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Rotary International
District 9820

Youth Exchange
Program

Outbound Students

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July 2009

Rotary District 9820 Youth Exchange Committee

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Rotary's Youth Exchange Program is a tremendous opportunity for secondary school age students to travel abroad to further their education in an entirely different environment to their own.

Rotary hopes that the impact of this experience for the participants will not only have an immeasurable impact on international relations but will stimulate those in the program to become better citizens and, as such, help prepare them for participation as leaders of their communities and play a significant role in the shaping of tomorrow's world.

The program is an extremely rewarding experience for all who participate in it, whether a student, Rotary club, host family, counsellor, host community or at district level.

Rotary Youth Exchange is an official activity of District 9820. The program is administered by the District Youth Exchange Committee which reports to the District through the Youth Services Chairman. In our district, District 9820, Brian Norris is the District Governor for this Rotary year 2009/2010.

The Youth Exchange Committee is responsible for the administration of the program. The exchange itself is the responsibility of the Rotary club - both the sponsor and the hosting Rotary club.

Within the district administrative structure, Youth Exchange is a part of the Youth Service Committee, which looks after all programs associated with youth.

Outbound Exchange Students

January 2009 ~ January 2010

Student	Sponsor Club	Country of Exchange
Alison Cronk	Frankston Sunrise	Austria
Annabelle Dominguez	Warragul	France
Annella Fullard	Bairnsdale Sunrise	USA
Bonnie Rogers	Seaford/Carrum Downs	Brazil
Corinne Deagan	Frankston	Sweden
Jakob Malouf	Maffra	France
Jarryd Sutton	Trafalgar	Sweden
Madeline Kaio	Frankston North	Brazil
Prudence Cartledge	Sale Central	Denmark
Rachel Caulfield	Berwick	Switzerland
Zara La Roche	Orbost	Austria

Returning Home to Australia

Rotarians believe that the future of our world is in the hands of our young students.

They are tomorrow's leaders

Their year will fly by and when they return they will have a wealth of experiences and a new language and culture to share with Australia.

They will talk about the positive things they have learned to their family, their friends at school, and their sponsor Rotary club.

We believe that the more we send our young ambassadors abroad, the greater the opportunities we will have to foster understanding between our Australian culture and other people around the world.

The success of our exchange students is our best advertisement.

Through all our Rotary Exchange Students, we seek to make peace around the globe and they have now become an important factor in helping us to achieve those goals.

Alison Cronk - Austria

It feels extremely strange to be writing an article for YEPYAP because it doesn't feel like I have already been here for six months. Although in a sense it is already another home to me, and that only comes with time. So I have been here for four months now and when I look back on it I have really done a lot. More than I imagined to have done in that amount of time. I have already travelled to a lot of places in Austria, of course to Salzburg and Vienna, but also to Graz and Bregenz. I have also travelled around Europe on my Euro Tour with Rotary.

I am currently living in a small town called Lindach which is about 25 minutes away from my school in Gmunden. Gmunden is on a beautiful lake called the Traunsee, which has a beautiful mountain in the background called the Traunstein. Gmunden is a lovely town and I can't imagine my exchange in any other place.

My school in Austria is a language and science school and from my school you can also see the Traunstein. I have made lots of really good friends in my school already and they are helping me a lot with my German.

My host family is amazing; they are extremely nice and take me everywhere. I have already been to Vienna once with my host mum, also Salzburg three times, Linz and a lot of places around where I live. I am still with my first host family; I stay with them for six months and then the other family for the other six months. In my current host family they have two older girls who live in Vienna and also one older boy that goes to school during the week and is only home on weekends. So it is a very quiet house, although my next host family has five kids and I have been told it is never quiet.

I am enjoying my time so much, it is hard to keep this article from going on and on for pages because I have so much to say! Thank you to everyone who helped make this exchange year possible for me, it is the most amazing thing in the world and I believe that everyone should get a chance to do a Rotary Exchange. It really is an experience of a lifetime, and I recommend it to everyone.

