



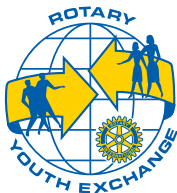
Yep, Yap

September 2011

Rotary International District 9820

Youth Exchange Program Outbound Students





Congratulations...

we have selected you to take part
in the Rotary Exchange Program

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, Kel Hobby is the District Governor for this Rotary year 2011/2012.

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.



Mardi Abbott

Rotary Youth Exchange Chairman

District 9820

www.district9820.org/





There are fun activities between presentations and time to mingle (and ask questions) with the newly arrived Inbound Exchange Students. Here you see the students on their 6:00am morning walk through the Aussie bush.



Outbound 2011 Students say goodbye at Melbourne Airport



The prospective Outbound Students have their duties, responsibilities and expectations explained. Over the three camps we cover issues like home sickness, insurance, safety and language and all the important issues required to prepare them for their exciting year on exchange in another land. There are some informal (like this one) and some formal presentations, including a special Rotary Club meeting at the camp.



Caption?



Reach Within to Embrace Humanity

Rotary District 9820

Youth Exchange Committee 2011

Chairman
Deputy Chairman
District Governor
Treasurer

Mardi Abbott
Dan Kraan
Kel Hobby
Julie Cartwright

Country Co-ordination

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

Dan Kraan
Wendy Farmer
Lucy McRae
Anthony Mayer
Anne Cox

Outbound Exchange Students January 2011 - January 2012

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Abbey Gray - Germany

'Abbey, Congratulations, we have selected you to take part in the Rotary Exchange Program.' These few words were all it took for my life change. I was your average teenager who was waiting for a chance to experience the world from a different perspective. Now here I am, living in this beautiful land of Germany, and realising that the world is bigger than I had ever dreamt of.

It's really hard to believe I have been on Rotary exchange for over 4 months! These have been the most incredible months of my life. The day I left for exchange I wasn't scared, nervous or even excited, it was an emotion I have never experienced before. On the plane trip, I couldn't sleep I was anxious to see who was waiting for me at the Frankfurt airport. When I arrived in Germany I was greeted by my host family, councillor's family and the YEO of my Rotary Club. There were so many people and they all had strangely pronounced names I could hardly say. Even though I'd see these names on paper before coming to Germany they sounded nothing like I'd been practicing. We went back to my councillor's house and had a very traditional German Breakfast, I looked out the window and it started snowing!

The first month of my exchange was so surreal. Every morning I would wake up, walk to my window and just stare out into the snow thinking 'this is my life now and I love it' My definition of Exchange is 'the year of firsts' trying amazing new foods, new school, different way of living and learning a new language.

*"the world is
bigger than I had
ever dreamt of"*

Learning the German language is mighty difficult and I would have to say it's been the biggest hurdle I've had to jump, but I'm determined to be able to communicate in their language fluently. The better my German becomes the easier it is to participate in family, school and social life.

I have met the most incredible people here in Germany, friends I will keep in contact with for the rest of my life. These people have stuck with me through the highs and the lows of Exchange and I couldn't have done it without them. I have had two wonderful families so far

who have adopted me into their families. Laughter and communication is the key to a successful exchange.

I have truly fallen in love with the German's and apart from small difference with food and customs; both Australia and Germany have very similar modern day cultures. I now understand that every country is different and diverse and you can never judge it by one person or what you see on TV.

Throughout the months I have been on exchange I have travelled around Germany and I have seen some breathtaking scenery. One of the highlights of my exchange so far would definitely be the week in Berlin with the other exchange students in my district. We saw so many things including the Berlin wall, the Brandenburg Gate, the Fernsehturm (largest tower in Europe) the history of Berlin and the haunting memories of World War 2.

I'm the luckiest person in the world and it's all thanks to the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. I have achieved so much in these short months and no one can take these experiences away from me. I just want to take this time to say thank-you for giving me the 'chance of a life time'.

Abby





Abby Butler - USA

This time last year I was counting down the days until I left Australia, now I'm here and time is going too fast. I cannot believe that it's almost been 6 months. To think that how fast the first half went, the next half is going to go twice as fast. Being in the United States on exchange is by far the best thing I have ever done. Even though I do get asked every single day to keep talking or "Your accent is so cool."



The first 3 days I was here I had seen real snow and having “snow days” at school was even better. That meant I could go outside and make real snow men not just sand or grass one’s that don’t even work well. I have been to Washington DC, the capital of USA, it was so amazing how I was in a place where all the US President’s have been. I went up the Washington monument and I could look out over DC it was so pretty and covered in snow. Speaking of snow, I have been skiing and snowboarding, and being me, the uncoordinated person I did really well..... at least with the skiing. Snowboarding not my thing Skiing was so scary at first but by the end I was pro.

School here is so different; you would think it’s just like on the movies right? Well almost. I am now a morning person because of the time they get up. OH and they do have those yellow school buses! I was so excited to go on one.

We are now in spring going into summer! It’s so green and colourful outside, all the wild life has come out of hibernation now and I am seeing my first squirrel and chipmunk. They’re so cute! I love the really warm whether they have here, they say it’s too hot and I always say, “This isn’t even hot”.

*“Exchange is by far
the best thing I
have ever done”*

I still have half a year to explore more of the U.S which I’ll be looking forward to. In the start off my school holidays I will be taking the U.S.A tour, I start in Arizona and finish in San Francisco, you could say I’m a little excited but that’s an understatement.

