



Zara

from
Burlington Central
to
France

Thank you to everyone reading my BeaverTale report. My name is Zara, I'm from Burlington, Ontario in Canada and I'm currently doing an exchange in France! It's been almost 9 months, and I leave in June. I've learned so much and really changed as a person since I've been here. Being in a new environment has bought me so many new habits.

Friends

During exchange, you will experience a lot of ups and downs which is completely normal. You might be shy or think that maybe exchange is too much for you but if you're willing to do it, you can achieve anything. Many of my exchange friends and I shared the same feelings; we both went through tough times together and had relatable experiences. I suggest getting close to the students in your district and really making an effort to connect with others. At school, it may be hard since it's a new language and everyone else has their friends but just be yourself and try to open up more. As an exchange student, it's easier to make friends because they'll be curious about you. Take this as an opportunity. The best way to make friends is to get to know everyone on the very first day of school. I got lucky because I and my host sister were in the same class so I got to meet all of her friends. Even if you're alone at school on the first day, introduce your culture and language to others. Engage in activities and try to participate as much as you can. I've made so many amazing friends and don't regret anything at all. Of course, I had my embarrassing moments but it's normal! Just be yourself and don't hide who you really are to fit into a new environment.

School life

Making friendships at school is one thing but taking your classes and learning is another. For me, French school was a lot more complicated because it's not only in a different language, but the subjects were more advanced than in Canada. My friends helped me a lot in classes which is also another great reason to get as close to other students as fast as you can, that way they will help you! Something I did was tell all my teachers that I'm a

foreign exchange student and might have trouble understanding. Try your best to take notes and also highlight any words you don't understand. Paying attention in class can really help you learn the language faster.

Host families

The number of host families may vary but for me I have 4. The first one I was with helped me learn about the basics of living in France. I wasn't quite comfortable as everything was new to me, but I reminded myself that this is a new country and it'll take time to get used to. Try to build a good relationship with all your host families and be honest with them. Hiding how you feel could give them false impressions on you. Some ideas for getting closer and more comfortable with your host families would be cooking with them, helping them clean, giving them souvenirs, going on trips with them and a lot more. Force yourself to be a part of the family and pick up on how they live and what they do in their daily life. As always, don't be afraid to talk to your counselor if there's any problems and don't force yourself to do something that makes you uncomfortable.

Host club

Your host club members will be your first ever supporters, make sure to thank them when you see them! Attending meetings and events with your host club is a great opportunity to get to know everyone and share your own experiences from your country. My host club has had a few fun events where I got to volunteer and also meet new people from all around France!

Rotary trips

Rotary weekends are the best part of exchange. Being with students who feel like family to you is amazing especially when you're discovering the world with them. We recently went on the Eurotour (which I'll be telling you guys all about because it was so amazing) and now for our second last weekend, we'll be going to Paris! I really adore it, even if you don't go to France, all countries have beautiful cities.

Eurotour log (this was taken from my older report which wasn't used on BeaverTales but I wanted to share my experience with future exchange students so they have a glimpse of exchange)!

First we went to Paris and then met up with another group of exchange students to continue our Eurotour with! There were in total about 43 students. In Paris, we visited; Le Louvre, la tour Eiffel, Château du Versailles etc. It was an amazing experience and I'm still shocked that I got to see the Mona Lisa in person. I think Paris is definitely worth all its popularity and I hope to visit again or maybe even live there!

We then visited Brussels on our way to Amsterdam. I bought many souvenirs and some Belgian chocolate. In Amsterdam, I had more of a tough time as we all needed to put lots of energy into doing a bike tour! It was great in general and also made me feel refreshed from having a workout. The difficult part of my trip was doing the boat tour in Amsterdam as I had accidentally hit my phone into the water without looking.. It was hard to accept but I sadly had to end up missing the Anne Frank house to buy my new

phone. Luckily, I was able to buy a new phone for a cheaper price and have almost everything restored (except my old photos). We continued the tour and visited a famous center in Amsterdam called "This is Holland". It gave us a fun virtual airplane ride around Amsterdam where we experienced the weather in 4D and had moving seats! My mood was easily lightened up and I was no longer upset about the loss of my phone.