Liebe Grüße aus Österreich.

Alison



Annabelle Dominguez - France

So far my exchange experience has been very enjoyable with school, travelling, meeting new people from all over the world and going out with friends.

One of the hardest things so far has been changing host families for the first time. I never imagined how hard it would be. I felt so many mixed emotions as I became very attached to my first host family, but at the same time I knew my second host family and loved them too. So my first week with my second family felt a little strange but after that I was right at home again. I feel quite lucky to be able to change and adapt easily to different environments. I'm also lucky that I can go back to my first host family's home every now and then for dinner or afternoon tea.

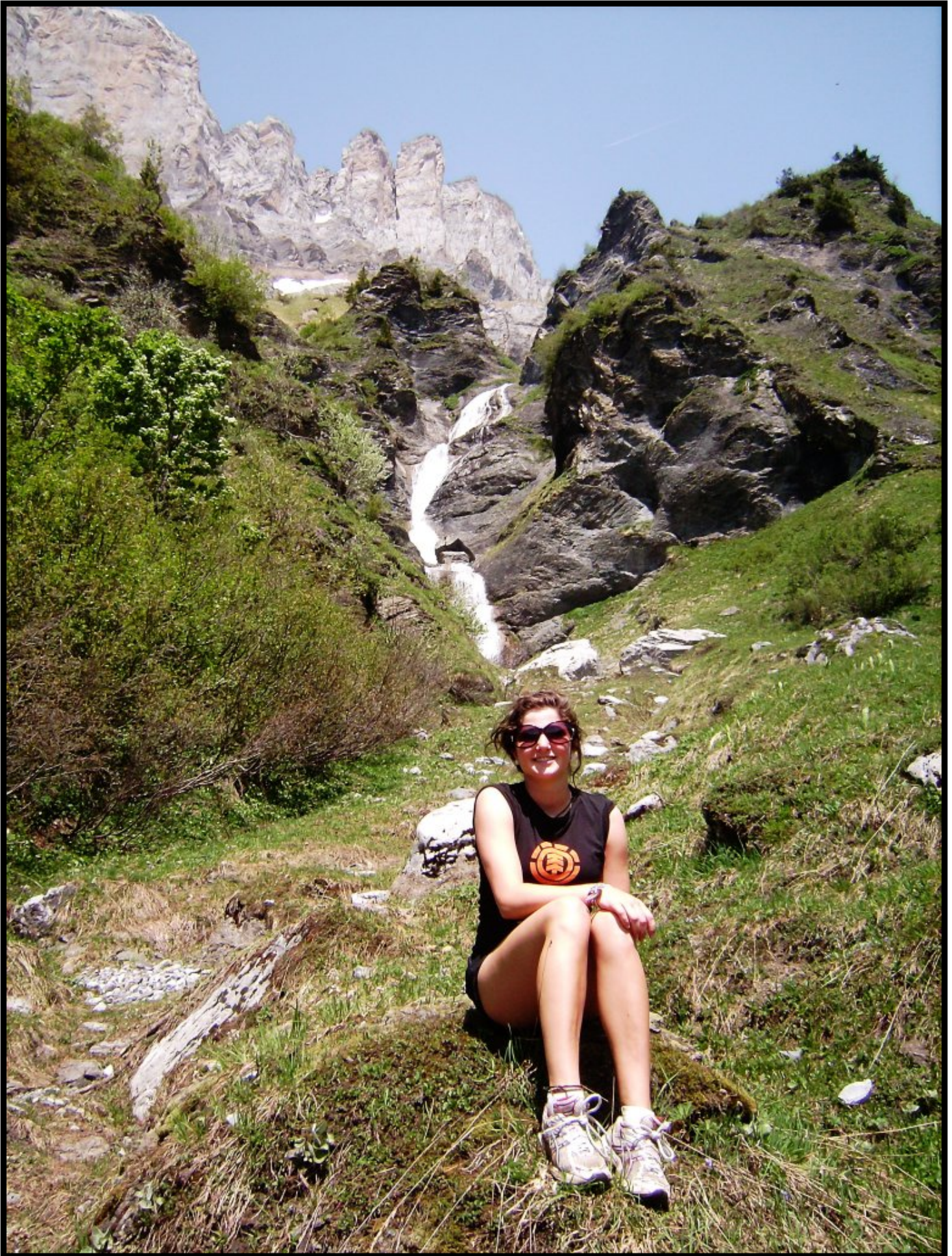
During these first six months of my exchange I have travelled quite a lot, including the South of France, Monaco and Northern Italy. On the last trip I went to the South of France to a town called Camargue. This town is particularly famous for the Taurus (bull fighting). We got to see a live professional Taurus show, after spending the day helping to brand the bulls. I even had the opportunity to jump in an arena with some of the angry bulls! Of course I didn't last long inside and jumped the fence after about a minute of running around frantically.

