since I was entering school in the middle of the year, but that seemed to be no problem as I quickly made friends who showed me where my classes were.

In the first couple weeks of school we had an outdoor ed camp, we went bush walking, and let me tell you everything was so different from the landscape to the animals, but I couldn't be any more in love with it. On the camp I got to see so many new things and got to bond with my class. When I first heard about the camp I was confused since it was the middle of winter, but the coldest it ever reached was ten degrees. In school I help out with the breakfast program with my host mum and brother, the program was every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. It was a good way bond not only with my host family, but with student and teachers.

Naracoorte in a small farming town in South Australia it has a population of 6,000. I quickly learned that this town has a huge passion for sports; Australian footy is the biggest sport and if you don't support the Adelaide Crows then you better be packing your bags. Naracoorte is a tourist town as it home to the Naracoorte Caves which is Australia's only world heritage site. It became a world heritage site due to the many fossils found within the caves. The town is so small that it not uncommon to see kangaroos and other native Australian animals rooming in your background. In fact a couple of my friends have pet kangaroos, so yes I can confirm that stereotype is in fact true. One of the other amazing things about Naracoorte is the swimming lake. The lake is a made swimming area which opens in mid-December as temperatures start to reach their high thirties. Naracoorte has a strong sense of community and everyone is willing to help out one another. This is how I ended up getting the chance to go and help out the kids of a new migrant family every Wednesday with their homework since they are just learning how to read English.

I've been lucky enough to do quite a bit of traveling since I've been in Australia. One of those trips was to Adelaide with two Rotarians, Julie and Murry and a Japanese exchange student that attends my school. We ended up going to the Adelaide show (fair) since I had won tickets to show. It was amazing and there were so many different things to see and do. We also got the chance to tour the city, like the market, China town and the footy stadium. I learned so much about not only Australia culture, but also Japanese culture. The most surprising things about Adelaide were the green spaces and how clean the city was.

I would like to end this my saying thank you to all of the Rotarian, host families, and to my family for making this all possible, the amount of time you have dedicated to youth exchange, and I am and forever will be grateful for such an amazing experience. I would also like to encourage anyone reading this who is looking into going on exchange to follow your dreams, it's not as scary as you think and the homesickness is easy to overcome.

Cheers,

Kierra