

Rotex Round-UP

2007-2008 Fall Issue

Submitted by Outbound Students

Alex Bolland

Sponsor: Osoyoos

Host: Denmark

Hello everyone back home. In short my exchange has been filled everyday with many, many activities and experiences. I have not had a day yet where I went to bed before 11, not even my first days off the plane!

Since the first day off the plane I have had so many activities, the first day I started Repelling with my host family, second day I was mountain biking, third day kayaking, fourth day judo, and the list go on and on. For an example of how active ive been I had lost 6 kg in my first week, it was hard keeping up especially with jet lag of 9 hours, but I managed to get through it and it has been the same since.

School is going well, my class is really nice and I feel welcome. The students help me a lot with my Danish and I have picked up a lot, however it has been hard work trying to remember names, language, dates, schedule, and language school homework. I am attending a gymnasium which in Canada would be more like a collage than a high school, they start school here at 6 years old so there is 19 year olds at school as well. I am having a great time going to the school and it is also a very nice school, no dress code, and a very relaxed atmosphere.

Ok, some of my highlights, there have been so many but if I was to choose my number one. It would be my trip to Germany with my host family this past month. We went for 3 days, and it was all activities. The first day we repelled 35 m, and went out for a nice dinner. PIZZA. Then the second day we hiked the highest mountain in northern Germany it was only 1140m high but it took 3 hours to get to the top, and the last day we went shopping and got some pins and souvenirs for my blazer. The activities were not over there though, upon our return we had a nice quite night, because the next day we had a marathon. I did the 10 km race but my brother, father, and sister did the 21 km race. Over all it was an awesome experience and I'm really enjoying my time.

Denmark over all is a lot like Canada, except for it is flat, and rains a lot, but other than that the food is very similar (they have McDonalds). The people are very nice and help you whenever you need it. When I first got here I couldn't speak any Danish, however everyone here speaks very good English and it was no problem getting around.

I am in a city much bigger than mine in Canada, however it is around the 10th biggest in Denmark, so I have lots of stuff to keep me busy between the times I don't have a usual activity, and it is not too big that I can get completely lost. I really like where I am its known as one of the beauties of Denmark, we have two hills that they call mountains that allow us to go into the woods for mountain biking and so on.

So I have explained a little about my exchange so far but my person opinion is that I'm having the time of my life, everything is going well, people are nice, have many things to do, and my councilor and rotary club helps me with whatever I may need. My host family has been so nice to me and taken me into their family, and I am very good friends with my host brother and sister, my host parents are always there for me and I have a lot of fun with them all.

Alicia Arrowsmith

Sponsor: Salmon Arm

Host: Netherlands Multi

I certainly intended to write this update a bit sooner, but things have just kept coming up, so let's get to it. It's nearing the three month mark of my stay in the Netherlands and the time has been passing surprisingly fast! I'll tell you a little bit about what I have been up to lately. First of all let me say that I never realized how draining attempting to speak another language would be but I never really realize it until the end of the day when I just fall into bed and then drag myself out the next morning.

There are two groups of exchange students in the Netherlands. The first group is all students from the southern hemisphere who arrived in January. The second group, from the Northern Hemisphere, arrived during the first week of August. I think there are about twenty four of us exchangers all from the Northern hemisphere. During the second week of August all of us from the second group attended a week long Dutch orientation course in Enkhuizen, near Amsterdam. The idea of the course was to learn the basics of the Dutch language, to form a good base of the language, and also to get to know each other. We were paired up and placed in the home of a rotary family in either Enkhuizen or a town next to it. The last day of the course we met the other group of exchangers but we didn't spend much time talking with them.

This last weekend, the 27th and 28th of October, was the first Rotex weekend for all the exchangers in Holland. We all met at the train station and then we were taken to stay in this kind of renovated farm house which had three very large rooms of bunk beds. We pushed the bunk beds together and it was really gezellig which is a word that really can't be translated directly into English as there isn't a word to really define it but basically it means cozy. After we were settled we had a choice to do either Archery or mountain biking, which isn't really mountain biking like it is in Canada since there aren't mountains in Holland. So really, they need to use a new word for it...like not-on-a-regular-bike-path biking or something like bumpy trail biking. I guess it's the same idea as mountain biking, minus the mountains. Anyways, I did archery and surprised myself by actually getting the arrow to hit the board and I also somehow managed to get a bull's eye! Beginner's luck I guess. That night the "Rotex" or, as we came to call them in Canada, the "Rebounders", lead us on a suspicious adventure into the dark forest. There we played capture the flag which was actually quite dangerous seeing as no one knew where we were in the event that we got lost. One of the other students, a girl from Alberta, and I went "all out" in the game, meaning that we commando crawled on the ground through the sand and fallen trees, sat in prickly bushes and snuck our way around by running from tree to tree. We thought we were being super sneaky and we were actually kind of proud of the commitment we made to getting ourselves dirty just for a game. When the flag was caught, it turns out we were probably only about twenty feet away from the border between the two teams, which was really quite disappointing but completely worth it for all the fun we got out of it! Mostly the weekend was just catch up time as there weren't too many activities planned but it really turned into a pretty great weekend.