I have also enjoyed very much the Eurotour, visiting amazing places in Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland. One of the things I noted was the large number of beautiful churches and old buildings, which really have to be admired for their elaborate work.

The weather is becoming incredibly hot here in the French Alps as summer sets in. It has been at least two weeks now that the temperature has been over thirty degrees, but I am fortunate enough to live right near a very popular lake where many families go to for a swim, barbeque or even to camp overnight.

I really am enjoying everything about my life over here, I can't think of anything I would change. I just hope the next few months don't go by as fast as the last six have!

Annabelle



Annella Fullard – USA

It's hard to summarise my whole exchange into just a few paragraphs.

This year so far has been the best year of my whole entire life. I have done so many things and met so many great people that I will hopefully know for the rest of my life.

My all time favourite thing I have done so far is the Rotary Eastern American Tour. It was the most fun I had ever had in my entire life. We first met up with 83 other exchange students, of course me being the only "Aussie"! Then we headed off to Washington DC (such a beautiful city with so much history). We went to many memorials, The White House, Museums and a lot more. Next we headed to New York City it was just amazing! We saw the Statue of Liberty, Times Square, Brooklyn Bridge, Central park and a whole lot more. New York is a great city with endless adventures and places to see. After New York we headed to Boston. Boston is very pretty with many things to see and do. One of the highlights of going to Boston was to visit Harvard University. The best University in the United States, which I thought was pretty cool. Last, but not least, we stopped at Niagara Falls. This was so beautiful and it was hard to believe we were actually there. This trip so enhanced my exchange and I now have friends from all over the world that I am definitely going to visit when I am older.

I am currently living with my second host family and they are just amazing. Another great thing about exchange is connecting with your host families. You may not connect with all of them but when you do, it makes your exchange incredible. I am always with my family, laughing and having fun. I have a 6 year old sister here who is just adorable and I love playing with her. One of the things I love most with my family is that they're always making me laugh. I feel so at home and it is just great.

Another highlight in my exchange was travelling to Florida and visiting Disney World. We did this with 11 other exchange students, my counsellor and another chaperone in a 13-passenger van. It was great fun. We went on all sorts of different rides, including a ride called the "Tower of Terror," which is an elevator that takes you up a haunted tower then suddenly drops. I was so scared but when it finished I hopped straight back into the line and did it again.

Of course, exchange has its ups and downs, but there are definitely far more ups. I just think every little negative there is will make the positive that much better. I always try and think positive and stay active. One thing I found hard was making a lot of friends, but I quickly realised I had to participate in a sport or get involved to meet and make friends.

Another thing I love about America is that everything is involved around food, and I love it! Americans like to have 'big' everything. Such as food sizes, cars, schools, houses etc.

