

# V E P V A P

**Rotary International**

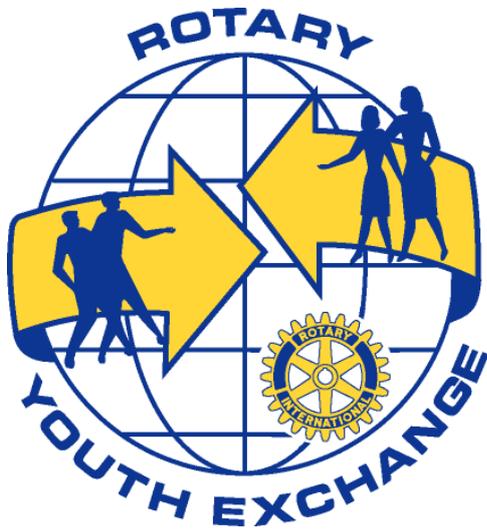
**District 9820**

**Youth Exchange Program**

**Outbound Students**

@

**July 2010**



**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 as District committee members.

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 Governor. In our District, District 9820, David Piper is the District Governor for this Rotary year 2010/2011.

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 portfolio, which looks after all programs associated with youth.

**Rotary District 9820  
Youth Exchange Committee @ July 2010**

Chairman  
Deputy Chairman  
District Governor's Representative  
Treasurer

Anne Cox  
Steve Harkins  
PDG Ken McDonald  
Julie Cartwright

**Country Co-ordination**

Brazil  
Austria, Switzerland and Germany  
Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden  
USA/Canada, France and Japan  
Co-ordinator support

Gus Dominguez  
Steve Harkins  
Mardi Abbott  
Wendy Farmer  
Anthony Mayer

**Outbound Exchange Students  
January 2010 ~ January 2011**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Sponsor Club</b>	<b>Country</b>
Alexander Denison	Mt Eliza	Sweden
Bethany Krasey	Somerville/Tyabb	Japan
Charlie Dobinson	Bairnsdale x 3 clubs	Japan
Crystal Holt	Sale Central	Sweden
Daniel Richards	Frankston North	Norway
Ellie Porter	Berwick	Denmark
Glenn Methven	Warragul	Germany
Grace Graham - Edney	Phillip Island & San Remo	Germany
Hannah Alexander	Frankston Sunrise	France
James Jackson	Sale	Switzerland
Jenny Li	Dandenong East	France
Madeline Stroot	Frankston Long Island	Germany
Meg Glass	Morwell	France
Megan Low	Trafalgar	Denmark
Melissa Howlett	Moe	Austria
Natasha Bland	Seaford/Carrum Downs	Sweden
Nicholas Bremner	Frankston	Brazil
Rachelle Gray	Maffra	France
Stephanie Cahill	KooWeeRup Lang/Lang	Japan
Stephenie Kelley	Traralgon Central	Finland
Tom Dudley	Leongatha	Switzerland
Tyran Hodgson	Rosebud	Canada

# Alex Dennison in Sweden



How funny is it, that one tiny seemingly insignificant moment can change your life in such drastic ways? Just over one year ago I was bored and decided to look through the school newsletter, and just happened to stumble across a little advertisement for 'Rotary Youth Exchange'. I had been interested in Student Exchange for a long time but had never heard of Rotary Youth Exchange. I decided to make the call and inquire for further information; after being part of the selection process I was fortunate enough to be accepted into the program.

Leaving behind friends and family for a whole year is probably one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, especially because all my classmates will be graduating without me. However, having all the other outbound exchange students at the airport made it a lot easier. The journey over to Sweden was long and tiring, but I finally arrived, admittedly slightly under dressed seeing as though there was a temperature difference of nearly 50°.

Settling down into a routine in a completely foreign country was sort of a surreal feeling. With differences such as school, snow, language and many other things it was a difficult task, but thankfully I have an amazing host family. I was extremely lucky to be placed with this family as they have had many exchange students before and have therefore been able to give me advice on many things I was going through.

In the past five months I have been a part of so many experiences that I would have never thought possible. I have been snowmobiling, travelled above the Arctic Circle and visited an Ice Hotel, skied in Sweden's best mountain range, cross-country skied on frozen lakes and travelled to Norway. All of these events would never have happened if I hadn't gone on exchange, so I am so grateful for being given the opportunity.

Another great thing about the past six months is that I have met some of the most incredible people ever. I have met people from Argentina, Canada, Mexico, South Africa, Germany, France, New Zealand, Japan, and USA. I don't know how to explain it, but there is some sort of link between exchange students, because no matter how long you have known them for or how different your personalities may be, they all have the ability just to get along with each other. Some of the friends I have made in the past couple of months, I feel as though I have known for my whole life, and I know that I will keep in contact with some of them for a very long time.

As with each individual exchange student's time away, there are going to be positives and there are going to be negatives. I have certainly experienced the best of both, but I am so thankful that I am a part of Rotary District 9820. Whether it be the Rotarians themselves, the Rotex students or the inbound and outbound exchange students, everyone gives their utmost support whenever it is needed. So to all 9820er's I thank you very much.

I am soon off on a month's trip that includes: spending a week with another exchange student in Sweden, 17 days travelling around Europe on the Euro-Ramble and then a week's visit from my parents.

Now looking back at how my life has changed because of Youth Exchange, I am so happy that I decided to read my school newsletter.

*Alex*

# Bethany Krasey in Japan



It is at the six month stand point, but to me it feels like two. Everything has gone by so fast. I recently read over my diary and couldn't believe that the things I had written in February really happened all the way back then.

I am always trying to better my skills in the Japanese language so that I never really see how far I have come. However, after I look at it properly, I notice that somehow from no knowledge at all I have come to know how to say each part of the human body in Japanese, and I didn't memorise that from a list. I've learnt lots of new words from different situations so when I put it all together it surprises me. I, of course, have a long way to go to being able to speak Japanese fluently, to read my beloved manga (Japanese comics) or understand movies.

I have embraced Japanese food despite how much I initially thought I would dislike it. Yes, I did dislike it at first, but slowly and surely I have become used to it, and the more I eat it the more I love it. I am sure that upon arrival back in Australia I will ask for some green tea instead of water. I want to cook my family a Japanese meal when I return, not really because I want to eat it, more because I would like to look cool. Sorry family, please put up with me.

One more thing my dear family will have to put up with is the fact that Japan has become a part of me and I am taking the culture home with me. For example, never again will I eat rice with a fork. I shall also be pestering my parents to install a Japanese bathroom and buy a kotatsu (heated table type thing). I will also, most probably make them all learn Japanese.

School has been the love of my life; probably not in the way teachers are hoping, but I have made amazing friends and together we have 'studied' some of the stupidest words in the Japanese language. People tell me it's okay if I don't remember how to say 'hostage' and 'open sesame' in Japanese, but I object because it has helped me make a lot of people laugh. The Japanese people are a good group of people to make laugh.

In my head I am already planning my return to Japan after my exchange is over. I am sure that this year will definitely not be my last time in Japan. I hope to keep on improving my language and cultural skills and I also want to keep in touch with all the friends I have made.

Thank you Rotary for providing me this opportunity.

*Bethany*

# Charlie Dobinson in Japan



Here I am, sitting in a cosy little house in Japan that has been my home for as long as I care to remember, and I'm staring firmly down the barrel of the fifth month mark.

