

District 9465 Rotary Youth Exchange



The First Four Months of their Year Already Gone!

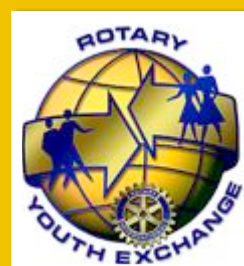
Welcome to the first newsletter for our 2012 District 9465
Rotary Youth Exchange students!

Our students have been in their new countries for over four months now and in this newsletter will share some of their experiences which are many and varied. Enjoy reading about their exchange so far, admire the photos and perhaps be a little jealous of their wonderful opportunity!

This newsletter will give you a snapshot of their experiences in Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland and Venezuela.

Featuring reports from:

Matilda Grey, Evie Hooper, Sarah Russell, Ben Jackson, Kimberley Warrand, Justin Johnston, Melanie Persson, Ellen Brookes, Daniel D'Ippolito, Megan Bilney and Amy Lowe.





Megan Bilney (Kojonup) in Switzerland



So I have now been in Switzerland for 4 months. Unfortunately I can't write everything that has happened to me in 4 months. Before I came on exchange I knew that it was going to be hard and trust me it is. Whether it be standing at the top of a ski slope trying to get yourself to just go down whilst your host dad (who trained in the military to ski) is saying "it's not that hard" and your host brother (who has been skiing since he was 3) is saying "it's not that steep" or trying to overcome the 3 month sickness. Another challenge I still trying to overcome is the language. Whilst learning a language it is so hard to communicate, often I have had to use my hands or actions so that they understand, this means that at times you just want to run to the nearest exchange student and just speak English to them for the next hour. However on a random day, you walk away from having a conversation with some one and suddenly realize that you just had your first German conversation with no English words, no crazy Hand actions and no need for the other person to correct you. For me, this was when I got really motivated and actually tried harder to learn German. I went out a bought books, I told my classmates that they aren't allowed to speak English with me and I actually listened in class.

Another highlight of living in Switzerland is that in most cities you can find a lake with mountains in the back. I was fortunately enough to go up into the mountains last week. It was amazing weather (22 degrees, shorts weather) and as my host mother and I were seating outside eating, the sun began to set. Whilst you may think that the sunsets in Australia all the time it just isn't the same. The sun peeks out from between the mountains, which still have a little bit of snow, and then reflects of the water. Often you can also hear the cows with their bells.

Now the one thing that everyone wants to know is about the food in Switzerland. Yes, the chocolate is as amazing as you hear. Just ask my dad, who I am pretty sure enjoyed the last package I sent home. Other amazing things are the cheese (often they also eat the cheese from Italy and France which are just as good), the bread which my host mum has showed me how to cook, and the gipfeli which is similar to a croissant but they put lots of difference fillings such as almond paste, tomato, ham and chocolate. However not all the food is amazing, many a time I have asked my mum if there is any chance she could send me a steak or a leg of lamb. A lot of the

meat here is processed, and often I can't look at the meat I am eating. Fortunately I can now eat their sausages, best way I could describe their sausages is like hot dogs but more rubbery and more processed. However I can forgive the lack of unprocessed meat because most of the food is amazing. My favourite is Raclette, where you sit at the table as a family and put cheese into individual pan and cook it over a small flame. Once the cheese is melted you pour it over potatoes and then put spices and herbs over it. Dinner is often a very social thing with all the family sitting together, Swiss people prefer when the whole family sits down for dinner together.

Now I know I must put in this section for my mum. The most common personality trait in Swiss people is punctuality and tidiness. And by tidiness I mean almost up to military style. Often I am told that my clothes need to be in straight piles in the wardrobe. Both of these traits are expected to be followed by society in Switzerland. Each time you are late to school it is recorded, and if you're too late too many times then you won't be accepted into university and later not be able to get a job.

Overall Switzerland is amazing with the beautiful scenery, the great food and the unique fact that it speaks 3 different languages. It is a completely different culture especially the personality of the people here. I am still trying to adjust at times however there have already been some absolutely amazing moments here.