My host Club here in Westerville, Ohio is just great. There are around 80 members and they make it a lot of fun. My Exchange Rotary District meets up every month, so this is a great opportunity to see all my exchange friends again. We are constantly doing new things and seeing new places.

Overall my exchange has been amazing, life changing, hard, fun, weird, crazy and indescribable. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to do this because it's now one year that I am never ever going to forget!

Nella



Bonnie Rogers - Brazil

It was this time last year that I was filling in application forms and going to my first selection camp for Rotary. Little did I know that one year later I would be surrounded by mountains and luscious green surroundings, in a little city called Jaraguá do sul, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

Not only has it been the fastest six months of my life, but the most emotional, amazing and eventful ones. My first host family were amazing, I was their first exchange student and they made my first experiences in Brazil so easy. I felt so comfortable and at home.

I went on my first trip in April, to the Foz do Iguaçu falls with most of the exchange students from my district. It was a three-day trip up to the boarder of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. The first day was spent in Paraguay, a five-hour shopping spree and chance to wander around and look at all the stalls. The next day was spent at the actual waterfalls, which were just breathtaking! Some of us even got the chance to experience them first-hand, in a boat, right under some of the waterfalls. After hours of picture taking, and a safari ride, we went to an aviary, where we saw some of the most amazing South American birds and snakes, including Toucans. We were lucky enough to hold one of the snakes and one of the parrots. Later on that night we went to a show and dinner, including dancers from all over South America.

I've also been to other beautiful places such as Balneário Camboriú (an amazing beach and city), Beto Carriero World, which is a Brazilian theme park, and more. Other events apart from the luxuries of travelling, I've been going to school where I've made some of the most amazing friends, been to churrascos (barbeques), had Rotary meetings and events, the Rotary district conference, been to soccer games, zoos, random German festivals, parties, more churrascos, and so much more. Not to mention eating brigadeiro - a chocolate goo which is pretty much heaven in your mouth, and so easy to make.

I seriously can't wait until I go on the big Northeast trip, which is a month long trip visiting such famous cities as Rio de Janeiro, Porto Seguro, Trancoso, Arraial D'ajuda, Salvador, Recife, Porto de Galinhas, Olinda, Natal, Fortaleza, Lençóis, Brasilia (the capital) and much more.

Although, being an exchange student isn't as easy as it seems. The difference in culture, food, people, language and being without family, friends and everything familiar can be a little overwhelming at times. But your not-so-good days make the good days even better, and if you keep your chin up and stay positive, you will experience so much more. The things that I have experienced, places I've seen and the people I have met will stay with me forever. This exchange is going so quickly, you can't even imagine, I'm nearly half way through and could stay here for years.

Thank you for everything Rotary, you've given me the chance to experience so many amazing things, learn a new language and meet some of the most wonderful people from all over the world. I am having the most amazing time.

Eu estou muito feliz aqui, mutio obrigada e beijos para vocês.

Bonnie



Corinne Deagan – Sweden

I can't believe I've already been in this amazing country called Sweden for 6 months. It's been the most up and down 6 months of my life so far.

I've had the best fun, from Language Camp to Exchange Student weekends to Ski Camp and soon to be, Eurotour. But, I've also had some not so much fun experiences including going to hospital numerous times, including surgery, and a case of the shingles.

But putting the bad stuff behind me, this has already been the best experience of my life, and the best choice I have ever made. About this time a year ago I only had slim hope that I would be picked for a year long Rotary Youth Exchange. Let-alone know that I would be chosen and that I'd be jetting off to Sweden after 8 months preparation. But here I am, in Sweden, living it up! It's been the longest and the fastest 6 months. Being busy all the time, but then at some points, having nothing to do all day.

I think the best experience so far has been the trip to Liseberg during the 'Göteborg Weekend' with most of the other exchange students in the District.

I think the best place I've been to so far is my host family's summer house in Rörö, it's so beautiful, everything, it's just stunning. We go there fairly often, either by my host Dad's boat or by the Ferry.