Earlier this month I also went on a trip to London, England with my host family; host father Henk, my host mom Lia and my two host sisters Marielle and Nicolien. I took over four hundred pictures and I even came back with a England soccer jersey which I have been wanting for ages! For the five days that we stayed we traveled by the Underground train which was definitely not something I was used to, seeing as I somehow managed to get caught between the doors of the train when it closed and then I had to actually squeeze into the train as my host sister just stood there clutching her stomach and killing herself laughing. We seriously should have walked around with signs saying clumsy Canadian exchange student who can't tell the difference between the pound coin and euro coins and crazy Dutch girl. I think that the highlight of my trip would probably be seeing Chicago the musical which was really fantastic. The musical also starred Britain's Kelly Osborne, son of Ozzy Osborne, not my favorite celebrity but I still believed it was something worth getting excited about. I think my Dutch also improved over the trip because Marielle and I thought it was fun to practice my Dutch in the Underground where no one could really understand what we were saying. I thought it was a bit of ironic and quite amusing to realize that I was in England where I could speak English but now I was speaking a language still utterly foreign to me from a country where I was used to being the one lost in translation and struggling to understand what the people around me are saying.

I live in a small town called Veendam in the provincie Groningen, which is in the Northern part of Holland. I live with the Journee Family as mentioned before; Lia, Henk, Marielle, Nicolein, and also my host brother Jan Hendrik who is no longer living at home but going to school in the big city Groningen which is also the name our provincie.

I have managed to keep quite busy out side of school. Shortly after I arrived I had joined a women's soccer team in Wildervank, very close to where I am living now. Wildervank only has two teams for women's soccer, the level at which I'm playing; the second team, which is more recreational and for those ladies who can't make a big commitment for one reason or another and the first team which is a competitive league for ladies who are able to make more of a commitment and can also withstand more intensive training. I also had the option of going to try out for a team in a bigger city but I didn't bother to look into it as it asks for even more of a commitment which I wouldn't be able to do. Right now I have training or practices on Monday and Wednesday and then games on Saturday. My team hasn't lost a game yet but we have tied more games than we have won. I am also taking guitar lessons, which is something I have wanted to do for as long as I can remember. The host father of my second family toured with Pink Floyd for two weeks nearly two months ago, so I figured it was really about time to learn to play an instrument. I go to a private teacher every Tuesday right after school and the first song that I was taught was, "Hey there Delilah" and I have also begun to learn "Nothing Else Matters" by Metalica. I have also kept up with my running and I also been running a few times with a group of Rotarians from my rotary club who train for marathons. They run 25 km every Sunday morning starting at nine o'clock. I would run with them from 9:00-10:00 which was two runs about ten kilometers in total. I had planned on going every week but it is difficult as Saturday night is the only night I am able to go out with friends and nobody packs it in for the night before 3 am.

Since being in Holland, I have also witnessed the typical Dutch holiday known as Saint Martin's/Sint Maarten's day. This holiday somewhat resembles our Halloween except for it is celebrated on November 11th rather than on October 31st like our Halloween. Typically on this day children go from door to door with paper lanterns and candles, and sing songs about St. Martin and about their lantern in return for a treat. The house of the Journee family only had four children coming to sing for candy this year, three of which were from nextdoor. It was quite facinating to see all the different lanterns, some of the kids are quite creative when it comes to building their lanterns. Some kids also make up their own songs about their lanterns or they add their own special touch to the traditional Sint Maaten's song. I really enjoyed seeing what St. Maaten's was like, however I couldn't help thinking...gosh, these kids really have to work for their candy!

It has been decided that I'll be moving to my second host family on November 22nd and I am quite excited! However it is an understatement to say that I'll miss my first host family but I have no doubt that I will grow to love my second and third host families just like I had grown to love Fam.Journee. My host father, Lubertus, has two girls from his previous marriage however they are both moved away from home now. He now shares a home with his girlfriend Helma. I suppose I will be living a bit of a different life now that I'm moving families as Lubertus's profession as a musician is quite a bit different from both Henk and Lia's professions as a Lawyer and a Notary Republic. It should be interesting to say the least.