Abby





Alexandra Cornfield - France

Bonjour tout le monde!

So, I am going to try not to sound too cliché, but 6 months already? You can never quite believe how fast time goes when you are on exchange, trust me, it literally does just fly. Halfway through your exchange you kind of have this sudden moment of realisation, you are leaving in six months! You can never take any part of this year for granted because it will just zoom past you, and you will be too slow to catch it as it goes past.

I have been living in Strasbourg, which people mistake for Germany, all the time! Even though it has very German influence on their houses, and food. It is most definitely France! I am so lucky to be living just outside a major city of France and I make the most of it every day!

School would have to be one of the hardest things. I found it really hard to make friends, and some days I would just say to myself "What is wrong with me? Why don't people like me?" But that's just it, there was nothing wrong with me, it just needed time. Now I am very happy with school, and I have lots of friends. I guess that is definitely one of the major things I have learnt from being an exchange student, if something is hard, or you just can't seem to work it out, just keep throwing time at it. Just throw all your efforts, and all your time until it works out for you. You can't expect something to work first time around.

This also applies to the language too, luckily for me; I had a small grasp of the language already when I got here, which I know helped me so much. You don't realise how quickly you learn the language when you are completely submerged in the culture. I feel much accomplished now, as when someone asks me "Do you speak French?" I respond loudly and very proudly "Of course!" I am not quite fluent, but I know that by giving it time (ah, that word again!) I will get there!

I was also really lucky to get some amazing host families, who I love very much. They are all so different, one with no children at home, the other with three. You really have to learn to adapt really quickly to home-life with your host family, do what they do, and they will love you. I am so close with my host family now that it is going to be so hard to leave them, but experiencing another family and their way of life is a new adventure! You just have to learn to take everything as it comes.



The food here is possibly the most amazing thing ever, it is all cream and pastry and meat. You gain weight just by looking at it. I am loving every moment, and I love not caring about how much weight I put on because hey! It's only a year right? So I am making the most of the French cuisine!

To say that I am always busy is a complete understatement. So far I have been on a bus trip to Spain, starting at Paris, then Versailles and down to Barcelona for a week with about 50 other exchange students all in a bus. It was an absolutely amazing week and I made amazing friends from every continent who I will be friends with forever. My second host family also took me to the south of France for a week, with another Australian exchange student too. We visited Cannes, St. Tropez, Nice and Monaco. We stayed in our own little French villa overlooking the bay with our own pool, it's the things like that, that really make you come to appreciate how amazing exchange is. I have also visited Switzerland and a few parts of Germany with friends and host families.

I have done things that I never could have done by staying in Australia, I have danced and played air guitar in the busiest square in Strasbourg, I plucked up the courage to walk up to random English speakers on the streets asking if they needed help, and I have made best friends with an American without whom I probably couldn't have gotten through the tough times.

You really come to rely on friends so much, that is why you become so close, so quickly. You are all each other have for some of the times and I know that I now have lifelong friends who I can depend on and trust forever.



I am so grateful for this amazing experience, I am so lucky to have been able to ride a bike through the gardens of Versailles, or stand outside the Monaco Castle, or ice-skate on top of the Eiffel tower. But you get to realise that this is what being an exchange student is all about, learning that there is more to life, it shows you how much you can experience.

I like to think of exchange as a very big swimming pool, at the camps we are sitting on the edge, not sure how cold the water is going to be. We see all the “big kids” who are already in, or have just gotten out, telling us how amazing the water is and how we need to get in even though it may seem scary at first. By the plane we have our toes dangling over the edge, terrified about how our bodies are going to react when we jump. And then we do, and we plunge our whole bodies into this massive pool of exchange. It’s cold for the first few minutes, but after a while you get comfortable with it, start to enjoy the fact that after the slight difficulty of taking the leap, you are where you truly belong.

I think of Strasbourg as my city now, as my home, and where (by the end of the year) I will have had some of my best memories, with my best friends. These past six months have been like a ridiculously fast experience missile, and it is sad to think I am coming home in 6 months, I don’t regret anything I have done. I know that I have grown, and experienced things that many 15 years olds can only dream of. I am a completely different person because of exchange. I know who I am; I am a French-speaking, friend-making, experience-taking, barrier-breaking teenager who has taken the dive.

Gros Bisous

Alex



Amy Coleman - Denmark

8 countries, 5 months, Hundreds of new lifelong friends, 1 exchange student, an open mind and 7 more months what more could possibly be ahead?

Who knew exchange would be so much more than just going to school in another country and trying to learn a language? Sure we are told at the camps that it's going to be the best year of your life it's going to go so fast and that you should take every opportunity that comes your way, but honestly I haven't really believed this until now, when I have to sit down and remember all the things I have done all the people I have met the places I have been and the challenges I have overcome.

Looking back at when I first left my family at the airport and the first week in Denmark and being unsure about everything. If I have the strengths to really stick this year out, if I'm ever going to learn this impossible language, if I will be accepted by my peers and if I am ever going to get over this horrible jet lag. Although I had many fears in my first week but I am surviving it, living it and taking every opportunity I can.

These 5 months have made me realise that life is not just high school, it is more than the colour of your hair, the clothes you wear and your social status. Just in the last 18 days of these 5 months I have been on euro tour with ten different cultural back grounds seven different languages and one bus. Just in the last 18 days of these 5 months I have been on euro tour with ten different cultural back grounds seven different languages and one bus.