No beefs about it, exchange is no holiday. The host country will welcome you as you attempt to live your exchange year, only under completely different circumstances than you are used to in Australia.

Over your year, you'll learn so much more than may have been apparent before you left home. You'll obviously learn the language and cultural traditions, but it goes a lot deeper than that. You'll learn how different, yet similar, the people of the world can be.

It may be a surprise, but you will most likely learn to appreciate your own culture more as you weigh up and compare ideas. Most of all though, you'll definitely make a journey on a real personal level, and, no doubt, you will change.

Exchange isn't always easy though. There are so many differences to encounter that may startle and shock you, even though it might not seem apparent at first. During the first weeks of your exchange remember that everything is "new" and "different".

I've often heard exchange is a rollercoaster, and that description fits so well. You'll have blazing highs, and deep lows. It's almost as if the emotional spectrum widens. It's like going through the same emotions as at home, but at greater levels.

Exchange isn't for everyone. You have to be extremely tolerant, adaptive, friendly, independent, modest and willing. You are an ambassador, and that entails rules as well as discipline, and putting your crazy ideas and travel plans aside; holding yourself back.

You have a responsibility, and Rotary has a responsibility to your parents. I often found travel rules to be slightly limiting, but now I look at those rules as the ones of an over-protective, nevertheless loving and righteous parent. It may seem absurd sometimes, but Rotary really, really cares about you.

Over my year, now at this point, I have slipped into normal life. I can't imagine not being here, and time has a weird flow to it.

My first two months, or so, were what I call the 'honeymoon'. Everything seems new, amazing and brilliant. I didn't experience any negativity or homesickness. I was absolutely out of my mind, talking to everyone, and absorbing everything about the wonderful new culture, surroundings and people. I look back on this time with great happiness.

I think I really established a good base for the rest of the year in those initial months, and that positive attitude is the greatest feeling.

Travelling to amazing places and interacting with amazing people is what defines exchange and makes it worthwhile.

Really, I'm just about over the mid-hump, and the future is looking so bright for the rest of exchange. The places I've been, friends I've made and the pure, blissful memories will stick with me through life. No doubt about it, the world is expansive, and there's no better way to get an intimate feel on that than through Rotary Youth Exchange.

*Charlie*

# Crystal Holt in Sweden



Well, I have been here 6 months now. I can say I have tried things I never thought I would, and definitely discovered myself.

When I got off the plane in Stockholm and walked out and saw my host parents holding a sign saying 'Welcome Crystal' with Swedish flags all over it, I knew this was going to be one of the best experiences ever.

On the second day after my arrival, despite

the jetlag and being so extremely tired, we went for a 6km cross country ski. This was the very first time I had ever been skiing, but it was so nice. It snowed some of the time and we were on a frozen lake that, I found out later, we would swim in during the summertime. Soon after my arrival in Sweden I went to a language/introduction camp where I met other exchange students from Australia and students from New Zealand and Argentina. We learnt some language, but also got to know each other.

In February, I got to experience another first, curling. And let me just say that I am so bad at curling! It's much harder than it looks, trust me. I also went downhill skiing for the first time, and failed miserably, but that

didn't stop my host brother and host dad taking me out there again, and again, and again. It was great fun.

My family in Australia are lucky because they have hosted a Swedish exchange student in the past, so I had the pleasure of going to visit him in Stockholm. It was the first time I had been to Stockholm. I instantly fell in love with the beautiful buildings and the harbour, it is an amazing city. While I was there I did something that I never thought I would ever do; in fact I always thought it was a crazy thing to do but while it was snowing and about  $-15^{\circ}$  I went into the hot tub, it was so much fun! We also went and watched my first game of 'Bandi', which is a lot like hockey, but played outside in the snow and more 'Swedish'.

In April, the exchange students were invited to a camp, way up north in a place called 'Kiruna'. It was absolutely beautiful there with the most amazing hills, lots of snow and great people. We got to do things like: go to the ice hotel, visit Narvik in Norway, go on snow-mobiles and have a Swedish traditional dinner consisting of Swedish food, Swedish songs and traditional Swedish costume. It was a great experience and awesome to meet people from all around the world.

School here is very different to in Australia; I think perhaps it's more like Australian university. You come for your classes and you go home when you're done. My school has been really great with providing me with Swedish language lessons, music classes and great class mates. My host family has been so kind to me, taking me places and showing me things. We went to their villa in the country. It's so beautiful there, surrounded by farms and woods. They have also taken me to Hamburg in Germany. That was, in one word, 'amazing'. We looked around at this beautiful harbour city and at all the beautiful buildings and, of course, I had my first German sausage. Yum!

In May, I went on a Rotary weekend to a place called Kalmar. We were meant to go rowing but it turned out that the Swedish weather had other plans for us. It rained the whole time, causing us to do indoor activities like bowling, eating lots of junk food, and, of course, we talked a lot.

More recently, the weather has been getting warmer and warmer, and by that I mean up into the  $20^{\circ}$ . I went for my first swim in the lake with my friends the other day; it was really exciting but I was freezing while the Swedes were swimming around like 'oh it's so hot today'. I love my friends here; they have all been so welcoming and kind to me, especially the other exchange students; I feel like I will be friends with them for life.

*Crystal*

## Daniel Richards in Norway



The last six months have been the greatest six months of my life. I would talk about the ups and downs, except there have been no downs. The Rotarians prepare you for times when you want to come home but that is the last thing I want to do right now.

Thinking back to the first time I picked up the advert in the school newspaper I remember thinking “I’ll never get in”. But I tried anyway and passed the preliminary interview and went on the first weekend. It was all so surreal to me and even as I boarded the plane I still thought something was going to happen and I wouldn’t get to enter Norway.

But now I have arrived and “wow” the things I have done and the things I have seen are amazing. I am 15 years old and I have travelled all around Europe. I have skied and snow boarded down the Norwegian mountain sides and I have gone from living in a city with over 4 million people to living in a town with just under 3000 people. I remember my first day in Norway; I was in Oslo staying with a family because my flight to Stokmarknes (the town where I am now) didn’t leave until the next day. So I arrived at Oslo Airport having spent 24 hours in the air and I was tired, but there wasn’t the time to sleep, so we went and had a try at the biathlon (skiing and shooting) and then a ride on a snowmobile – it was a great first day.

I have done so many things in so many places: went to the Berlin Wall in Germany, went to the city of a hundred spires in Czech Republic, crossed the alps in Austria, took a gondola ride in Venice, up the Eiffel Tower in Paris, crossed the channel to England and in two weeks I’m off to Denmark and Legoland.

And just in Norway I have learnt to ski properly, eaten whale and moose and reindeer, sailed through the fiords on a re-created 17<sup>th</sup> century ship, been to the Viking museum in Oslo where they have the 3 oldest most well preserved ships in history (from over 1000 years ago), visited the Nobel Peace Prize Museum and found a book written by my great grandfather in a Norwegian museum.

People often wonder why I would have chosen to come to Norway. Well the answer is simple: I wanted to go to a place that was the complete opposite from where I live and that’s exactly what I got – I went from 40° to -30°, from 4,000,000 people to 3,000 people, from sand to snow and from a family of 3 to a family of 8 and I love it.

If you are reading this and debating whether to go on an exchange or not, then put down this book, find the application form, fill it out and send it to Rotary because there is no question, this is the best experience of any young person’s life.

*Dan*

# Ellie Porter in Denmark



I can't believe that I'm writing for YEPYAP already and that 6 months has gone by. I was told by a lot of people that this year would fly by, but I didn't really believe them. Now I see what they meant.