Now that it's spring, all the flowers are blooming into wonderful shades of every colour and they pop up everywhere. And life has come back into everyone and everything. The trees are growing back their leaves, which make for great shade from the harsh Swedish sun. A lot of the exchange students have even been sun-burnt, which a lot of us thought wasn't possible. I mean c'mon we're in Sweden. where it is cold and snowy all the time! Haha!

But seriously, I couldn't have asked for anything better, Sweden is just amazing, and being able to spend an entire year here is just the greatest thing in the world for me.

As much as I would sometimes like to be home and to see everyone, I would not give anything in the world to be back in Australia at the moment because I'm enjoying myself too much here. I have changed so much whilst being here, even in 6 months, and everyone will see that when I get home. I can say I'm definitely a stronger person than I was before I left, and this "once in a lifetime opportunity" has definitely changed me for the better. Having said all that though, I can't wait to see you all and tell you about what I've done and all my stories.

Corinne



Jake Malouf - France

Wow, what can I say! This exchange is just such a big thing to try and summarise in a few hundred words but I'll do my best.

It seems like only a couple of weeks ago that we were all saying our teary goodbyes at Tullamarine Airport when in fact we've nearly arrived at the halfway point of our exchanges.

I guess I should start from the very beginning. The flight to France was really entertaining, despite it being so long - 32 hours. It was great meeting all the other kids going to France as well as others who were on their way to Switzerland. It didn't take long before we were already friends despite having only met a couple of hours before.

Unfortunately upon our arrival at Charles de Gaulle we soon had to leave for our respective terminals, as we were spread all over France.

After arriving in my host town, the first thing that hit me was the cold. Coming from an Aussie summer to a French winter makes a bit of a change and the small amount of winter clothes I'd bought weren't nearly enough.

After recuperating for a few days with my first family, the Arthauds, it was off for the first day at my school, which is called Lycee Madame de Stael. I think that it's here at 'the LEM' that I've been able to notice some of the largest differences between French and Australian cultures. Differences such as their intense love of food, even if it's just a simple meal made in the canteen, or how nearly every single French person makes an effort each day with their clothes. A pair of tracky pants would definitely not be allowed.

In terms of experiences, I find it hard to pick out just a few from the vast amount of great things that I've been lucky enough to come across here but the standout would definitely have to be the Eurotour, which happened only recently. It was so great spending 13 days with all the other exchange students travelling all around Europe. Amazing... I even got to catch up with Annabelle Dominguez.

As well as being with exchange students on Eurotour there have been Rotex weekends and also the 3 days spent in Toulouse with every single inbound in France. Then there are the trips I've been taken on such as to the French Alps (the snow is incredible), the Mediterranean, Paris, and at one point I was even taken on a hunting trip with one of the Rotarians. (Thankfully just for a day as it wasn't exactly my favourite thing in the world). As you can see I've not been lacking in things to do or try.

I've found the kindness and friendliness of all the people I've met just amazing. If it wasn't for people such as my school friends, my host families (who have all been great), my other exchange friends and of course the Rotarians that I've met, this exchange just wouldn't be the same. I just can't believe how lucky I've been.

From the very start of my exchange it has been the best thing that I've ever had the luck to experience and it only looks like things will get better!

Quel séjour! Merci à tous!

Jake



Jarryd Sutton – Sweden

Well as the 6-month mark approaches I still feel like I'm in a dream. The fact that I'm in a different country and that I won't be home for another six months still seems surreal, as if I'm going to just wake up and be in my own bed. So far I have had the most amazing time, it is unbelievable, and some of the things I have done I would have never dreamt of doing and I definitely never thought I would see some of the things I've seen.

Never in my life did I think I would visit a hotel made entirely of ice, or see a real rocket getting ready to fly into space, or witness a Bandy Grand Final (a ball game played on ice). I didn't even know what bandy was before I came to Sweden. These experiences have all been insane and that is only the tip of the iceberg, I have many more fantastic experiences on the way.