We have been to and experienced...

- Germany - Walk along the Berlin wall looking at the amazing meaning full art work
- Prague - we visited a concentration camp which was extremely interesting and very confronting. It made me think how mankind can be so cruel.
- Austria - in Austria we found a little Australian restaurant and has some Vegemite on toast and spiders. We then went to an classical music concert which was amazing
- Italy - we went on a gondolier ride through Venice discovering the city it was an amazing experience and my favourite city on euro tour



- France - climbing the Eiffel tower and looking over the city; then watching the lights come on and sparkle in the evening something I will never ever forget
- Belgium - the chocolate it tastes SO good.
- Amsterdam, Netherlands, tomorrow is the last day of euro tour It is going to be so hard saying good bye to all the new exchange friends I have made over the last 5 months. As they will be returning to their home country in the next month, but I am sure we will all remain friends for life over facebook. I will always have some place to stay if I ever decide to travel the world.

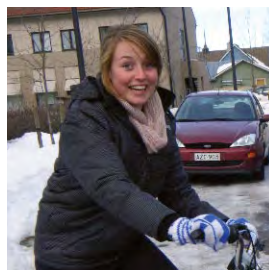
"I am more aware that we are all different and I have learnt to accept people for who they are and not who I want them to be. There are so many interesting people, cultures and beliefs in the world. If we could all let go of our own little worlds and accept others for who they are, what they believe in and not what we want them to be, the world would be a better place."

"Hundreds of new lifelong friends"

I would like to say a Giant thank you to Rotary, My Family and friends at home, all the wonderful exchange students I have met that have made this 5months so wonderful and my new found Danish friends and family.

Amy





Amy Robinson - Finland

At the beginning of the year when I thought about how my exchange in Finland would turn out, I had no idea of the reality of the world, I had hopes and expectations but of course I didn't really know what I was getting myself into.

It's so strange to think that half of my exchange has come and gone, and I know that when I am home back in Australia, the whole year will feel like a dream. Without a doubt, this has been without a doubt the best year of my life.

Although I have my ups and downs, the more time that has gone on the less downs I have but I guess that's all a part of it, learning to deal with the bad days and appreciate the good ones.

My first family, although had no children living at home, were really traditional and taught me so much about the Finnish culture, they lived about seven kilometres out of town so riding to school every day was a good exercise and I became good friends with the others living in the same community who went to school with me.

When I first started school I was really nervous and at first a lot of people were really shy but everyone was so nice when I started talking to them.

I spent a lot of time during summer at their summer cottage which was a beautiful little house set on the lake where I lived. My host mum and I lived there with her sister and husband and other family members were always visiting. I loved it there. Every evening I would go running and then have a sauna and swim and afterwards have a sausage, another Finnish tradition.

I moved in with my second family two weeks after moving in with my first, while my first host family went to Australia to visit their son who was also on exchange. My second host family were Russian so while living there I got a taste of the Russian culture as well as the Finnish.

I was living in Finland, in a Swedish speaking town, with a Russian family! They had two daughters, one living in Russia and one who is my age. We got on really well and although we didn't hang out together in school we were best friends, I love her like a sister.



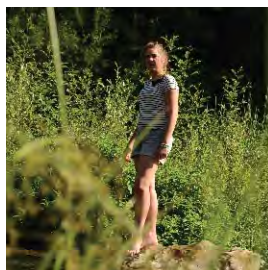
While living with that family, although I only lived there for a month, they took me to a ski resort near the Russian border where I first learned to snowboard, we had so much fun.

At the beginning of the summer holidays I went with all the other exchange students around Europe for three weeks, I can only describe it as a once in a lifetime opportunity. It was something so special and I know I will never do anything like that again.

I have never seen so many things and had so many new experiences in such a short time. I will be ready to come home but right now I just don't want to think about it. My friends have planned to come to Australia and visit me one day but there's no way I'm not coming back to visit them: I love Finland! As much as everyone who lives here hates winter and the snow, it's one of my favourite things about this country. Thanks!

Amy





Emily Lade - Switzerland

After a 24 hour flight to Switzerland, with one Winsome Browne, I was greeted at Zurich Airport by my second host family (as my first family didn't have a car). They had a sign with my name, which now hangs in my room, but I was told they recognised my odd hairdo from pictures they had seen on facebook. WARNING: Everyone looks at your Facebook.

After two days at their house, I went to a two week camp in the Swiss-German part to learn a bit more of French. Here I met the funniest, most amazing exchange students and we enjoyed ice skating, swimming, numerous trips to Migros (Swiss Safeway) and some language lessons in the spare time. When I returned, I started school which was the most intimidating thing I've ever done. It was extremely hard, for the first few weeks but afterwards when you have real friends, it becomes a lot easier and more enjoyable.

The cold weather didn't seem to be worrying me until I realised that I had a permanent cold. The most frequently asked question about Australia surprisingly isn't anything about kangaroos. I get asked the temperature, and how far away I am from the beach. Without fail, in that order, every time.

After one month, French didn't seem to get any easier, and I would fail epically every time it came to conversation. But after taking every opportunity to speak, it improved rapidly and I received my Exchange Student milestone, my French dream!

*"Exchange has
been absolutely
mindblowing"*

When things seem to settle down I decided I would go to Milan for the day so I took the train at 5am and spent the day in the fashion capital of the world. After another four weeks at school, we had one week of holidays for carnival, most of which I spent either in the street eating kebabs, or going out with friends, I was loving life.