I can really tell that I have changed as a person. My attitude towards life, the universe and everything. I never realised how differently people in the world can live. It never ceases to amaze me how different Denmark is to Australia. Exchange has really opened my eyes to a whole other way of living, communicating, and relating to people.

These past 6 months have been the hardest, most challenging, most emotional, and the best of my whole life. I am so excited about going back to Australia and being more mature and more ready to continue on with my life. I learn more and more about myself everyday and it's making clearer what I would like to do after I have finished school.

I went on Euro tour last month, and it was the most exciting and tiring experience of my life! I saw some famous buildings, pieces of art and sights and also made some amazing friends. One thing I am loving about being an exchange student is that we make friends with people from all over the world. I have become really good friends with so many exchange students. It's so great to be able to talk with people who are going through the same experiences as I am, especially when it's in times that are so drastically life changing. I am really going to miss my exchange student family after my exchange is over.

A huge thank you to Rotary for giving me this opportunity to change and improve. I shall see you all in January 2011, and tell of all my wonderful adventures!

*Ellie*

# Glenn Methven in Germany



I'm sitting in my German math's class as the teacher talks to us about linear equations. Perhaps that isn't the most exciting thing in the world but I can't think of anywhere else I'd rather be. I have never had so much fun, seen so much, done so much and lived through so much in my whole life.

My exchange really started back last July at the selection camp. We all met and made amazing friendships. From there we built on those friendships and together we prepared for our year away. The real adventure began, of course, at Tullamarine Airport when I walked towards those big doors and said goodbye to my family, my friends, my country, my culture, and my language. I walked through the doors with the world at my feet, ready to take on the world. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January I arrived in a winter wonderland. I was in a brand new land with new people and new language and new culture. On my first day I went ice-skating with my host brothers. I stood there on the lake looking around, watching children skating; all I could hear was the German language.

This was an important moment for me when I realised I was really living my dream, and I realised from what I could see and hear that I wasn't home back in Warragul. This feeling was incredible. I'd made it!

The first couple of months consisted predominantly of simply adjusting to everything; taking everything in, learning, getting a feel for things and having the time of my life! I learnt so much.

This year I have met so many wonderful and interesting people from all over the world. I've seen an amazing amount, and at times I just smile to myself or even sometimes laugh out loud, it is all so wonderful. I have walked through German towns covered in snow, seen the rolling hills of the Danish countryside and had my breath taken away by the amazing old buildings in Lübeck. I've spent time exploring the canals of Venice with a German, a French and an Indian, I couldn't believe my eyes as I exited the Cologne train station and saw the most incredible cathedral I have ever seen, and I've eaten spaghetti in a café on a cobblestone street as a band entertained us. In Barcelona, I've had a conversation with a Spanish man who couldn't speak any English (there were lots of hand gestures involved), I've sat with a friend by the Rhine in Düsseldorf, gone to Denmark just for a hotdog, and eaten Belgian chocolate in Brussels. The thought of Belgian chocolate is enough in itself to put a smile across my face.

When I go home at the end of each school day, together with my host family we talk about our day, what we think about different things that have happened and just whatever comes into conversation, and, of course, that will all be in German language.

In a few days time I will travel with my host family through Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

There is nothing to compare to the exchange life.

So to wrap things up, I'd like to end by thanking the remarkable people who have made it all work for me. The Rotary Club of Warragul for choosing and sponsoring me, the people involved with the Rotary Youth Exchange Program who make it all work, The Rotary Club of Flensburg for hosting me and of course my family for supporting my dream.

*Glenn*

## Grace Graham-Edney in Germany



It's almost impossible to put the last six months into words that make sense and not just a jumble of feelings and emotions, and an over-use of the words 'awesome', 'amazing' and 'fantastic' and about 20 other synonyms that mean the same thing.

Rotary Youth Exchange has been one of the best choices I have ever made and, I think, one of the best experiences I will ever have!

The first six months have been a crazy non-stop time with the highs undoubtedly outweighing the lows. The beginning of my journey was a bit rocky, choosing where I was going to spend my year (and I now know that I made absolutely the right decision with Germany), and the settling in process once I arrived. It was quite a challenge to acclimatise myself to my new surroundings, the different culture, so many new people and, of course, an unfamiliar language.

One of the hardest things for me to comprehend coming from Australia (a country so big there is no such thing as a day trip to another country) is Germany is only about 4 hours from the French border, and that is how I spend my weekends. I have recently

returned from my Euro tour around Europe, which was an 18 day roller coaster ride and one of the coolest things I think I have ever done. Forty six Rotary Exchange Students in one bus for 3 weeks, travelling through 6 different countries ... an incredibly difficult thing to describe.

Prague and Berlin were my undisputed favourites. I loved Prague because it was different in so many respects, particularly its architecture, and (well, I am a girl and I'm sixteen) ... Prague has awesome shopping! Actually it's for similar reasons I loved Berlin. In a moment of small drama, the other Australian students and myself got completely lost and ended up in Turkish ghetto Berlin. After a small anxiety attack we discovered it was fantastic, and it made a great story to share with our fellow travellers.

A crazy aspect of touring with 46 new best friends on Euro tour is that sleep becomes a figment of your imagination after about the first 4 days. This happens because you want to make the most of every second; you just don't want to miss a thing - every moment must count!

The friendships that Rotary Exchange kids develop are perhaps the most difficult thing to explain - there is a shared bond that is created instantly – it's like an instant click and then they are your family. I guess the one thing that I have learned most about on exchange, is myself. Lately, I have been thinking and reflecting a lot about how I have had to learn quickly to deal with good and bad situations; how I have had to change my ability to look at things and, as a result of that, I see life very differently and look at the world in a new way. Being plucked up out of the security of family and well known friends, and surroundings that are as familiar as the colour of your own eyes (comfort zone in the true sense of the words) and dropped into an entirely alien environment, challenges everything you think you know. That experience has a life changing effect and while in some ways it's made me realise how small I am in the grand scheme of things, it has also given me the skills to plant my feet and stand on my own, on my little patch of the planet.

*Grace*

# Hannah Alexander in France



Bonjour à tous!

So, I'm finally here in France, after months of preparation and anticipation. I'm here, eating baguettes with butter and confiture for breakfast, some days going to school from 8 till 6, and speaking French all the time. The language was definitely a lot harder than I had anticipated, but once I started speaking it all the time, I began to understand more and more. Now I can understand everything people are saying. I still don't understand my chemistry classes though, but that's understandable.

Life in France is wonderful. I catch buses everywhere, I go to school in the city and hang out with my friends in the free hours we have during the day. We go to cafes and eat delicious muffins and sip amazing hot chocolates, or go to the conservatoire and play piano and other things like that.

It was my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday this week; I had two other Australians stay over and we had a big dinner with my host family.

I have just got back from the Euro tour a week ago. The tour was incredible; it was very tiring, but absolutely amazing. We went to

Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Monaco, Italy and around France. I met the funniest students on the tour; they are people that I'll stay in contact with long after my exchange is over.

France, in general, is beautiful. Springtime in Besancon was absolutely exquisite. The trees had flowers of every imaginable colour hanging from them, the sun was warm and it was beautiful. Time flies on exchange, I'm already in my sixth month here. I don't want it to end.