Sarah Russell (Esperance) in Denmark

Exchange is a great adventure that not everyone gets the chance to do and those who are lucky enough to get the experience never regret it. Exchange is more than just a year in another country; it's a year of differences and learning that is unique. So many people wish to travel and see other cultures but truth be told to see a culture is nothing compared to experiencing one, to see the differences and the similarity. I'm on exchange in Denmark and I'm having an amazing time; I'm learning another language which is not as easy as it sounds; I have made new friends; and my host families have become my extended family. I'm currently on Euro Tour for the exchange students in Denmark, as we have been travelling over Europe the exchange students as well as myself have found that we compare the new things we see and experience to both our home countries, but also to Denmark as that it now our second home. Exchange is great I recommend it, but it isn't always easy, I'm not just talking about the homesickness but also the culture shock. They always warn you of the big things like having to shower communal style with

the other girls in your class or when you go to the swimming pool, but the greatest culture shock to me was the schools believe it or not. We call teacher by their first names, we have either our computers or the schools with us on the desks with easy internet access, mobiles and iPods in class with students listening and using them and the teachers not doing anything about it, classes being cancelled last minute and suddenly you have a free period. Doesn't sound anything like the school I went to or the school system I'm used to, but that's how it is here in Denmark and it takes some getting used to like any kind of cultural difference does.

I have been on exchange for just 4 months and I have friends that I know I will have for the rest of my exchange and also when I come back to Australia, the only reason I have such good friends is cause I have accepted to culture and tried to be as Danish as I possible, which a tongue twisting language it's not easy and I have made so many mistakes, but it doesn't matter you get points for trying and that's what I have done and It has paid off in a major way. I have done things I never thought I would ever do in my life, seen things that so many people always dream about and only see on Television or in magazines and books. All the tears I cried cause I was missing home or finding the Danish way too hard or different from what I'm used are nothing compared to the happiness and excitement I have experienced from my Exchange all I had to do was dry my tears and smile and try again and any of you that read this article and become exchange students I encouraged you to do the same, dry your eyes and smile because the rewards are worth all the effort.

4 months of exchange and I have done so much it's hard to keep up with it all, I did a school trip to Norway with my school class so we could go skiing for a week and now I can ski both down slopes and cross country I'm not perfect but it was my first time, but I became so much closer with my class during that trip I become a class member rather than an exchange student that had been put into their year.

I saw the great and wonderful Lego land with my first host family and it was truly amazing what they had done with all the Lego and it brought back so many childhood memories, and even though it is more for little children it doesn't stop us going to see and having fun there. It really brought out the little kid in me but it also showed me that Lego really is for all ages after you see what the people at the park have done with it.

This is only a small sample of things I have done on exchange and the things I have discovered and with still 8 months of my exchange to go I say bring it on! I can't wait to see what the rest of this year holds for me and I already know I'm going to miss it when I have to leave and go back to Australia. If any exchange students are interesting in talking with me about exchange in general or my life in Denmark you guys are welcome it always helps to have a little bit of a heads up before you leave to explore the big wide world that exchange provides.



Daniel D'Ippolito (Busselton/Geographe) in Sweden



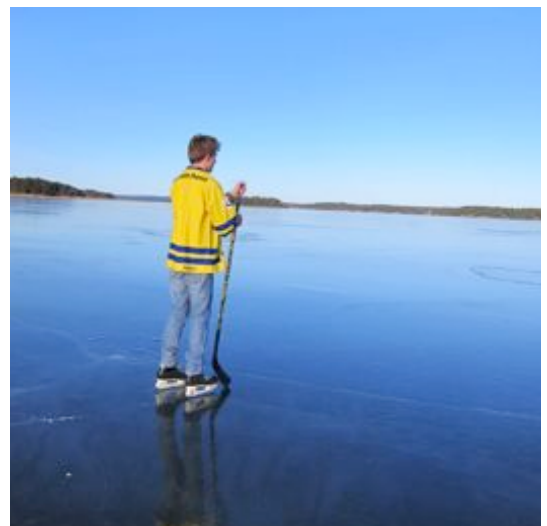
As of a week ago I have been living in Sweden for 4 months now, and I've never experienced time go so quickly without me realising it. In my first third of my exchange year I have already experienced so many things and had so many great opportunities, that I don't really know where to start.