After that I spent another 5 weeks at school and then I had two weeks for Easter holidays. I passed these holidays in Portugal with my first two host sisters which were just amazing. We visited many sites and beaches and I got my first taste of sunlight since I arrived. On my



return from Portugal, I changed host families for the first time. I love this family more than the last and everything is going fabulously.

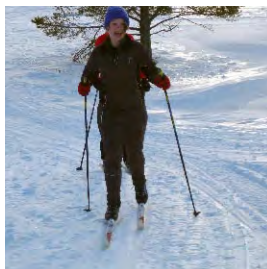
During the summer holidays, I will be travelling to London, Italy and somewhere in Europe unknown until we arrive at the airport. One thing that separates Switzerland from the other European countries is we don't have the typical Eurotour. So in October, I will be going on two separate trips to Paris, and to Rome and Venice.

Just two weeks ago, my mother came to visit me. She stayed with my host family and me just for the weekend. We showed her around the town and she took every opportunity possible to make fun of my weight gain. I blame it on the chocolate; I am in Switzerland after all.

These first 4 months of exchange have been absolutely mind-blowing. It has been nothing like I expected, just so different and so much better! Now I can't wait to see what the next 7.5 months have in stall for me!

Emily





Isabelle Onley - Sweden

"Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve." - W. Clement Stone

This quote has been my mantra throughout my whole experience of Youth Exchange, from June last year when I was first given the opportunity, to this day. And I truly believe it has helped me - whenever I have moments of doubt or homesickness, I tell myself what a wonderful chance I have to grow and mature in a foreign country.

It seems like only yesterday I was looking at last year's edition of the YEP YAP and thinking how wonderful it would be to be in those students' well-travelled shoes, and it's hard to believe that, now, I am! That it's my turn to head off on Euro Tour, to tell everyone about my experiences, my host family, my country.

These past four months have gone so fast it's as if I've blinked and missed them, but when I look back they seem like a whole lifetime - a lifetime of new people, places and adventures. My host family has been so wonderfully welcoming to me, and has made me feel right at home. I really am a part of their family now, and I love that I can say I have a second home in Sweden. I've made friends that I know I'll keep for the rest of my life, though when you've shared as much as we have I think it would be hard not too!

My arrival in Sweden could not have been more of a culture shock. I came from the middle of an Australian summer to the depths of Scandinavian winter - darkness, snow and twenty degrees below zero. Having grown up on a chicken farm in a small country town, Stockholm seemed like a whole new world. But a whole new world was exactly what I wanted, and by now I feel as if it's all mine. I can't tell you how chuffed I was the first time I conquered the subway system on my own - now I know my way around the city better than some of my Swedish friends!

Everyone I meet is so fascinating, and also so fascinated with Australia. People want to know if I've seen a kangaroo, a crocodile, or a shark - but their first question is always; "What are you doing here?!" quickly followed by, "But why Sweden?" I love the feeling of just chatting to a complete stranger, on a bus or in the street, and having them wish you luck with your life. I have met some of the most inspiring people, and the exchange experience



has definitely given me a lot of confidence. My year is not even half way through yet, and I already feel that I've changed and grown as a person.

One of the things that make Rotary Youth Exchange so wonderful is that it offers students the opportunity to have their own adventure but, at the same time, share it with others. It's wonderful to know that you have a support network stretching over the entire world, and getting together with other exchange students is like a big family reunion.

Last week, I went canoeing in the Stockholm archipelago. How many times in my life am I going to be able to say that? It rained the whole way and I froze, but it was one of the most breathtaking experiences I have ever had - along with standing on a mountaintop looking over the border of Sweden and Norway.

One other comment I have heard countless times this year is, "Aren't you a little young?" I know that I am definitely not the youngest outbound this year, so I'm sure that others will have had this too. I was fifteen when I arrived in Sweden, and while I may be up to a few years younger than some of the other exchange students, I wouldn't have waited for anything. I feel that so much of my growing up will happen this year, and I'm so pleased that it will happen here.

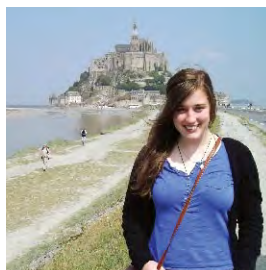
*"Offers students
the opportunity
to have their own
adventure"*

My advice to anyone thinking of going on exchange is, firstly, DO IT, and secondly, don't let anyone tell you that you're too young, or too old, for that matter.

Also, don't feel that you are limited by what you know and what you're used to. It's so much better to go somewhere completely different than to stay inside your comfort zone, which, in my opinion, defeats the purpose of the experience. I am having the time of my life this year.