I've got some really wicked, crazy school friends and the other exchange students are absolutely amazing. One student made me a big cake for my birthday. I also have an amazing set of host families, which I just have the most incredible relationships with. I'm loving my time here in France; it's taught me so much about myself and about the world and I am extremely grateful for this opportunity that can most certainly be described as 'life changing'.  
Merci à tous et à bientôt!

*Hannah*

# James Jackson in Switzerland



Going on exchange was one of the biggest decisions I have ever had to make and if I had to make it over again, nothing would change. Rotary Youth Exchange has done such a great job to ensure this year of exchange for me is a great experience. Prior to my departure, Rotary gave me such great preparation, and looking back I see how important it is to be well prepared for the great events and the not so good things you hope to avoid, but are, nonetheless, prepared for anyhow.

I must say, the ground temperature of  $-5^{\circ}$  was a bit of a shock, especially after the few hot weeks we had in Australia. After touching down I was met by my first host family, who were very excited to see me, and I was, surprisingly, energetic considering I had had no sleep on the plane. When I stepped outside I took a deep breath. Taking in the clean, crisp, cold air, and with a smile on my face, I knew I had arrived in my exchange country, Switzerland.

They told me the weeks would fly by; of course I didn't believe them. They were right, and I suppose I should have known that time does fly when you're having fun. If I think about it, when I was at home in Australia there was the occasional boredom, but here it doesn't hit me because I may be doing something I always did in Australia, but knowing that I am doing it in another country just blows my mind.

They talk about culture shock, which I didn't notice so much. The language however, hit me like a 10 ton truck. Just sitting in a room listening to the Swiss speak is an amazing feeling. Just knowing that they are talking a completely different language and that one day I too will be able to sit there engaging in those very conversations is the strangest feeling. The one thing I regret is that I let people talk to me in English for too long. I should have thrown myself in the language immediately and tried to make my way without speaking English or having others speak English to me.

The host family I am living with and my future host families, that I have already met, have been amazingly kind. I must say that I underestimated it when I was told that these people would make me feel like part of their family. I was prepared for some initial awkwardness, but it just wasn't there. As soon as we met I got massive hugs from all my family and at that moment I knew I was going to be very happy with them. As I soon learned, this is the attitude of all the Rotary families. As I met more and more of these friendly people I realised how wonderful this Rotary organisation really is.

School is an absolute blast. Not only is it my social hub but it is where most of my German speaking is done. I have known exchange students who have complained about having to go to school; I do not understand that. School is one of the best things of my week. If you told me 6 months ago how much I was going to enjoy school I wouldn't have believed you.

School is where I've made the majority of my friends. I thought that joining a new class and being so different I would be excluded and would have trouble getting into the groups. But, it was no problem. They accepted me with open minds and I made friends in a snap.

Since I have been in Switzerland I have seen many of the major attractions of this beautiful country. I have seen most of the major cities, including Luzon and its beautiful historic streets and its famous bridge. I have seen Basel, with its historic buildings, and I have to mention that I went to its zoo, where they have an Australian section with kangaroos. I have seen Zurich with its high end shopping and bustling streets, and Bern, the nation's capital, with the houses of parliament and its magnificent Aare River flowing through the city.

The time that I have spent so far in Switzerland has been absolutely amazing and I can say with utter confidence that it will only get better from here.

*James*

# Jenny Li in France



Those who know about Rotary Youth Exchange know how amazing it is. But it is only those who have experienced it for themselves that truly know the impact it can have on you.

For me, the months that have gone by already have been a rollercoaster ride. There are hard times and there are really good times, however you learn from each experience you have, whether they be bad or good. Through your experiences you become a much more mature person.

Heading to France for a whole year was really scary for me. At the start I didn't know anyone, and I found learning the language very difficult. Despite thinking I was prepared for it, culture shock came out of nowhere. But it is through confronting difficulties that I am growing stronger and realising that life challenges you everyday, not just on exchange. For anyone thinking of going on exchange I can only offer the advice of not to have too many expectations, because exchange is always full of surprises.

I thought I knew a lot about France, because I had learnt about Paris and tourism, and also about the stereotypical things like French cheese, French wine, French bread, the Eiffel Tower and awesome Paris. It is only when you live here you see the real France and get to become part of the country and its amazing culture.

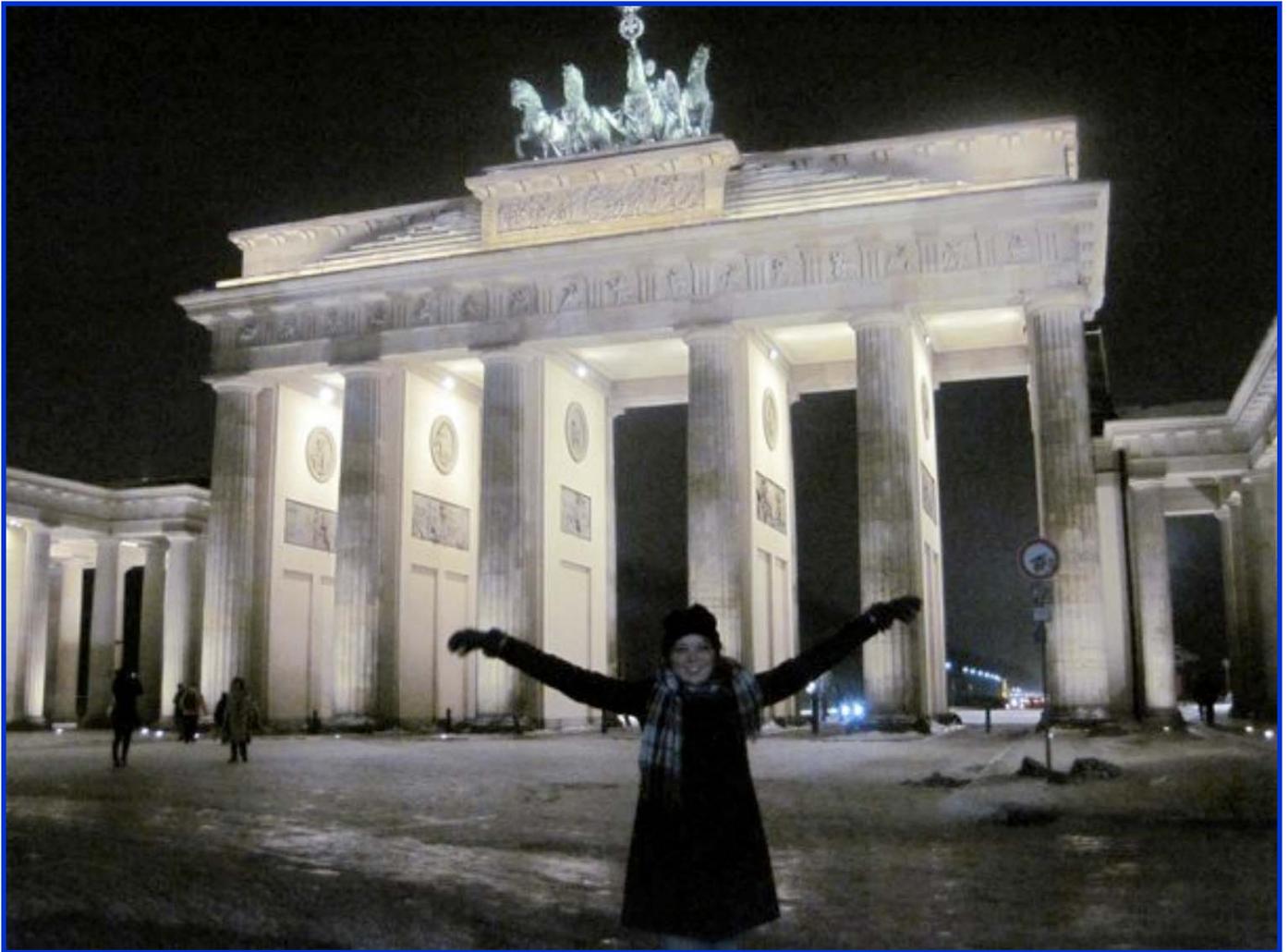
I have met many other exchange students from all over the world, and learnt so much from them. In June I went on Euro Tour for 13 days and it still shocks me to think how close everything is here in Europe. In just a couple of hours you change country, language and climate. We travelled through Paris, Strasbourg, Munich, Innsbruck Verona, Venice, Florence, Monaco and Nice, and lots of other places in-between. I have met people who have changed my life, and met people from countries that I didn't even know were part of Rotary Youth Exchange.