The first thing I noticed as I arrived in Sweden was the snow. There was snow everywhere. Everywhere. And coming from a coastal Australian country town (where the closest thing we had to snow was sometimes getting a bit of early morning frost on the windscreen in the dead of winter) this was an amazing experience. With the snow came so many other awesome things as well. Impromptu snowball fights at school, Ice skating on the huge inland sea near my town, downhill skiing as well as cross country and of course, making a snowman. So far I have been skiing 3 times and it's my new favourite pastime. First I tried snowboarding, because I thought it would look cool, but I found being strapped into the board not so fun when I'm travelling head first into a sheet of ice. But the skis are more fun anyway in my opinion (and a little easier) . The only thing I don't like about skiing is knowing that I won't ever be able to do it again when I'm back home! Two of my ski trips were also with other exchange students on Rotary Exchange , so the combination of skiing and hanging out with the friends I have made from all over the world made for a great couple of weeks .

There is more to Sweden than just snow though, Especially now that it has become summer. There are flowers everywhere and everything is really green. There was transformation of the landscape in between seasons that doesn't exist in Australia. Everything went from white and dead, too colourful and alive in the space of a month. It really was cool to see. And it has become a little warmer. When I arrived the temperature was sitting at around -16 degrees and now it is reaching up to about 25. I think that's as warm as it will get though. Not that I'm complaining though. It's perfect temperature for swimming in many of the lakes and rivers around the town. Also the people here are amazing. They are all extremely shy at first. I was barely spoken too in my first week at school , but as they get more comfortable around you the begin to open up . And once they do they are some of the nicest people I have ever met. And once your friends with a swede, you get the impression that you have made friends for life.

I am still getting used to the Swedish way of life however. I have so far failed to understand the fun part of a sauna. I prefer to cut my cheese rather than use the ostyvel. Half the time I have no idea what anyone is saying. AND I STILL DON'T THINK 18 DEGREES IS WARM. But everyday I'm still discovering new parts of my city, interesting little facts about Sweden, making new friends and struggling hopelessly with the language. But these last 4 months have been the best of my life. I honestly don't think I'd rather be doing anything else with my life right now.

And I always thought it was just a rumour, but everyone is good looking here. It's true.





Matilda Grey (Manjimup) in Brazil

School Life in Brazil

I attend a school whose system is based in Germany. It's called Waldorf and they have many schools all over the world including Australia, and one here in São Paulo. The school focuses not so much on getting students into university, but setting them up with skills and lessons they will need throughout their entire lives.

I study Biology, Geography, Geometry English, Portuguese, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Physical Education, Philosophy, Art, Dance and Choir here, and we do very different things within these lessons. At the beginning of every class we all stand and sing a song or recite a poem. There's a different one for each class and we change this piece every 3 weeks when our timetable changes. Before the first class we always recite the school poem. We do drawing activities, copying and forming different patterns in some classes. It's strange for me but it is a unique Waldorf method. They focus on the arts at my school which I adore as I am able to participate in activities I have always loved but have left behind in my last couple of years of school. We are also given various things that have meanings behind them and that become meaningful to us. One example of this is when our English/Portuguese teacher gave us a piece of material with a needle, a thread and a pin. She said sometimes in life you have to be the needle and lead the way for the others. At others you need to be the thread, and at others you need to stay out of things and have your own time like the pin that holds everything together.

The canteen at school is like a buffet with delicious hot, fresh foods. They sell everything like in an independent shop and you pay for the buffet by its weight. At school they do no internal exams that get you into university. You get taught everything you will need to know but then you sit the entrance exam of whatever university

you want to go to to see if you get in. If you don't pass this exam you spend another year studying at a 'college' to sit the test again at the end of that year. At Waldorf we aren't given much homework, nor do we sit many tests. It's comparatively laid back to school in Australia, but it's also because I am in a Waldorf school that things are like this.

I have been incredibly lucky to be placed in the school that I attend. I go to school 5 days a week. On Mondays and Wednesday class goes from 7:15am until 4pm and on all other days, 7:15 until 1:15. We stay in our classroom and the teachers come to us. We have 2 or 3 breaks each day depending on how long it is. Everyone there immediately welcomed me into their 'family' as they literally call it. People are lovely and made effort to talk to me as soon as I got there. The teachers are fantastic and I try to do the work that I can, though they are very understanding of the fact that I can't do everything. My friends help me with my Portuguese and invite me out to places, and as the only exchange student in the school, all of my friends are Brazilian which has been wonderful in terms of developing my language and cultural understandings.