Isabelle





Marley Angus - France

Salut à tout le monde,

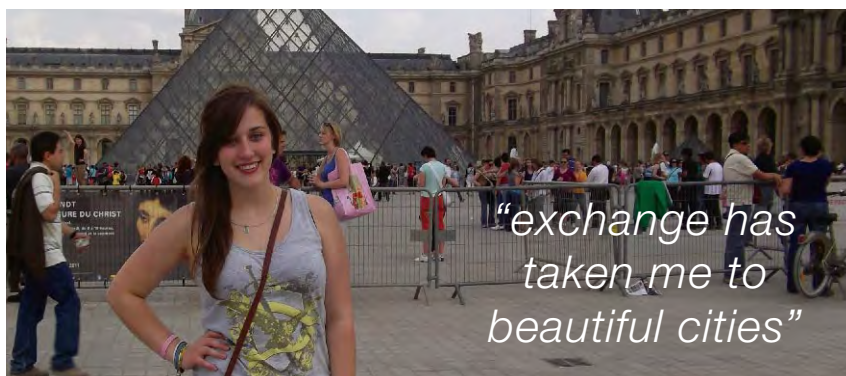
These past four months of my exchange have completely sped past me so much so that in fact I find it hard to believe I'm already writing for YEP YAP and approaching the halfway mark. It still feels like yesterday when I stumbled off of the plane, bleary eyed and tired after twenty eight-ish hours of flight and yet it also feels like another lifetime. I suppose you could say it feels like another lifetime because I don't feel like the same girl, the girl who stepped off of that plane, incredibly jetlagged and slightly unaware of the journey she was embarking on.

My exchange is taking place in beautiful town with a population of seventy-thousand called Cholet in France. I am about half an hour away from the Loire, the longest river in France, and I live near countless castles of the Loire Valley. It sounds like a dream and for me it is. A dream which has taken me to beautiful cities and through countless experiences in the 123 days that I have been here.

My town is beautiful and whilst it isn't tiny, it isn't large either. There's a town square, three churches and this vibe that everyone belongs. My school also shares this feeling. Although I am an exchange student, I have been blessed, and occasionally cursed, with being treated like everybody else. This means I do (try) the exams, the tests and (I try) the homework. But it also means I have amazing French friends who listen to my stories even when I realise they're nonsensical and who have integrated me into their lives willingly and happily-even introducing me to their friends so that my social network can grow. Each day at school is challenging, especially when I am told I must give an oral to the class (in French of course), but knowing that I have friends to support me makes things so much easier. Also, they have taught me so much in such a short time, from the slang to the teenage culture of France to the studious nature the demanding school work asks of the students.

Another integral part of my exchange has been my host families. Right away it was embedded into my mind that my Rotary Club was prepared for me and had everything organised. From the moment I stepped off of the plane I was told what I would be doing in July (going to Nice, Antibes, St. Tropez, Monaco and other towns in the Cote d'Azur!) and when I would be changing host families. My host families are all supportive, but of course there





are those times of tension when things could very easily change for the worse. Luckily for me, they haven't and I feel at home and at ease in my host family, something which all exchange students treasure-understandably considering the fact that we are seventeen thousand kilometres from our 'real' homes.

An average day for me is like in Australia; I wake up at hours every teenager believes to be unnatural, I go to school (sometimes from 8am 'til 5pm), I come home and I do my homework, maybe finishing my day watching television. However there are other days which I have spent in Paris or in Brittany (the north-west of France) or even surrounded by people from fifteen other countries.

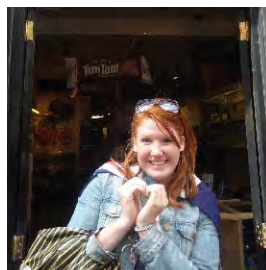
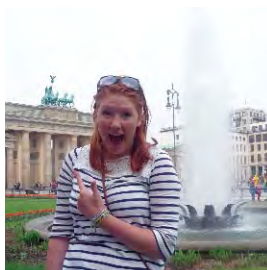
The most amazing moment of my exchange so far has been going to Paris! Paris was incredibly beautiful and it was amazing to be there and feel the Parisian atmosphere as I ate ice-cream under the Eiffel Tower, shopped on the Champs Elysees and walked along the River Seine, it was all so surreal and, honestly, a dream come true.

It wouldn't be incorrect to say that exchange is a paradox. It's both incredibly amazing and intensely difficult. You spend many days with conflicting emotions, dealing with conflicting languages and juggling two cultures and lives. There are some days when even the smallest things seem difficult, but I can honestly say that every day is amazing and special. Over the past four months I've adapted to this new life in a way that it now feels like I've been living it for sixteen years. I don't know when but somewhere along the way things have gotten easier, though never too simple. There are still times when I am frustrated because I don't understand what's happening or how to do something, but there are always times when I am loving my life and my exchange! I'm so blessed to be in the beautiful country of France, speaking the beautiful language of French and living the life of a real French person. Exchange is the best thing I have ever done in my life and, quite frankly, it's all rushing by way too fast!

It's tough to give people an insight on my life right now, mostly because many moments are indescribable, but I hope you have at least understood this tiny glimpse into what is already the most amazing year of my life.

À bientôt!

Marley



Mikayla Sutton - Norway

So they tell me that I'm getting to halfway through my exchange and I look back and think to myself, where it has all gone? I have done so many incredible things and met so many amazing people but it hasn't really sunk in yet that I'm actually here.

From the moment I stepped out of the airport, I knew that I had chosen the right country. Norway immediately felt like home. Now, even though I still have 7 months remaining, just the thought of going home makes me want to cry.

This year has been incredible. I don't have the words to describe it. Everyone told me it would be fun and exciting but no one told me it would be quite like this. Everyday has brought new opportunities to experience so much. I have been lucky enough to go to Italy with my 2nd host family for a week, go on a 2 week tour around Europe with 23 other Rotary exchange students, and later in the year I will travel to Finland, Italy and England once more. But it's not only these big things that I'm enjoying the most, it's the simple things like coming home and chilling with my host sister, or taking the dog for a walk that make me really appreciate the position I am in.