Next we visited Berlin. In the morning, we went to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and learned about what happened during the Holocaust. It was both informative and emotional to be on the same ground where many people lost their lives. I am grateful that they will never be forgotten and that generations will continue to acknowledge what happened to the victims during the Holocaust. Berlin was definitely a very welcoming city with many great sights. We did a city tour with the group and visited famous tourist spots which I will post on this doc. In every country, we also have free time to eat lunch and go souvenir shopping. I bought many gifts for my family that I can't wait to share.

The second day in Germany, we went to a small city called Dresden while we were on our way to Prague. We had free time during Lunch to go shopping and visit the different shops. Me and my friends had an Italian lunch and then went souvenir shopping. After that we resumed our trip to Prague.

In Prague we had an informative city tour and visited all the famous castles, statues and other popular tourist attractions. Everyone split into groups for our free time so I and my friend decided to visit the most interesting places we could find. First, we had lunch (and Starbucks of course) then went to a doll shop. I had always wanted to start a doll collection but didn't know how, I thought this could be the start of it. I picked out a real porcelain doll which was 43 CZK and my friend picked out a string puppet to give to her grandma as a gift. My friend then wanted to go to a torture Museum but nobody else was interested so I decided to go with her. I was scared but there was actually nothing scary about it and it was really interesting! The museum showed us how medieval torture methods worked and why they were invented. To enjoy our last moments in Prague, we then went to get a Thai foot/leg massage . I found it really funny, and it was also my first time getting a massage done.

Next was our trip to Vienna! I think Vienna was definitely one of my favorite cities as we did many things and had lots of free time to explore. We had a city tour and then took the bus to the Schönbrunn Palace which reminded me a lot of the Chateau de Versailles in Paris. The palace had an audio tour which told us the backstory of every room. Once we were done, we had time to explore outside of the palace where there were a lot of tourist attractions. Me and my friends decided to go to a zoo! We had a nice walk through the gardens on our way to the zoo and then saw many cute animals. There were bears, wolves, giraffes, sea lions, lions and many more amazing animals. I found it really exciting as I love animals and saw some that I had never seen before.

We then were in Budapest the next day, we did a beautiful city tour where we were shown the Buda and Pest side of the city. They are both beautiful in their own ways and are connected by a large bridge. On one of the sides, there is a large church and to get to it,

we had to climb many stairs. I think it was worth it because at the top we saw the beautiful view of Budapest! We bought many souvenirs, and I got some Marzipan chocolates for my family. During free time, my friend and I had gotten Starbucks (again) and got our nails done together. I was really happy to have visited Budapest as I never knew what to imagine.

We then did a quick stop in Ljubljana for lunch before continuing our adventure to Venice! Venice was my second favorite city (after Paris). We started with a city tour and saw all the leaning bell towers in Venice. I was told they're leaning due to the ground being soft. Our city tour was short, but I learned so much about Italy and got to see all the different important buildings that are a part of the history of Venice. We even went on the very famous bridge before ending our tour. During our long period of free time, we did some souvenir shopping (where I bought another doll) and then found a restaurant to eat at once we got tired. I and my friends ate at this amazing Italian restaurant for lunch and ordered pasta. The view of the canal was beautiful, and the waiters gave us free food! We resumed our shopping and got matching Venice t-shirts as well. We then did a Gondola ride around Venice! It was so relaxing and beautiful to enjoy the view around Venice. At our hotel, we ate Italian pizza for dinner and had a great night.

Our final city was Zürich while we were on the way back to France. It was a rich and calm city; all of the shops were designer fashion and very expensive. The view in Switzerland is so beautiful and, on the bus, everyone was in awe because we saw the big mountains beside the river.

I think my Eurotour was the highlight of my exchange and I met so many new people and made amazing memories. I am so grateful to have had this opportunity and there's so much more to come.