We have been on three school trips within São Paulo. The first was in March to a favela, Horizonte Azul for a day. Here we worked with the local people in their farms, in schools and infant centres, in kitchens and in general maintenance. It was an amazingly eye opening and different experience to see how these people with little money live their lives without much technology. And they are just like us, however their communities so tight knit as they work together as a family to maintain their society. The second was to a nearby country house where we participated in medieval activities for



a week. The trip was based on the story of Parzival, a knight of the round table, and the life lessons within the tale. We learned a lot about life and ourselves, and while it seems like a strange experience, it was a wonderful, emotional one. During this week I became a lot closer to my peers and teachers. The third was to the Memorial da América Latina to view the exhibition of Guerra e Paz by famous Brazilian artist Candido Portinari. This was just a day trip but a wonderful cultural experience.

Students in the 12th grade do an annual work on a subject of their choice. They write a huge essay on it in a form of their selection, and they have 6 months to do it. I am required to do this too, however I have been allowed to write mine in English. I will do mine on the life of an exchange student through Rotary International, so I'll get in contact with everyone in Rotary at home at some point for this!

To EVERYONE at Rotary; thank you thank you a million times over for the opportunity you have given me. I couldn't have had a luckier placement and I couldn't be happier to be here. I know as I adjust even more to the language and culture things will only get better. I hope you are all doing really well; I'll see you in only 8 more months!



Kimberley Warrand (Collie) in France



Lyon Trip

From the 28th March to 1st April I traveled to Lyon and Annecy with all the exchange students in my District to meet with all 430 exchange students in France, an event that only takes place every four years.

Day 1

There are 28 exchange students in my district from 13 different countries (Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Ecuador, Finland, Japan, Norway, Philippines, Taiwan, Venezuela and the United States). We set off from Nancy at 9:30 en route for Lyon. On the way we stopped at a small medieval town called Perouges, that had been mostly kept in its original state since the middle ages. There we were split into five teams and were told by a woman dressed in a Medieval red dress that a murder had taken place the night before and that it was our job to figure out who killed the village guard out of five women, The Judge's wife, The Tisserande (Woman who makes cloth), the Apothecary, The Foreigner or the Mayor's wife. Each woman was stationed around different places in the town and we had 5 minutes to talk with each one of them and ask them questions about their movements the night before. All in French. Each one had their own motives however it was the Judge's wife who had murdered the Guard.

Day 2

Our first day in Lyon where we visited la Forviere, a Church on top of a hill with a view over all of Lyon. We were taken on a tour of one of the towers and then onto the roof. Next to La Forviere was a small tower which looked like the Eiffel Tower only much much smaller. In fact it was a practice for the real one that had been left standing. For lunch that day we were given 10 Euros with one rule. That we ate a Lyonnaise meal. Most of us found the same restaurant as it specifically had Salad Lyonnaise and Andouillette Lyonnais (A special sausage) on the menu.

After Lunch we visited a miniature and Film museum. Not a very French museum but it was nice quand même. We then went to see how silk cloth is made by the traditional way before a tour of the Croix Rousse, once separated from Lyon by a wall. There all the streets are built from North-South, East-west to take advantage from the wind that comes in that direction. When the area was being built, no building was allowed to have more than 6 stories, as they were all old silk factories and no windows were allowed to be open.

Day 3

Not a very busy day, we visited an art museum in the morning and had time to ourselves in the afternoon, a small group of us decided that instead of going shopping at all the chain stores we would find all the vintage shops in Lyon. Very glad I did so as I found a pair of

vintage sunglasses that were exactly my prescription strength.

We then left for Annecy to meet up with all the other exchange students in France.

Day 4

In the morning all of the exchange students attended a conference on the winter Olympics that Annecy had campaigned for. We listened to the story of a skier who hadn't had the ability to move his legs since he was 21 but who had an enormous amount of energy. After the conference we took a ride on a boat around the Annecy lake and gathered at the park for an hour to mingle, swap cards and pins and take a giant group photo. That night was the talent show where every district took it in turns to get up on stage and dance or sing or present a sketch. Some districts got up as a group while others had one person performing a traditional dance from their country of origin. Our district went last but we had no idea we were going to be performing and had nothing prepared. Just before the talents started the Venezuelan boy said that he could do some Latin dancing and as soon as he started dancing on stage everyone joined in, not just our district.

