



Zara

from

Burlington Central

to

France

Hello to all the future exchange students and Rotarians who are reading my BeaverTale. My name is Zara Gobind. I am 16 and currently on exchange in France coming from Canada. My sponsor club of Canada is Burlington Central and my host club of France is Nieppe. I have been in France for almost 6 months and I have 4 remaining. I first arrived in France on August 26th and will return back to Canada on June 30th. Ever since I got here I have been discovering something new every day and making memories by trying new things. I didn't only discover so many new places but also adapted to traditions, tried new food and got used to living in France as time went by. As I was close to Belgium, I was often going across the border to popular cities in Belgium such as Bruges. I felt lucky as I didn't only experience French culture but also Belgian culture as well.

As the months went on, I visited more places such as Luxembourg, Mont Saint Michel, Strasbourg and many more beautiful places. With monthly Rotary trips, I was never missing out on the fun and was always taking advantage of my exchange. A promise I made to myself was to live my exchange year to the fullest and never step down or miss an opportunity. Not only if you will be doing an exchange in France but other countries in Europe, there is a chance to go on the Eurotour which I have booked for April! I can't wait to write about it in my next BeaverTale.

With exchange there are also challenges, it is not something to be taken lightly when preparing for your exchange year. This isn't to scare anyone but to be open minded! Remember that when you are in your host family's, you're not a guest but pretty much being adopted into a family as a foreign student. Make sure to get close with them and be comfortable, the faster you adapt, the easier it will be. Do not listen to stereotypes or rumours you may hear about your country before you arrive. For example, many said that French people are rude, ignorant and close minded, this was not true at all as I was welcomed by my host family with a friendly and inviting attitude.

Making friends can also be challenging at first, my best advice is to push yourself into making new connections and let them know who you are! Some people may be afraid to talk to you or distracted with their own friend groups, nothing wrong with that, maybe they need a sign to talk to you or are unsure that you want to be friends with them. First impressions are always important on exchange, this is for host families, friends, Rotarians and all the other people you'll be meeting. Having a positive attitude and participation are the most important parts to being a good ambassador for your country and also creating connections. For my first few days in school, I would go up to new students every day and speak with them. Even if it's difficult with the language barrier, I used that as a topic in our conversations. Now I have many friends at my school and never feel alone.

Make sure to think a lot about what your goals are for exchange and create a bucket list for all that you want to achieve. There will be so many people to help push you to your goals, it's just you who has to take the initiative in fulfilling them! Once you get used to living in another country, everything else will come naturally as well. Thank you for reading my BeaverTale!

- Zara