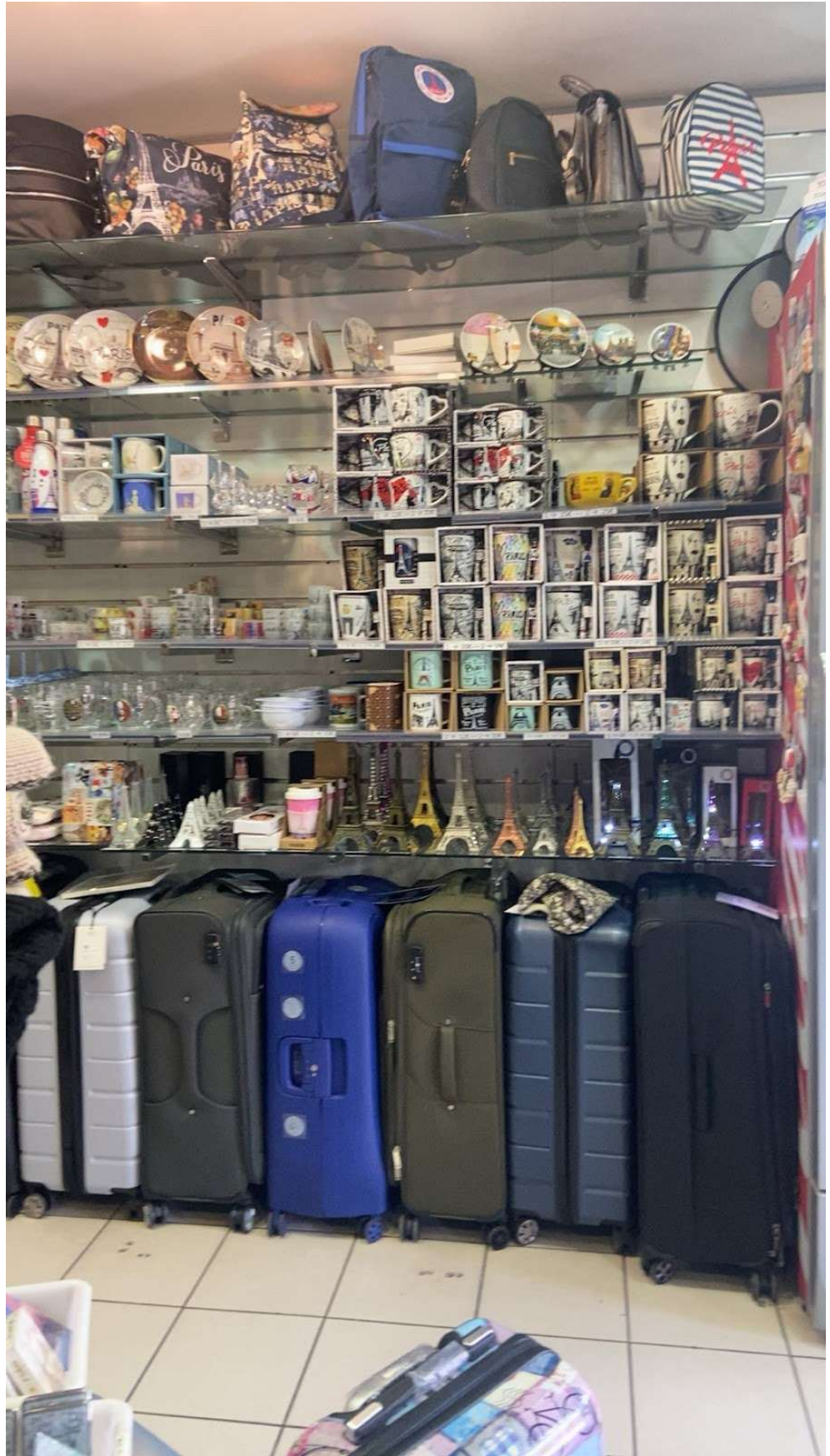
Tough times

To end my report, I wanted to give some advice on what to do if you're having a hard time. For me, I had a lot of ups and downs as I mentioned before but I didn't let it ruin my year. Adjusting can be different for everyone, and some may take it better than others. During the middle of my exchange, I had a lot of trouble with my host family and fitting into their daily habits and thought that everyone else on exchange was ahead of me. I talked to other students and realized everyone goes through their own struggles no matter how big or small it is. Make sure to fully engulf yourself in exchange, don't stress about what's going on in your home country, don't worry about the past, don't feel like a burden if you made a mistake and of course remember that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity so you have to make the most of it no matter how hard it gets. Never go home and leave behind all the possibilities of your exchange, you can get through it!