Day 5

The last day was spent travelling back to Nancy, however in the morning because it was April Fools we were going on a scavenger hunt to find local 8 fish. Unfortunately my group only found 4... After a picnic lunch it was time to head back. A very memorable experience and I wish I could do it all over again.



Ellen Brookes (Cockburn) in Japan

A day in the life of a Rotary Exchange Student in Japan

6.00AM – Wake up to your host siblings' very loud alarm clock as they have an early start and so do you (Hooray for English Communication Classes!)

6.15AM – Actually get out of bed and make your way into the kitchen, where your host mother has prepared breakfast that can consist of anything; for example rice, soup, salad, toast, cereal, pudding, pancakes, fish, coffee, green tea, beef and/or chicken.

6.50AM – Finish food ("Gochisousamadeshita!") and then return to your room to get dressed into your incredibly cute school uniform and pack your bag for the day. Yes, your uniform does look like it is from one of those Japanese cartoons, and yes your stationery DOES have Hello Kitty on it.

7.15AM – Ittekimasu! Time to go downstairs from your apartment and get on your bicycle for your amazing ride to school! Don't mind the copious amount of people staring at you as you ride by, it's perfectly normal for people to "stare down the foreigners". That or maybe they are staring at your Hello Kitty gym bag?

7.45AM – Arrive at school to nearly be run over by the track and field team as they run laps around the school, be almost stepped on by the dance club as they have early morning practice, listen to the painful cries of the kendo team AND the basketball team, see the third year boys upstairs in the gym working out and be greeted with the lovely sounds of every student who plays a portable musical instrument practicing on the roof... Get to your locker and change from your school shoes into your school slippers (Mine are green!!!!) and then move off to the communication classroom.

8.00AM – Stand at the front of the communication classroom with your English teacher and look at all of the terrified first year students who are too scared to even say "Good morning" to you. Proceed to grin evilly at them as the aim of today's class is to get them talking!

8.30AM – End of communication class and off to the first class of the day... Politics and Economics with class 3-3.

9.30AM – Class is over, so you say a cheery farewell to class 3-3 during the TEN MINUTE long break between classes. During this time you skedaddle off to the gym to get changed into your PE gear so you are ready for volleyball! The PE classes are arranged so that boys and girls are separated and play different sports, but they combine two homeroom classes meaning that there is approximately 80 students having PE at once.

10.30AM – Changing back out of PE clothes and off to the music class where you are learning to sing a beautiful operatic piece called "Caro Mio Ben" as well as slacking off and singing some Japanese pop songs to keep things lively.

11.30AM – Back to homeroom, 2-4, for math. (Is it bad that I actually understand maths better in Japanese than I ever did in English?)

12.30PM – LUNCHTIME!!!! You have the choice to eat in your classroom, eat outside, eat in a friend's classroom, eat in the cafeteria or eat in your study room~ Usually lunch involves third year's studying, clubs practicing, people running in the hallways and interesting conversations with those who are doing none of the above. Lunchtime is also a great time to have "parties" such as a going away party that was held for a teacher a few weeks back, or birthday parties, or that party for a girl who now has a new baby brother!

1.15PM – English Superman class! In this class you get to work not only on your English teaching skills, but your Japanese skills as well because every day they have a "tango test" ("Tango" means word, or vocabulary). Have an interesting time trying to translate the kanji into



the correct English words (you got 11 on the last test of 30 which is sadly better than some of the students...)

2.05PM – Head up to the fourth floor for your Japanese History class where you will read nothing but kanji being written on the board for approximately the next fifty minutes. Japanese History is hard (even the students who ARE Japanese don't get it), so during the class continually ask yourself WHY YOU DID NOT CHOOSE TO DO GEOGRAPHY WHERE THEY ARE CURRENTLY LEARNING ABOUT KALGOORLIE?!!!

3.05PM – Beginning of Homeroom, your final class for the day.

4.05PM – Finish homeroom and then head down to the gym to get into your judogi (or the judo uniform) and start your practice session. As the female team captain, you must arrive early to training (which usually means you are ten minutes earlier than the male team captain who has the key, but that's okay!)

6.00PM – Practice ends, so strip off your sweaty judogi and back into school uniform before embarking on your ride home.

6.30PM – You arrived home ten minutes ago ("TADAIMA!") and have now completely changed your outfit, wiped yourself down with a wet towel and are now off to your Rotary meeting!