While in Norway I have had the opportunity to go skiing many times. Before I came to Norway I had never skied before. The first time I skied I was in the backyard of my first host family and I was trying out cross country. I don't think I had ever screamed so much in my life. Fortunately I have got a lot better at skiing and stopped screaming. Now I am able to both downhill and cross country ski reasonably well.

I also got to attend the world ski championships in Oslo with all of the exchange students! The event we watched was the ski jumping. It was amazing. Even though there were no Aussies competing, I was still there with my flag cheering just as loud. It was so much fun!!

My host families are all fantastic! My first host parents were a retired couple with no children at home and that suited me just fine. After coming from a family with 5 older brothers, it was nice to be an 'only child' for a while. With this host family I was lucky enough to go to Sweden 3 times on the ferry from my town and also to the mountains for 4 days of intense skiing.





My second host family are elephant conservationists in Kenya! But they live in Norway. In this family I have an 18 year old sister which is great! I'm not used to having a sister so I really love it. With this host family I have been extremely lucky as they took me to Italy for a week! It was incredible. My third host family have 2 children my age. The oldest, is living in Australia at the moment and I can't wait for her to come home so we can see each other again. The youngest, had promised me that he will teach me to play guitar while I am there. I also really love the parents. I am fortunate enough that they are taking me to Italy for 2 weeks during the summer holiday! It will be great! My fourth and last host family have 3 daughters which will be incredibly different for me!! I will get to spend Christmas with them which will be super fun! I can't wait!!

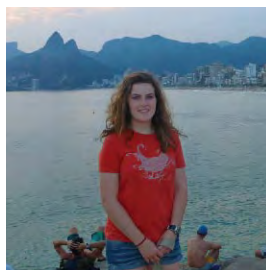
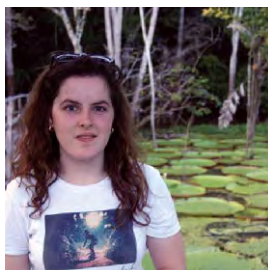
*"I have made
fantastic friends from
all over the world"*

During this year I have made some fantastic friends from all over the world. I now have Norwegian friends, South African friends, and friends from U.S.A, Canada, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, France and Australia. So many of these people I will never forget because of the bonds we have formed and can't wait to visit them in their respective countries.

Not many people can say that they have travelled the world by the time they were 17. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity that I am forever thankful for. It is the experience of a lifetime that has already taught me so much and still has so much to teach me. I would like to thank Rotary International for giving me such an incredible experience. I would also like to thank my sponsor club: The Rotary Club of Morwell and also the RYE Committee for all the hard work they put in to make my exchange possible.

They say that: "Once an exchange starts, it never stops; it goes on forever in your heart." For me this is definitely true. My exchange year will be the most memorable and the best year of my life. I'm sure of it.

Miki



Orlaith McAlinden - Brazil

In January, after 10 months of anticipation and two whole days of travelling, I, along with 25 other Australian exchange students, finally landed in Brazil. All at once we were taken aback by the momentous journey ahead of us; we were beginning a new life, in a new country with a new language, with no one we'd ever met before... And so we took the first step into our new lives, and went to meet our host families.

My exchange started better than I could have ever imagined, living in Urca, a gorgeous little suburb in the interior of Rio de Janeiro city with the most incredible family. Right from the beginning everything was different... I went from having just one little sister to living with a niece and three older brothers, from a Catholic family to a Buddhist family and from a house of social workers to a house of architects! One thing that didn't change however was the fact that I really felt like a part of the family.

My host mum knew I was only going to be with them for a month and so she took absolutely every opportunity to show me the beautiful city of Rio. We went out every day, whether we went walking, bike riding, caught the bus or took the car, there was never a shortage of things to see or people to meet. In the entire month I only went to two places more than once; the beach and to a children's art class my host mum taught! In between these things I went rock climbing with my brother, cycling with my mum, visited the botanic gardens with my little niece, celebrated Australia day and started to pick up the language!

I had the most amazing time with this family, I fell in love with the country, the culture and the language and just as I was getting used to everything, it was up and off to Teresópolis! A city in the mountains about an hour north of Rio, where I would be spending the rest of my exchange!

Since arriving here in Teresópolis, I have had three separate host families and each has been completely different from the last.

My first family here included my host mother, Giseli, a sister the same age as me, Tayane, and a little white fluff ball of a dog, Hatchi.





I was with this family for almost 7 months and I love them to pieces!

We did things for carnival, Tayane helped me learn Portuguese and find my way around school, I met so many people whilst travelling with them that I can't remember all of their names, I've been to some of the most beautiful places with them and I learned a lot about the city and its history in such a short amount of time. My other host sister, Taynara, returned from her exchange in the United States shortly before I moved families but I can say that I will never forget these people, they are my best friends and a part of my family now

My second family consisted of my mum, Martha, dad, Eduardo, an older brother, João, and yet another cute dog.

I only stayed with this family for three weeks but my goodness, I will never understand how we did so many things! We went hiking in the national park, saw movies, drove to nearby cities and even managed to go horse riding! I adore this family and still visit all the time because even though I spent such a short time with them, they managed to make me feel right at home.