I hope you found my report helpful and somewhat calming, thank you so much for reading.

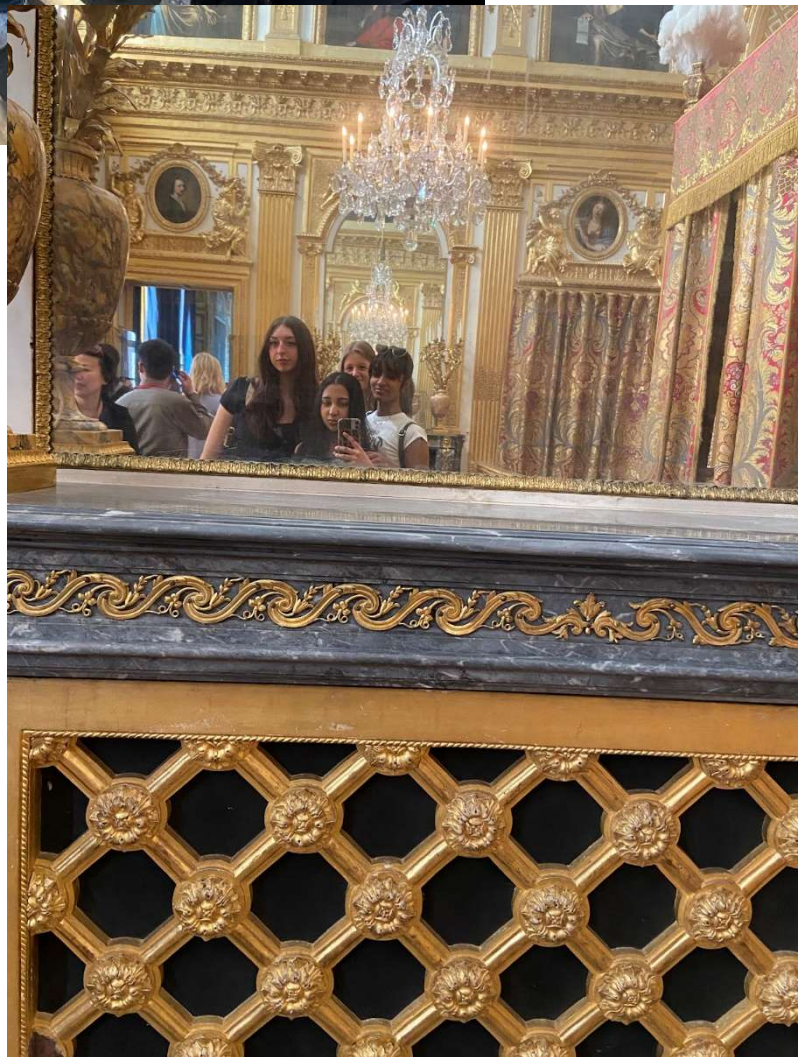
Here are some recent pictures of what I've been up to in France:

Paris (during the Eurotour)





My amazing exchange group who are my second family while we were in Paris!



Me and my friends in the Château de Versailles



Me and my friends from Taiwan and Japan during our Soirée exotique! (A fun event where students cook a dish from their home country and perform a tradition or song from their culture)



Me and the exchange girls from another district during our Eurotour in le Louvre



Me and my little host sister who's my best friend.

Me and my best friend from school



My host dog enjoying the sunlight



Me and the other two exchange students from Canada made Poutine for the soirée exotique I mentioned earlier!



Me and the girls in front of the one and only Eiffel Tower!



Thank you for reading

- *Zara Gobind*