7.30PM – Arrive at your Rotary meeting, held at a particularly fancy hotel in the middle of Sakai City. Today your club will give you not only your RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards) certificate for having been on the Hiroshima trip and participated in the training camps, but also present you with your pocket money and give you acknowledgement for winning that speech contest last week. 8.30PM – After finishing your meal and the meeting has been adjourned, head out with the "young" Rotarians for a round of Karaoke. They won't keep you out too late though because it is a school night, but it is good to relax and kick back and listen to the members try their hardest to sing popular English songs to you... and then you can fight back and sing to them in Japanese!

10.00PM – Finally, the end of a long and rewarding day! Get into the 'furo' (bath) and spend a few minutes relaxing in the warm water, before heading off to bed and getting some zzz's before you do it all again tomorrow!





Melanie Persson (Busselton/ Geographe & Bunbury) in Italy

When it comes to my exchange, I don't know where to start. People say that it is daunting, such a huge change, uprooting your life to make new friends, to love a new family and to learn a new language. While it can be frightening at times, my exchange has fully lived up to, and exceeded, all my expectations. When you first apply for any exchange program, people tell you what to expect and how to act. The truth is, no matter how much preparation you go through, how many seminars you listen to, nothing will fully prepare you for the fantastic experience ahead of you.

When I first arrived in Italy in January, I knew that I was beginning a year full of new things, adventure and excitement. This was immediately apparent when I arrived in my new apartment with my host mum and she showed me how we could see a castle out of the living room window! My host family was fantastic. My host mum was the best cook, and many nights I would be down in the kitchen helping her to prepare dinner, trying to soak up recipes while she explained everything she was doing in Italian. My host dad was also just an all-round cool guy. He was hilarious, always laughing, joking and explaining in English when I didn't understand. I clicked with my younger sister straight away. She was mature for her age and we would often joke around, laugh and help each other with English and Italian. They also provided me with opportunities to go skiing with them in a village in the mountains, and introduced me to their friends (who are also hosting an exchange student) who then took me with them on their Easter holiday to Pisa and Florence. I am so grateful for my host family. They were so supportive and helpful, and they became my new family.

Starting Italian school was something that I had been really looking forward to. I thought that the tiny amount of Italian I had learned in Australia would be put to good use. I had underestimated the difficulty and complexity of it though so I settled into class, listening and doing my best to understand what was said around me. My class mates were, and are, incredible. I know that many other exchange students in Italy have found it hard to mix and to make friends with their peers. Luckily for me, I was placed in a class full of kids prepared to accept me and who tried from the beginning to help my Italian. They were the ones who took me around after school to buy my school supplies, they showed me some of the city and they introduced me to people outside my own class. They were also the people who helped organise our class trip to London in March which was so much fun. We spent five days walking around the city, shopping and looking at art galleries. I found this incredibly helpful for my Italian as I felt so much more confident attempting to speak when they were also self-conscious about their English. We had fun helping each other out a lot. I owe them so much, and I'm constantly encouraging them to come to Australia to visit me when I go back. By far, the most amazing thing about my exchange has been the new people I have met through school, rotary and my family.

So, the morning after my birthday I set off early in the morning for the Milano Centrale train station to meet up with the other students and the Rotarians who would be taking us on our trip. The main Rotarian in charge of the exchange students is Roberto Mancina who is a cool guy who can laugh and joke around with us really well. The trip was fantastic. We spent six days travelling south to Napoli and Ercolano (volcano ruins), Sorrento and Capri (a beautiful island off the coast) and, finally, Rome. Seeing these sites of Italy while with an amazing bunch of teenagers has definitely been a highlight of my exchange so far. The exchange students are able to bond so well and so quickly, all being of a similar personality and going through the same experience.