I have been on a snow mobile, been ice skating, seen the longest cross country skiing competition in the world, been to the home of Pippa Longstocking, kayaked in the sea, learnt to ski, seen a moose and lots of squirrels. I'm learning a new language, a new culture and trying new foods - the worst so far being horse, I nearly threw up, and it was made worse by the fact that I could see a live horse as I was eating one, but it's all part of the fun and experience.

I have met so many new people and now have so many friends from all over the world. I can go to New Zealand, America, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Mexico, France, Germany and Canada and will always have somewhere to stay. The other exchange students are fantastic; everyone gets on so well because we're all away from home, in a totally strange country, with new people and a new language. Suddenly we're the foreigners, so we know how the others are feeling and we help each other to get through things; it's fantastic to have them around.

The Swedish school took a bit to get used to, it's not structured like Australian school, you start and finish at all different times of the day. Sometimes you might have six classes, at other times you might only have two. Teachers are more like friends than lecturers; they have nicknames and are generally friendlier than Australian teachers

I have been extremely lucky as my current host family is absolutely fantastic, they help me with Swedish, they are always taking me somewhere, they try their hardest to make it normal and seem like home. We're always laughing and joking and having a good time, I'm having a really great time with them, it will be sad to have to move, but I know my next family is also great and I should have a great time with them as well.

My Rotary club here is also great; someone is always having me over for dinner or taking me somewhere, they love to hear about what I've been doing and they often help out money wise too when I'm going on a trip somewhere or doing something that I can't afford.

I am currently on my first day of Euro tour and it seems like it is going to be fantastic. We're visiting Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, France, Italy and Belgium. We get to see the Eiffel Tower, go on a Gondola ride, have a typical Czech dinner and heaps of other exciting things; I can't wait to eat Belgian chocolate, that's probably why I have put on 8 Kilos already.

Jarryd



Maddie Kaio – Brazil

Now, how I can describe this year so far? How can I even begin? Most of the time it has been this surreal dream and at other times I have felt like I am in over my head. But even though things haven't always been sunny side up I can't say that I don't regret a single moment of it.

I have seen the Iguacu waterfalls, not only from the Brazilian side but from Paraguay and Argentinean sides as well. I've been to the Amazon where I spent days on a boat on the rivers, trekked through the forests and swimming with the pink dolphins. Later this year I will see Sugar Loaf, the famous mountain, and also go to see Christ the Redeemer as well as going to Peru to experience Machu Picchu. How could I regret doing such amazing things?

As well as seeing and doing such mind-blowing things, I've been growing as a person. In the Amazon, despite being terrified I jumped into the black water below me. I jumped even though I was paralysed and hysterical -the moments before were not my finest- and after I knew that, I was stronger because of it. Even small things like talking to almost strangers and tackling a completely different language have made me stronger, even though I'm not the best at the language yet!

A part of the exchange that I love with all my heart is the other exchange students. I have met people from places around the world that I have never even thought about before. Now I want to visit Finland, Denmark, Poland, America and other countries just to visit friends that I have met here. Meeting exchange students is unlike anything that I have ever experienced before. I can meet another exchange students and instantly have a million things to talk about with them. It is incredible the friends that you make from this experience.

Though I am still struggling with Portuguese language, I believe that I have learnt a lot from being in a country that doesn't speak English. It has forced me out of my comfort zone so many times that I can't count. Last year I would have laughed at anyone who said that I would be speaking Portuguese -as badly as I do- the following year. Learning a different language has never been a strength of mine, but this one year will make me rethink learning a different language. When I return to Australia I will definitely continue studying Portuguese because I want to learn a lot more of it.