The third and sadly, final family, includes my mum Lucelia, dad Tadeu, my sister Bruna, who is my age, my younger brother Fernando, three Labradors, three hamsters and five birds... It's a madhouse sometimes but I love it! I've not been here long but we've already spent a weekend back in Rio, visited the nearby cities, gone to festivals and I've learned a lot more Portuguese since moving here.

In between jumping around host families I've also travelled quite a lot too...

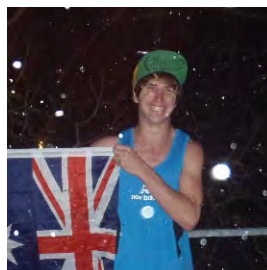
I spent two of the most incredible weeks of my life with 40 other exchange students in the Amazon rainforest. We slept in hammocks, visited Indian villages, swam in waterfalls, fished for piranhas and learned a lot about how two different worlds can exist even in the same country.

I've also been to nearby cities that are quite similar to mine and to others all along the coast which are beautiful. I've been to visit other exchange students and have been around Rio with them and Rotary too.

Being an exchange student I think, is the best way to get to know a country. My families here have shown me some of the most unique things Brazil has to offer and I can't explain how magical this experience has been. It's impossible to put into words how much I've learned and gained from these past eight months. I'm extremely thankful for the opportunity I've been given and although I'll be excited to go home at the end of my year, it's going to be so difficult to leave everyone and everything behind. I never realised how much can happen in a year and how strong relationships and bonds can become in such a short amount of time.

Órlaith





Jamie Hildred - Austria

Well, my exchange as far as I'm concerned has been amazing!! I was met at the airport by my last host family and then we went to their house as I was staying there for my first 2 weeks. Later that night we went out for dinner with all of their family and I must say it was amazing!! I got to meet the people I would call family for the next year.

So after 2 weeks in this magnificent country I was off to my language camp, this is an amazing time as it is the first time all of the inbound exchange students are together and we get to meet everyone else and it marks the start of a new language for us all. For me the language was German but not any German, it was completely different to the way I was taught back in school. But that is enough for the language.

"This is an amazing time"

After being here now for 1 month I was at school and really enjoying my time. I had met my oldies in Vienna, met my class, meet all the newbie's and really got to start seeing bits of this amazing city. Everywhere that I go in Vienna puts a smile on my face, there is nothing that reminds me of home and there is nothing bad here. Living in such a beautiful city and also the capital does have its bad parts too... everyone wants to come here so you don't really get to go to other places and everyone wants to be staying with you so you have no time to yourself to reflect on how amazing it was 2 hours ago.

Just going for a walk in this city by yourself is such a beautiful thing to do, no one to annoy you, nothing planned, beautiful places and beautiful people. It really does make you happy.

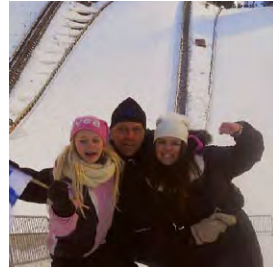
I have also had my ski camp which I must say was really fun, I had never been to the snow before and I had certainly never snow boarded before so this for me was a first but I can assure you it will not be the last, I loved it!! For me and my group we all had so much fun from throwing snow balls on other exchange students as they skied under us while we were on the lifts to going down the ski runs together as a group and our teacher was also really nice and she was from Canada.

We, as most of the exchange students in Austria were all being so well mannered we got to go sledding and this was also a first for me and wow two man sledding is so much fun!! But later that night I felt really sick, no it wasn't home sickness it was a lot worse and in fact my appendix was inflamed and within the next 2 hours I had been to the hotel, got changed, fainted twice and then woke up in hospital. This was such a hard time as the hospital didn't ring up my parents or even host parents they made me do that. So I rang up my mum back home in Australia at 2am their time and I was forced to tell her I was having an operation within 30minutes. This really wasn't easy to do. After my operation it really hurt but I felt like I was recovering quickly and for the next 3 days I was getting visited by other exchange students who took time away from skiing and snowboarding to come and see me which was really nice of them and it made my days a lot easier.

Well now it is May and I am 5 months into my exchange and I am leaving for Euro-tour tomorrow and this will be an amazing time. All the exchange students will be back together as one big family and we will be travelling Europe!! I really do love this place!!

Jamie





Stephanie Beaver - Finland





Tuscani Lakeman - Sweden

My first day in Sweden. Wow. I arrived at 6:30 in the morning and I can remember it so clearly even though it was over 4 months ago. I remember going through security and walking so fast with my heavy suitcase, even though I was tired. Then I saw all the Swedish families waiting for everyone and I saw a big sign with my name on it. That feeling that you didn't go half way across the world for no reason is a good feeling.

I have been in Sweden for over 4 months. Even though it has gone so fast, it feels as though I have been here a lot longer. I have had so many experiences, met so many people, tried so many new things, and I know I have changed.

These 4 months have been some of the best and hardest 4 months of my life. Some of the most memorable moments so far have been, skiing. If you haven't tried skiing yet, do it. It feels so weird to have these big things attached to your feet. It is awesome! Downhill is so much fun!

Another memory is cooking Pavlova. It failed. I couldn't get it off the tray. Oops!!

The first thing I saw coming to Sweden was snow. Everywhere!!! The people in Sweden are so different!! They only seem to speak when they need to. This is different from in Australia where people love to talk!

My first day of school I was so scared. The day before I had come to school to choose my subjects, and I remember walking into a room and once the teacher telling the class my name, 25 ish people saying my name and talking about me in a language I didn't understand. So for my first day I was very scared! But they were all so nice. A lot of people didn't talk to me but it is just because they were all so shy. Now they talk to me!!!