On the tour I felt very proud to be Australian, especially at times when we sang our Australian national anthem and Waltzing Matilda. As good Australians, we handed out Vegemite on crackers to everyone for a taste and told them it was Australian Nutella; of course they took them with a big smile, but soon spat it out. It was funny to watch their faces, and even funnier when we eat spoonfuls from the jar, they couldn't believe we enjoyed the taste. Vegemite is part of being an Aussie!

I am loving being on exchange here in France, and I will be forever grateful to the Rotary Club of Dandenong East and Rotary District 9820 for allowing me to experience this absolutely amazing year.

*Jenny*

# Madeline Stroot in Germany



I call Germany my home because it is. These past 6 months have been the most amazing adventure and learning experience I will probably ever have. I've created myself a second home, I've made the best friends, I have a family that couldn't be any more amazing, and I've travelled more than my imagination could have taken me.

I reflect on my feelings when I was back in Australia and remember the excitement and anticipation that was building up in me. It sent shivers of joy and suspense through me. Before I left Australia I spent a lot of time thinking about what everyday life would be like for me on exchange and it is surprising to realise how comfortable I am here and how relaxed I am with my family.

The moment I arrived in Germany I had my first culture shock; I was coming from the hot Australian summer to Germany at  $-10^{\circ}$ .

I am very fortunate to have a host sister that is only one year older than me and we are in the same class at school. She has helped me so much and made me feel comfortable and, with that comfort, helped me meet new friends.

In the first month of my arrival in Germany I was off to Berlin with my host dad. He has family there and it was his grandchild's birthday. I couldn't believe my eyes when we got there, I was actually in Berlin. The next month my family took me to France for a ski trip. We spent 10 days in the French Alps. I could never get sick of waking up each morning and heading off for a day's skiing in the French Alps, it was absolutely spectacular.

I remember early in my exchange my host mum's mother came to stay with us for a few days. She is such a loving lady, and I remember one day just sitting quietly, thinking, when she leaned over and casually patted my hair. I was so surprised that such a simple gesture filled me with joy. That simple gesture mattered so much to me. It's moments like these that make exchange.

Euro tour was the most amazing trip I know I will ever take in my whole entire life. We travelled around Europe in a bus with the most awesome people ever – Rotary exchange students! The tour would still have been amazing without the other students, but the friendships and contacts I now have all across the world is beyond my wildest dreams. During the trip, I discovered so much and learnt so much about the world that, for me, there is now no going back, only forward. We started the trip in Germany and made our way to beautiful France, stopped in Switzerland, and then Italy, and after Italy we went to Austria; it was all gorgeous.

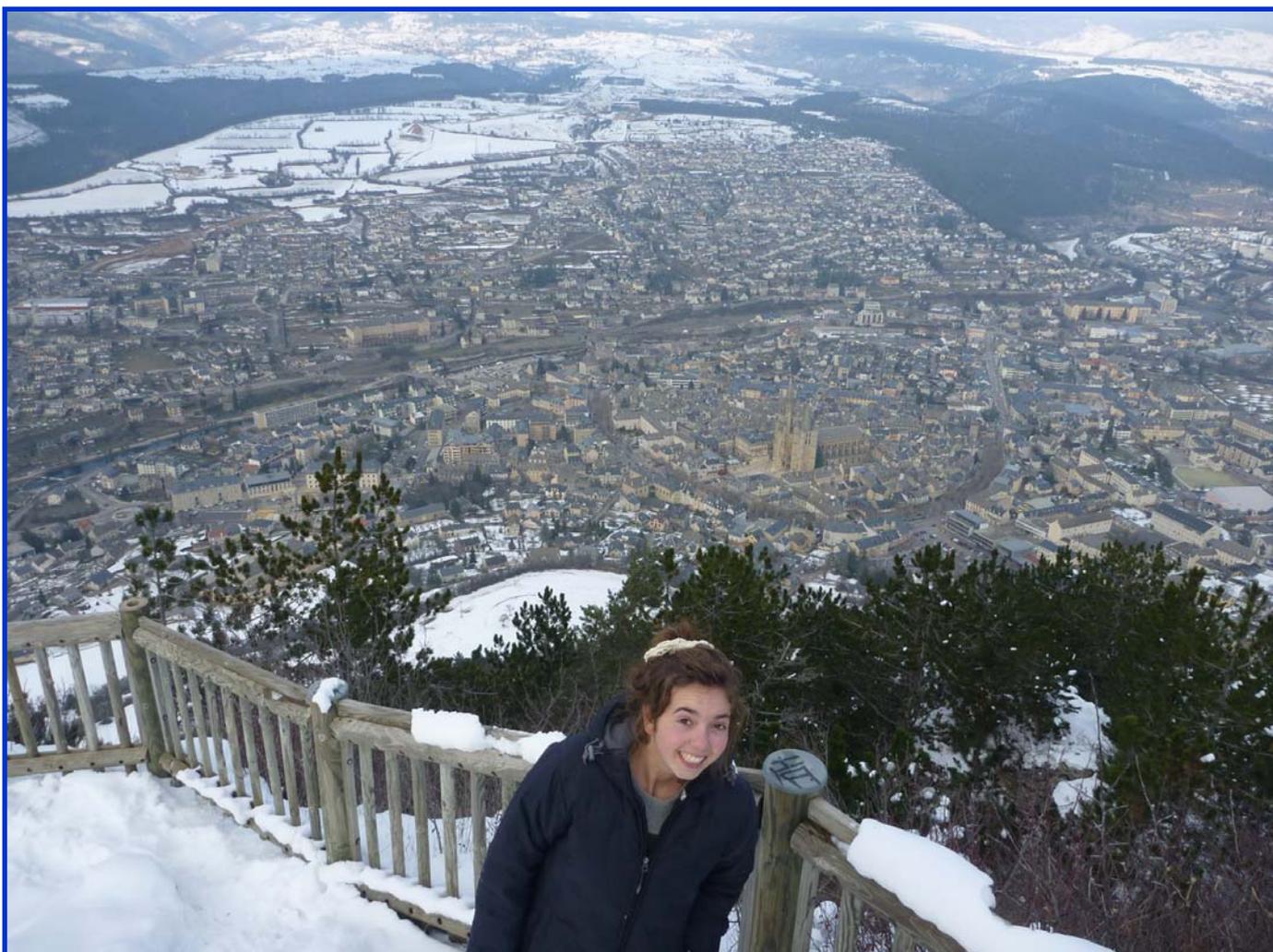
On our way to Czech Republic we stopped in Slovakia, which was wonderful. We stayed in Prague and that day we got great weather. Our last stop was Dresden in Germany; it was the night where we all reflected on our time together because it was our last night and the next day we would all be back home. It was a very emotional time for some students as, in just a month's time; they were flying back to their home country. We'd all become such great friends during Euro tour.