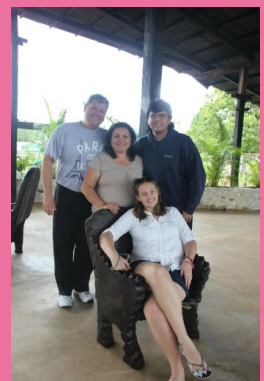


Amy Lowe (Willetton) in Venezuela



In my short time in Venezuela I have already fallen in love with the food, the culture and the people. The thing I love most about the food is that there is always too much and it's always rich in flavours. My favourite new Venezuelan food would have to be the empanada! It is made similarly to a dumpling - the base is made from corn and can really be filled with anything but most commonly meat or cheese or both and then deep fried (there is a lot of deep fried food here!). The culture here is quite different to Australia in a general sense. The Venezuelan people all live in closed/gated communities and most have guards at the urbanisation's entry. This is one of the few downsides of the culture, that it isn't very safe to walk in the streets, especially if you are alone, foreign, a girl or all of the above. On the other hand the culture of Venezuela is very colourful and friendly, which makes me feel right at home. I love the Venezuelan people because like Australians, they are very friendly but even more so in Venezuela. When I am at school I constantly have a conversation because people are always asking questions and practising their English. They are a very carefree and relaxed people and just generally easy to get along with. I'm hoping the rest of my exchange will be just as interesting and exciting as my first few months.

My family here, with whom I have had many adventures, is pretty great too. I have had the opportunity to help at family gatherings and even preparing a pizza dinner.



Justin Johnston (Mill Point) in Germany

Ok, where do I start, my exchange has been absolutely amazing so far. I have made so many lifelong friends in such a short space of time while visiting some of the most amazing places on the Earth whilst learning another language. It truly feels like a dream come true.

I arrived in Germany a little more than four months ago and have been seizing every single opportunity that has presented itself to me. My host family has been absolutely amazing helping me learn German and inviting me to every outing they go on. I've even had a tour of Europe visiting thirteen capital cities all over Europe. But in my opinion the absolutely best thing that's happened on my exchange so far would have to be all the friends I've made within the German community and the exchange community! It feels amazing knowing that in ten or twenty years' time you can visit another country and meet up with an exchange friend because your friendship is so strong!

This year definitely is the best year of my life and I'm so glad I decided to do this exchange. It's one of the greatest experiences anyone can ever be fortunate enough to be given.



Ben Jackson (Esperance & Katanning) in Finland

Of course I have been doing a huge amount of things and there are definitely too many to list but there are a few things that have been really good.

The warmer weather has now arrived and all the snow has melted where I live. The countryside is starting to be greener and the real Spring is really close.

Recently the ice hockey team from my nearest (home) city won the Finnish national ice hockey league championships and I was lucky enough to go along to many of their games. There was then a big free celebration in the city with a concert with many bands and the team had a parade then joined in the party with everyone which was a really great experience.

I am playing floorball (like indoor hockey) every Monday night and I have four hours of sport per week and we play many different kinds of sport including pesapallo which is the Finnish version of baseball. It is an interesting game with some weird rules but good fun.

We recently had our district conference here which was good to see all the other exchange students again. My host father's club was partly organizing the conference so he had me play my trumpet for everyone. It was quite good actually because there was a representative for the Rotary International President from India and he came and talked to me after I played which was interesting.

There is much more that I have done but a lot of the best things just happen at school or when I am hanging out with friends.

My Finnish is coming along quite well I guess, to say how hard the language is. I just need to use it more with my friends and in public.

Evie Hooper (Esperance & Applecross) in Canada

For Easter I went to Red Deer (6 hours away) with my host parents and my host mum's mum lives in a nursing home there. so we spent a bit of time at the nursing home, but we stayed with Linda's (host mum) sister, and her 2 girls which was fun. On the way to Red Deer we went through the parks and through Banff which was amazing and so beautiful! Easter seemed pretty similar to what we have at home, all the family gets together and doesn't really do too much, bit of chocolate, Easter bunny comes etc. we went to the church service on Easter Sunday (I have never really been to church before) and that was good. I got a loaf of bread.

Then drove home Easter monday and back to school Tuesday. School is going ok - I was doing really badly and hating chemistry so I dropped it today and changed into a cooking class which is much more fun. I'm also taking art, gym and psychology.

I am on the soccer team and last weekend we travelled to Kelowna - we came 3rd and it was really fun. Most of the snow has melted now and the grass is getting greener every day. The other day when I got home from school I checked the weather and it was 16 degrees here while Esperance was having 14 degrees, which I thought was pretty funny.

I go to Rotary meetings every Thursday at lunch, they are pretty interesting and I get out of school.

Unfortunately Ben and Evie did not submit reports to be included in the newsletter so their brief reports have been taken from emails sent to the Rotary Club of Esperance.

Collated and edited by Jane Lowe from
reports submitted to the RYE District 9465
Committee and photos of the students.