Learning the language. I recommend before you go on your exchange, learn some simple things in the language of your country. Please do!! I didn't but when I did start learning Swedish, people were so impressed if I could just say thank you in Swedish. So if you have learnt some of the language people will appreciate it.



In Sweden everyone speaks English pretty well. I want to learn Swedish, so I had to tell everyone at 2 months to only speak Swedish to me. Otherwise I knew I would just get lazy with it. But I always have someone there with fluent English who I can talk to if need be. In some countries though, they won't speak English to you at all so you have to learn the language fast.

One of my favourite parts of exchange is exchange students. They are awesome. It's meeting a whole heap of people that you are bound to get along with, because you all have exchange joining you. I had a week up in the north of Sweden with 30 exchange students. It was a ski week. So I would stay up talking and having a great time with the exchange students and then get up the next day and go a full day of skiing. I should have been tired, and I was but it was one of the best weeks ever!!!! But saying this you have to make friends with people in your country of choice. It is so easy to get along with exchange students, which is great. But why would you want to leave the country without any friends from that country?

Exchange is all about trying new things, being open minded and going outside your comfort zone. So during your exchange you will have to open yourself up to strange food, strange cultures, and strange life styles. But just because these things are different and strange, does not mean at all that they are bad.

*“Exchange is
all about trying
new things”*

Be prepared to try, and do things you would never have thought you would. Just remember, smile. If you smile, even if feeling sad, everything will seem better. This is a once in a life time opportunity. You should smile the whole way through. I am having an awesome year!

Tuscani





Winsome Browne - Switzerland

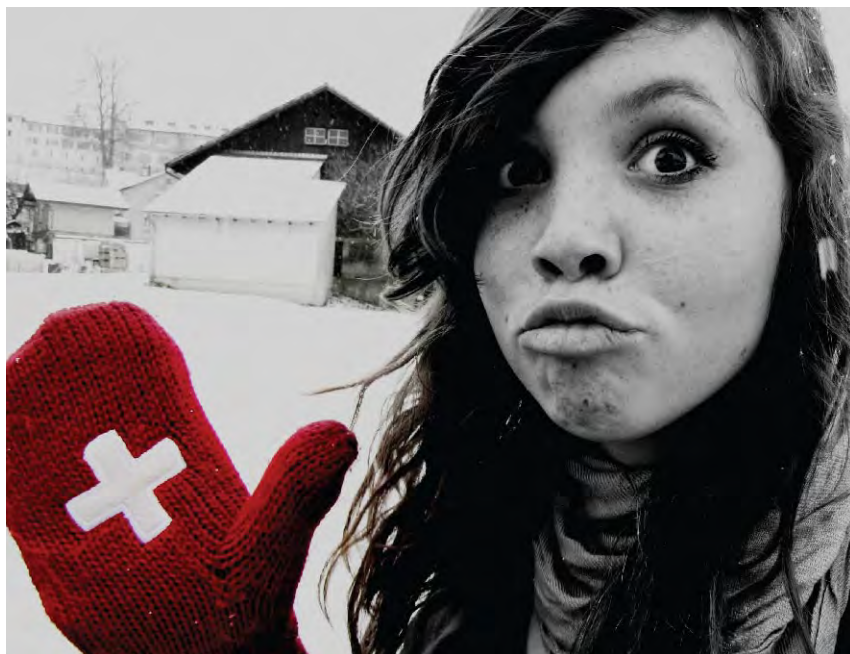
I would just like to begin by saying that this is the third time in two days that I have whacked my head on the ceiling, not exactly what I would call luck, maybe it is more due to the fact that the Swiss have ridiculously low roofs. Never could I imagine myself whacking my head on the ceiling in Australia unless by chance I was a giant (and I am not exactly short). This now leads me to the point that absolutely everything in Switzerland is tiny, only yesterday was I volunteering at a sporting event on a food stall cooking French fries with one of the smallest fryers I have ever seen in my life not exactly perfect for the circumstances, but we most certainly did our best and I did get free cake.

It has already been four months, which is so unbelievable and yet again I have been running around half asleep (most of the time) going to school, seeing some of the most beautiful places in the world, speaking the language and falling into bed every night wondering how I ever ended up here, how I could be so lucky and how I will wakeup tomorrow morning so early for school.

"I will bring back a suitcase full of chocolate and when that runs out I will know it's time to go back to Switzerland"

Whenever people ask me "bist du müde?" my standard reply is always yes. I think people are beginning to stop asking that question and just beginning to assume the obvious about the Exchange Student. I figure all the waking up early and going to bed late is just a part of what makes Exchange what it is and living every moment to the fullest something which I





will never regret. "Life is a succession of moments. To live each one is to succeed" this is what Rotary Exchange allows young people to do in one of the most amazing ways, being immersed in other peoples culture and style of living, providing challenges and experiences I will never forget.

I have managed to climb mountains, eat large amounts of chocolate and cheese and will continue to do so for the next 8 months or so, until I return back to Australia, then I will bring back a suitcase full of chocolate and when that runs out I will know it's time to go back to Switzerland, I can tell you now that suitcase of chocolate won't last long at all!

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference".

Winsome

“Like all great travellers, I have seen
more than I remember, and remember
more than I have seen.”

Benjamin Disraeli

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