On my first night back with my host family, even though I was on the verge of passing out with exhaustion, we waited up till 12 midnight so they could wish me a happy 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. My family organised a party for me and invited all my friends along. The biggest surprise though was that they told me they were taking me to Spain. On July 6<sup>th</sup> I will be heading off with my family to Spain. I am so excited.

My life here is something I am very proud of and I am incredibly happy.

*Maddee*

# Meg Glass in France



What can I say that hasn't already been said a thousand times? Well, I know you're probably sick of hearing the phrase but I really 'can't believe we've already been here for 6 months'. The time has honestly flown so fast that I'm already finding myself making plans for the summer holidays here in France, when it feels like I only just left them in Australia.

You hear people always saying 'live your life day by day' and I think exchange is one of the best reasons to take that on board - if you need a reason. Before I came on exchange I was a fairly shy girl, and I know now that I'll never take speaking English for granted again.

I think as much as we try to tell ourselves we're ready before we get here, we can never really imagine what it's like to be living an entire year out of our family, out of our country and out of our home. It's one of those classic cases of 'you don't know how much you've got 'til it's gone'. For me, one of the scariest moments of exchange was honestly the moment when I couldn't sleep on the plane and thought

to myself, “God, I can’t wait to get home and just relax”, and then realised that it would be a long time before I could ‘just relax’ at home.

The region which I’d been placed in was, I’ll admit it, initially a bit of a disappointment. But now, 6 months in, I feel so lucky to be where I am. People tell me that my region, The Lozère, is the ‘cœur’ of France; there is still a lot of old tradition in the area, like the food people eat and even village festivals. I’ve heard there is a ‘changement des vaches’ festival, which is basically when they move their cows to the high plateaux to feed during the summer (because in the winter the plateaux is covered in snow).

I feel lucky to be in my region because the landscape is absolutely amazing. There are gorges and valleys and plateaus and mountains, and in the winter there is snow everywhere, which is absolutely beautiful. And I feel lucky to be here because I know that I’m seeing the ‘real’ France, the local delicacies, the local wines and cheeses; there is even a local language spoken by farmers on the plateaux.

An exchange year is full of ups and downs, but one thing I know is that the ups are always more frequent than the downs. Waking up in the morning and remembering how to pronounce the French word for ‘yoghurt’ (after some earlier difficulties) can put me on a high for the whole day.

One of the major highs of my exchange so far has been the Euro tour, because I couldn’t think of any better holiday than spending 2 weeks on a bus through Europe with 52 other exchange students there to share it with me. Before the Euro tour, nearly everyone had spoken at least once with every other person going on the trip, and I think that’s because Rotary Exchange Students are really great at making friends. They want to learn about other peoples’ cultures and languages, and they want to have friends all over the world.

But none of this would have been even close to possible without Rotary. So I’d like to thank District 9820 Youth Exchange, my sponsor club, the Rotary Club of Morwell, and my host club, the Rotary Club of Mende-Lozère. Everyone back in Australia did a lot to get me where I am, and I know it was a lot of effort, so thank you all so much.

*Meg*

# Megan Low in Denmark



Well, it's YepYap time. And I'm wondering how I'm supposed to fit all my experiences so far into just a few paragraphs. All the hard things like shocks, frustrations and troubles, and all the good things like laughter and fun, friends and family, learning and experiencing. Well, I'm going to try.

I've learnt to live in a different family and to have sisters, and I've traded my farm life in Australia for a small town in Denmark. At first it was hard to deal with so many changes and I felt very lost, but everyone was so patient with me and all my clumsy attempts at being a Dane. By opening myself up to others who could help me, I made so many new friends.

School was a huge shock! It was so different to anything I could have ever imagined. But my classmates were awesome; helping me out the best they could. Sometimes I felt really alone because I couldn't be involved with what was going on. I felt like there was a glass screen all around me that disconnected me from everyone else. That wall slowly came down with language and smiles and laughs, and now I feel like I belong. All it took was just a little time.

But those are just the everyday things. There are so many other awesome things that have happened like parties, adventures and, most recently, Euro Tour. Euro Tour certainly is one thing I will never forget. So many people and places that I loved, and will miss so much. They were definitely some of the best 18 days for my life.

I have learnt how nothing in life is constant. Just as you begin to feel comfortable, everything changes. You get a new family, school starts or ends and the weather takes a turn for the better or worse. These times can be the hardest, but they are also the most interesting. These times are when you learn the most about yourself and others. Changes are not good or bad, they are just different, and you can always learn to like them.

But there are so many things in Denmark that I am going to miss when I leave early next year: my friends, my families, my school, the food, the culture and the Danish language. There is no way I can really explain how much I absolutely, adoringly, love Denmark!

*Megan*

# Melissa Howlett in Austria



For 3 years it has been my dream to be a Rotary Exchange Student in Austria. Then, at age 14, my dream came true. It is hard to believe I have been here for already 6 months, it has gone so fast!

Austria is a great little country in central Europe that has everything – apart from the beach. I have been fortunate enough to visit the capital city of Vienna, which is a city full of culture and class. I have also visited both Salzburg, the birth place of Mozart, which is the place to visit if you are crazy about music, and Innsbruck, which is full of history and gives you the opportunity to explore its amazing mountains, rivers and forests.

I am living on the edge of a cute little village named Zirl; this is about 20 minutes west of the city of Innsbruck and is only 30 minutes away from both Italy and Germany. When I walk outside I am surrounded by the amazing Austrian Alps, the beautiful blue sky and lush green fields. Think of typical Austria; that is where I live. I love it!

At my school in Innsbruck, I am in the graphic design class, which is completely new to me, but I have managed to learn a lot about art. My teachers and classmates are really nice and quite interested in Australia and teaching me German. Most days it's quite a lot of fun. In Austria they speak German, but every state has its own dialect. I live in Tirol so I'm learning Tirol-ish as well as High German, which is quite confusing. But I can tell I am slowly learning.

Austria is a very small country that every year manages to host about 60 Rotary Exchange Students. Rotary Austria is very supportive of the Youth Exchange Program and they organise many events for us. In February they organised, and ran, a two week German course, then in March they organised a one week skiing trip, and in May they organised for all 60 Austrian inbounds and some inbounds living in Croatia, Hungary, Switzerland and Germany to make a three week tour of Europe. This tour was the best three weeks of my life. Seventy five exchange students, 9 countries, 3 weeks and 2 buses all added up to a lot of fun. Later on in the year I have more Rotary weekends away so I can explore more of this lovely country.

Some days I find it hard to comprehend that I am now 15, have travelled Europe and am living this amazing life in Austria. The past 5 months I have experienced and learnt so much. It has been hard at times but things only seem to be getting better. I can not imagine missing out on this 'once in a life time' opportunity.

Thank you Rotary, this year is proving to be an amazing year!

*Melissa*

## Natasha Bland in Sweden



My exchange really began after stepping off the airplane by myself at Luleå Airport. I can remember a lady talking to me and me just shaking my head not understanding a word she was saying.