I have no words to explain Brazil. This country is such a beautiful place. It has shown me beauty in a million different forms but also unspeakable poverty. Comparing Australia and Brazil is impossible because neither is better, they are both just so different. I love Brazil, I love the people, they are so nice, happy and open. I love the places, they are so incredible to see; I have seen some spectacular sights here. I love the food and it's pretty obvious because I have gained quite a lot of weight here, but I can lose weight, but I'll never lose the memories!

Last year I wasn't sure which country would have been the best choice for me, but I am sure that Brazil was the best place that I could have exchanged to. I have experienced great joy here like Carnival and great times with my host family and friends, as well as experiencing a sadness because of the poverty that I have never seen in Australia. Both the good and the bad have changed me.

All-in-all and no matter what happens in the next six months of my exchange I believe that the good times will always outweigh the not-so-good times.

I just keep that Rotary smile on my face and build a bridge!

Maddie



Prudence Cartledge – Denmark

As clichéd as it sounds, I really am having the experience of a lifetime here in Denmark. Now I'm not saying every experience has been an incredible, eye-opening, life-changing moment, because that would just be unrealistic and naïve. But **every** experience; whether it's good, bad or an everyday occurrence has helped in defining the person I am becoming.

My first few weeks here were a blur. All I could think was 'Wow, I am actually here in Denmark.'

The first big shock was the cold. The average day was about minus 2 degrees Celsius. Of course none of this bothered any of us at all once it began to snow. And as one very wise (and patriotic) Dane once said: 'There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing.'

The second big shock was the language. Of course everyone here can speak impeccable English, but naturally they prefer to speak Danish. At first it was a little inconvenient, but it has helped me to learn the language that much quicker. Nothing is more exiting than being able to read the milk carton label at breakfast, or being able to ask the bus driver how far you missed your stop by.

School in Denmark is much more relaxed than back in Australia. The time table is more flexible, you are on first name terms with your teachers, and of course, there are no school uniforms. The school parties are 'something different!'

The highlights of my year so far have been the Galla Ball (Danish equivalent to the American prom), visiting Lego land (a theme park based around Lego) and Rotary get-togethers.

But there are also the simpler pleasures, such as watching TV with my host family, spending time with the people from my school class, or just walking the streets of my city, comparing the old with the new. One of the most beautiful buildings in the town is an old stone church which was built in 1506. Only a little bit before my time!

In a few days I'm off on a bus tour around Europe, travelling to Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, France, Belgium and Holland with around 45 other exchange students in my area. I'm sure you can imagine how excited I am about this.

I meet new, interesting people everyday, am constantly adding new words to my Danish vocabulary, and am even starting to relate to the Danish love of salty liquorice. (Something I was sure would never be accomplished.) I am also enjoying the spring, and the warmer weather that comes with it. It is especially satisfying knowing the weather in Australia is not so lovely.

So here is a huge heartfelt thank you to Rotary and my parents for giving me this amazing opportunity. I know it's an experience that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Prue



Rachel Caulfield - Switzerland

Grüezi! My name is Rachel Caulfield I am sponsored by the Rotary Club of Berwick and hosted by the Rotary Club of Lenzburg-Seetal. I have been extremely lucky to have been given the chance to go on exchange to my most beloved host country, Switzerland. By the time you are reading this I will have been in Switzerland for 6 months. What an amazing 6 months they have been!

Firstly a little about Switzerland itself: There are 4 national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansch. Most Rotary exchange students are placed in the German and French speaking part. I am in the German speaking part. In Switzerland there are 26 Kantons (States) and I live in Kanton Aargau, where about 500,000 people live. The capital city of Aargau is Aarau where I go to school. About 8 million people live in Switzerland and Tasmania can fit into Switzerland twice. I currently live in the middle north of Switzerland in a tiny town called Leutwill. Now that I'm living there the population has increased by one to a huge 721. My current host family owns and runs a cherry farm (funny, but I never liked cherries in Australia and now I eat them everyday) and it takes me around 45 minutes to get to school. I ride my bike; take a bus and then a tram.