I remember how cold it was outside, and how small I felt. I remember the three hour drive to Gällivare, my host town, with my host dad. I was looking out the open window, with my camera in one hand and the other hand covering myself from the snow pouring in; I was in such awe of the amount of clean, white snow.

I can remember my first day at school, how nervous I was, and the questions that were fired at me. There were many expected ones, like riding kangaroos to school, and also the not so expected ones, like was I an aboriginal.

I can remember the first time skiing and the battles I faced. The fact that I still can't do it, and that I don't think I ever will be able to. The fact that my host family wouldn't let me quit until the season ended. I remember their faith in me.

I can remember language camp down south in Vimmerby, playing the numerous rounds of 'I have never', the friends that were made and the bad attempt at learning Swedish.

I remember the first time I went shopping by myself, feeling so strong and independent until the shop girl asked if I wanted a bag, and I broke inside. I remember my first sauna with all my new friends; the dizziness from the contrast of the coldness of the snow and the heat of the sauna. Sadly I also remember me jumping in face first and almost breaking my nose.

I can remember my first Swedish party. I remember the music, the laughter and the epic attempts at teaching the Swedes 'The Melbourne Shuffle'.

I can remember the second Rotary camp I attended up in Kiruna. The friendships I built with many Americans and a Kiwi. We had some great adventures exploring the Ice Hotel, seeing a Saomi perform, and learning to Ice Fish.

There are so many things I can remember about these past six months and each has been amazing. Sweden has been more than I ever imagined it to be, and each day I face something new, that I know is going to turn out to be even better than yesterday.

Euro tour is coming up soon, a Kayaking camp this coming weekend, and my parents are coming to visit, so I have so much to look forward to in the next few weeks.

I've learnt so much about myself, and I have learnt to appreciate everything I have back home; because being away from it all has been the hardest thing possible. But I'm conquering it, and becoming stronger each day, all due to Rotary Youth Exchange.

*Tash*

# Nicholas Bremner in Brazil



One word to describe my time in Brazil – 'Indescribable'.

The people I have met, the places I have been, the friends I have made, the exchange students that have changed my exchange into something incredible, and all of the memories that will be with me for the rest of my life. All these things will stay with me forever.

So far, I have been to Iguassu Falls (Paraguay and Argentina in the same trip), Rio des Ostres, Rio de Janeiro, The Amazon, Cabo Frio and Buzios.

The Iguassu Falls trip and the Amazon trip were mind blowing. The tour organisers dedicated so much of their time to help us all turn our exchange from amazing to incredible. I can't wait until November to go on the North East trip for a month. I hear it's nice in that part of Brazil. What am I saying? Brazil is incredible anywhere you are.

So far, my exchange has brought me so much fun and enjoyment that it, hopefully, will bring a lot more amusing and exciting times for the next half of my exchange.

In the first few months of my exchange I experienced language shock, culture shock, time difference shock, food shock, and many other kinds of shock that I didn't really expect.

Carnaval was one of the craziest things I have ever been to and seen in my life! So many people, so many amazing outfits, and many new friends and people you met dancing and partying throughout the whole experience. I had only been in Brazil for about one month when Carnaval came around, so I was still a bit culture shocked. I had no clue what anyone was saying to me, but in one night I was called 'German' about 10 times. I think that people in Brazil think I'm German.

In Nova Friburgo (my host city), there were 7 exchangers: Cody and Nina (American), Phillip (German), Johanni (Finnish), Thomas (French), Dempsey (Australian), and me. We've all formed into a family and we do so much together. We go out on the weekends, watch soccer games on TV, chill out after school and heaps more things.

I still can't think of any combination of words to express to everyone what sort of experience I am having, and will hopefully continue to have for the future months of my exchange.

But this has been just incredible and I don't want it to end.

*Nick*

# Rachelle Gray in France



*“A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.”* Lao Tzu

Since the day I arrived in Montpellier, France, I have felt welcome amongst my host families, my Rotary Club, and my class at school. I was thinking everyone was going to be really snobby but everyone has been amazing and it's like I have a second family of crazy French aunts and uncles, which are my host parents and their friends.

Everyone has helped me so much with settling in and learning the language. I came here thinking I knew a little bit of French, but in the end, it was nothing! When you're actually in the country with fluent speakers, you realise just how much you don't know. Of course there are also the differences between the French language used by adults and that used by the teenagers at school; which, as you can imagine, has terms and expressions that have no English translation and take a while to fully understand. Before coming to France I really thought that English was the hardest language to learn, but I have never been more wrong! The most complicated thing in French is all the conjugation of the verbs; there a millions of different rules you have to

use depending on who you're talking to or whether the object/person is feminine or masculine. As you go along though, it slowly gets easier.

Another thing I've found is that if you show you're making an effort to learn, people are going to help you and be patient with you when you try to speak or understand. At the start I understood basically nothing and if somebody said something to me that I didn't understand I felt bad asking them to explain over and over and over. To learn though, it's what you have to do. At times you can tell it's frustrating for the person and when they show that, you just let it go. However, if you ask someone to explain what they are trying to tell you and they say 'don't worry about it', that's even more frustrating, so you just have to try and explain to them that you really want to understand.

I've just come back from my 11 day Euro Tour, and it was probably the best 11 days of my life. The countries we visited and the things we saw were amazing and breathtaking, but the thing that really made the trip unforgettable was the people I was with. I know that sounds really cliché, but it really made all the difference. We went to some amazing places, but in-between those places we all spent a lot of a long time on a bus together, and that's where we slept, talked and got to know each other. We started out on the first day knowing a few people, but by the last day nobody wanted to leave because we were friends with everyone. The friendship wasn't just, "yeah we're mates", it was more than that; the experiences we'd had together made a bond between the group. The bond was so strong that, on the last stretch of road before we got to Paris at the finish of our trip, a big, tough Argentinean student said some things over the microphone which, if we weren't already bawling our eyes out, reduced us all to tears. In the end there wasn't a dry eye on the bus and he shocked us all because what he said, we would have never expected from him.

This whole exchange is an amazing opportunity and I really want to thank everyone who has made it possible. Without you I would never have even dreamt of meeting the people I have, nor done the things I have done, or learnt half the things I have in this short 6 months. But, in reality, my journey hasn't only been 6 months, it started back in Australia, 15 months ago, with one little letter, and will keep going long after I get home.

*Rachelle*

# Stephanie Cahill in Japan



Japan, 'the Land of the Rising Sun'.

When I arrived here, I was amazed. Firstly how cold it was and secondly how heavy my luggage seemed to be while I was carrying it to the domestic terminal. I was nothing short of exhausted and couldn't wait to get to Nagoya Airport. When I arrived at Nagoya I was warmly welcomed by all my host families and host Rotary Club, it made me feel at home straight away.

After settling in for the first week, I went to my first day at school. Japanese school is a lot different to the Australian system. At first I could barely keep up with a word they were saying, but I did understand when students took out their phones and asked for photos with me. I was so pleased that everyone wanted to be my friend. I am also now part of an after school club called 'Kendo', which is Japanese traditional fencing, I enjoy it a lot.

A couple of weeks after arriving I met Rotarians from my Rotary District Youth Exchange Program and other exchange students. There are 8 of us inbounds and we all get along really well.

The Rotary Youth Exchange Program here has had a few outings, including a Ski tour. This tour was an amazing experience that I will never forget. I made a lot of new friends and saw snow for the very first time. It was so cold and wet, but a huge amount of fun. I hope to go snowboarding again one day and to be able to stand up on the board without putting fear into everyone within a 10 metre radius on me.

When I first got here I thought the language was very difficult, but my family were great at helping me with the things I didn't understand. I started a language school, which has helped me a lot with such things as writing and pronunciation. Because of the language lessons I feel more confident with making friends and school work.

Japan has many festivals and traditional places to visit, and everyone is very willing to explain what-is-what in their country.

I went to Tokyo with my first host family; we went to a famous shopping street in Harajuku but could barely move because there were so many people. I found it a most interesting place to be though. When the sun goes down in Tokyo it's the most beautiful place you could imagine - just like a sea of light. I can't wait to go back there.

My exchange has to be by far the best thing that has ever happened to me, and I am enjoying every second of it. I couldn't thank Rotary enough for giving me this opportunity. I think this is a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity that everyone should experience.

*Steph*

# Stephenie Kelley in Finland



My first step onto Finnish soil was as I walked across the tarmac to an awaiting bus to take me to the terminal. It was  $-26^{\circ}$  and I was in a t-shirt and pants. From that moment onwards, I knew I had come to the right place and that I was going to love it, as I have.

After dressing myself correctly, by wearing almost my entire suitcase, I was ready to face Finland.

So far, I have swam in a lake that was almost frozen over, then jumped into a sauna at  $+80^{\circ}\text{C}$ ; I've played Floorball, been ice skating,

I've done downhill and cross country skiing, and ice fishing. I caught a fish and have photos to prove it. I have celebrated Easter the Finnish way and been to folk dances. I've toured Helsinki, had 3 days in St Petersburg and so many more things.

I live in Sysmä, which has a population of 4500; it is located on Lake Päijänne which is the second largest lake and deepest lake in Finland. It has 1886 islands and 200 km of shore-line touching Sysmä. There are 3700 summer homes in Sysmä and each summer Sysmä's population triples because everyone comes to stay in their summer homes. Sysmä is two hours north of Helsinki and located between Lahti and Jyväskylä

Because Sysmä is a relatively small town, I have met and spent a lot of time with all four of my host families. I now feel like I belong in Sysmä and participate in as many activities as possible, which have included the Municipal Sports day, a charity event for the Haiti disaster and all of the Rotary Club activities.

School has been a really important part of my exchange. It has created the opportunity to form wonderful friendships and I have enjoyed the different approach of the Finnish education system. I get to choose my timetable, so it is a little more interesting than for the Finnish students. I chose subjects that didn't require fluent Finnish and are fun, like art, sport and English. I have given many presentations on various topics at the secondary school and I have spent a lot of time at the primary school because one of my host mothers is a primary school English teacher.

I have also built up a good knowledge base about the Finnish medical system due to a crash I had while I was downhill skiing, which resulted in a torn medial ligament and severe tissue damage. But I am well on the way to recovering with the help of my first host mother who is a physiotherapist. I still have to wait 3 more months before I can take part in sport again. I thought it was really funny because in Finland you get crutches with spikes on the bottom to help walk on the snow and ice.

Thank you everyone for making this experience possible, I love Finland!

*Steph*

# Tom Dudley in Switzerland



Die Schweiz! What can I say? ... Where do I start?

Just the thought of being thousands of kilometers away from the comforts of home, the regular sounds that one normally hears, and seeing the people that mean most to you, makes a frown appear on my face, but then I think 'wow', I am in another country. I am in a country with a different way of life; I am in Switzerland where the greatest cheese and the most delicious chocolate ever known to mankind are made, but that's only the start of it. Chocolate is so cheap too!

When someone says Switzerland, what do you think of first? Maybe the cheese (hmm) or the chocolate (hmmm), or maybe the mountains and lakes! These are the themes that tourists think of when Switzerland comes to mind. Let me tell you, it's completely and tremendously better than any story you've heard, photos you've seen or books you've read. I can't explain how awesome it is without

getting in trouble from Rotary for the use of exceedingly offensive language. Must keep it PG rated!

One problem with being an exchange student, no wait ... not a 'problem', but an 'opportunity', is to move further on from being a tourist and to become integrated into the normal lifestyle. I have made some great new mates that I will remember for the rest of my life, I have seen what really makes this country click and I feel that I have a backstage pass to the real life here in Switzerland.

Another thing about being in Switzerland is it's about the size of Gippsland. I have been to the north, the south, the east, the west and also I have been lucky enough to visit France and Germany. I hope to be visiting Italy and Austria very soon.

I have been skiing, snowboarding, and hiking in the Swiss Alps. I have been sightseeing in the cities and checking out all the old castles and beautiful old parts of towns. I have seen crystal clear lakes with backdrops of snowcapped mountains rising into the sky. I have seen glaciers slowly crawling into the green valleys divided by crafting rivers seizing each passage. Yes it's really that amazing!

I remember when I was little, hearing about all those fascinating adventures that older people have, I was always envious of what they experienced. Its funny to think that it's now my turn to experience another part of the world; to experience new tastes and smells, to experience the weird, but normal, way of life, and to know I will return home speaking a new language. These experiences are worth so much.

I know I only have one year to make it the best year of my life. I am seizing the opportunity with both hands.

*Tom*

# Tyran Hodgson in Quebec, Canada



Before leaving for my exchange I was always a little worried that I might get really homesick and want to come back home early. Now it's been 5 months and I can't believe that I was ever worried. I haven't felt homesick once while I've been here, and I think it's because my family here is so much like my own back in Australia. I feel like I've never left, and that this is my home now. My host brother and I are like real brothers and also best friends. He is only 1 year younger than I, and he has most of the same interests as me.

My Rotary Exchange District do a lot of short trips. The trips I've done are to New York, Toronto, Ottawa and Niagara Falls, and I have done a school trip to Philadelphia. Living in Quebec, the French part of Canada, I've learnt to speak the French language.

School is still a little hard, but I'm passing more and more now because my language has improved so much. After the holidays I'm hoping that another 2 months of just speaking French will make me able to understand everything in school, so I can pass as much as I can.

I'm looking forward to July because school is finishing; I head off for Cuba for 2 weeks, and when I get back I haven't got school until September. I'll have to plan what I can do because all the other

exchange students finish their exchange in July and will have left by the time I get back from Cuba. I do still have a lot of friends from school that I can go out and do something with though.

I have been with this one host family for my whole exchange so far, and even though I know it isn't normal, I think that it is much better because they are really good and fun and I'm very lucky to start my exchange with them. I have been told that I will be changing families around September time, but I think the new family doesn't have any children and I'm not used to a family without children. I guess it's another experience to have anyhow.

After I come back from Cuba, I'll be trying to get into Quebec City as much as I can because it is so different to Melbourne. It doesn't have the high rise buildings like Melbourne and it feels more like a large European village, which is strange because we think of North America to be just like the US.

I still have another 6 months here; the past 6 months have gone by so fast. I have missed my family and friends while being here, but because while on exchange we are always doing things and experiencing things that we can't do in our own country, sometimes I forget that I'm even an exchange student. I think that I have always been here, and that I forget there are people back home who are missing me. I'm just having too much fun.

*Tyran*



**January 2010**  
**A group of our students at Tullamarine Airport**  
**heading off on their exchange**

*“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, World President,  
Rotary International 2005-2006



**Rotary District 9820**