Right now I'm living life like a true Swiss teenager. Some people have told me that they didn't believe I wasn't Swiss because of how much I have immersed myself into this country, which makes me feel really good. In the winter I went skiing, in the spring I had a lot of barbecues with Swiss friends (barbecues are very popular in Switzerland) and now, in the summer, there is a lot of swimming to do in the beautiful lakes. I've made some great Swiss friends through my school and through general socialising. It's a pretty well-known fact that the Swiss can be hard to get close to, but as soon as you've broken down that barrier they are the best friendships that one could ever have. I've also been lucky enough to do some dance classes, which I am really enjoying, and in the rest of my free time I try and travel as much as possible within Switzerland. My host Rotary Club paid for me to have a year long travel ticket, which enables me to use all the public transport in the whole of Switzerland for free.

The Swiss culture took me a little while to get used to. The rumours are true: the Swiss are very organized and straight down the line. If a train is 1 or 2 minutes late it's practically a catastrophe. When you are friends with the Swiss you are friends for life; they will help you out no matter what, and will always be reliable and that's something I really like about this country. They are also very proud of their country and their languages; they speak an entirely different language called Swiss German. They read and write High German but they almost always speak Swiss German. There is, of course, a lot of cheese and chocolate (a block of Cadbury chocolate here is only 00.45 Rappen, and it's so good) and of course the best bread that you will ever eat.

Looking back over the last 6 months just amazes me. I've grown a lot and now I know just how much I want from my life. I've learned so much about myself, as a person, and about another country, which I now consider my home. Although I

know my exchange will come to an end in 6 months time, I am, at present, absolutely terrified at the thought of leaving this beautiful place because I have grown to love this country so much.

I would like to thank the Rotary District 9820 Youth Exchange Program, the Rotary Club of Berwick and of course my family for this most wonderful and amazing experience that I am living.

Rachel



Zara La Roche - Austria

I have now been in Austria for almost half of my exchange, although I still believe it has only just begun. Austria is a small country with great character. Initially the people, especially the youth, came across as distant, conservative and studious, but turned out to be insane party-goers on the weekends and beautifully accommodating and friendly people in general.

The language here is a dialect of the German language; I think this gives it a little quirk from the stereotypically conventional and practical German language. It is a little bit harder to learn, but it allows a lot more personality and feeling to be expressed and is a little speck of national pride for the people here, me too.

The landscape is unlike anything I have seen in Australia with rolling green hills (or white in the winter), beautiful and awe-inspiring lakes, cute little pine forests and lots of pastures with the occasional hare or deer. It is like a fairy tale, especially in the winter.

For exchanging in Austria, Rotary organises a lot of events to participate in with other exchange students, and also because of the size of the country it is likely you will be living close to other exchange students, or even in the same class as some at school. This has obvious advantages and disadvantages but promises many unforgettable times and much fun.

My biggest highlight so far in Austria has been our Rotary organised ski week. It was at the resort of Schladming and was the first opportunity for the January inbounds to meet all the other exchange students in Austria. We had an unforgettable week, making many friendships and having the best time in amazing snow.

These experiences and memories of my exchange year are something that will stay with me for life, and will never be a regret of mine. There is nowhere else in the world I would rather spend my exchange year, Austria is so wonderful.

For those considering becoming a Rotary Exchange Student, don't ever hesitate, make the most of every moment, and you will find you have a fair share of good times, make some of the best friendships and memories of your life.

Zara





Mr and Mrs Santa Claus (DG 2008/2009 Ken McDonald and Margaret) with the Inbound and Outbound Students at Forest Edge Camp Christmas Party December 2008

“My dream is for every 17-year-old to become a Youth Exchange student. If we could achieve this, there would be no more wars.”

Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar, President,
Rotary International 2005-2006



Rotary District 9820