I think around this time last year was the deadline of that rather thick Rotary Exchange application package, I couldn't even imagine then what my exchange would have in store for me and now I'm living it! I can't thank Salmon Arm Rotary club enough for giving me this amazing opportunity. I feel like I have grown so much already and I still have so much left to experience and look forward to. I will definitely make more of an effort to keep in contact as I would really like to share all the experiences of my exchange with everyone!

Craig Wood

Sponsor: Kalamalka Vernon

Host: Germany Multi

My adventure began on a less than perfect note, after a delayed in Kelowna of over four hours I missed all my connections, resulting in me arriving in Germany a full twenty-four hours later than I was originally gonig to. So far I have been in Deutschland for just over two and a half months now and the time so far has been amazing. I have had so many great experiences and this is only the beginning.

I am living with a great host family, they are incredible, and their lifestyle is quite similar to that of my families in Canda. I was fortunate to meet Hendryk, my host brother, before he went on his exchange to Mexico. He took me to some parties and introduced me to a few of his friend which helped with settling into life here in Deutschland. My sister here goes to the same school as me, Gymnasium Ulricianum Aurich, and is in the eight grade. She is very helpful whenever I need some help with my Deutsch.

I'm currently living in Aurich which is located in the North West of Germany, around 30km from the Nordsee and 30km from the Netherlands. My town is basically the same size as mine in Canada so there is not much difference there, but it is way way older, which mean some very nice building and lots of histoy. The school I'm going to is much different than mine at home. The grades go from 5 to 13 and has 2005 students. So it is interesting to see all the little kids running about the halls and courtyard. I've already graduated allready in Canada but have been put in grade 11. The classes are fairly similar to the ones in Canada and with that being said are still boring, and that is made worse with my limited understanding of German, but each day I am improving. Along with being in grade 11, I have also attended some classes in grades 9, 12 and 13, some of which I now attend on a regular basis. I'm still battling the language, but since that almost everyone here speaks some English they have been able to explain things to me when I cannot understand.

My biggest struggle to get used to was the meals, haha, lunch is the main meal of the day, and dinner is usually something small like buns, meat, and cheese which is eaten fairly late each evening. In the place of vegetables is usually bread and lots of it, at each meal there always is lots of bread to eat. The only thing I don't like in Germany is the weather, rain rain and more rain. Every now and then there will be some nice days but not enough, but besides that minor detail everything has been truly amazing.

So far I have seen so much, something which I hope to continue for the rest of my exchange. I have visited many towns nearby to Aurich, the island of Norderney, I visited the Netherlands with another exchange student, her host brother and some of his friends, I went with a few of my friends in grade 13 on a school trip to Rome for a week, and with Rotary I went on a week long Germany trip where we saw Berlin, Wolfsburg, Erfurt, KZ Buchenwald and may other historic places.

Also I have joined a fußball (soccer) club in my city, and have played in several matches so far, which has been a really fun experience and great for meeting new friends. Along with that I attend grade 13 basetball class and that has also been a lot of fun.

I would like to thank Rotary, the Youth Exchange Program is such a great experience. I am having the time of my life and District 5060 really prepared me well for my year exchange. I know the rest of my exchange be just as great as the beginning has been.

Dan Fiedler

Sponsor: Prosser

Host: Finland

My update comes in 3 parts. They are the three monthly updates I have put on my blog. If it is too much, feel free to delete content. Anyone that asks for exchange student blogs can be directed to mine at this website: fiedlerinfinland.blogspot.com. Here is my Update:

Hey everybody! I have now been in Finland for 42 days. I have been very busy meeting new people and getting settled in to my new school. I am living in the city of Tampere

(TOM-pede), which is about the same latitude as Anchorage, Alaska. There are 200,000 people living here in the beautiful city of Tampere. My host family is wonderful. I have two host brothers and one host sister who is living in Grandview, Washington this year so I haven't met her. My host brothers' names are Jonotan and Santeri and they are 10 and 13 years old. My host mom, Tarja, treats me as her third son and cooks us very good food. My host dad, Jussi, works as a real estate agent in Tampere. My first week I spent at Karkku Orientation/Language Camp with all the other Rotary exchange students here in Finland. There are 125 students living here this year from all over the world, and 4 living in Estonia who tag along with us also. We spent our week at Karkku getting to know each other, attending language class everyday, and using the sauna! The Finnish sauna is unlike anything you have experienced. They range from small, one person saunas to large, 20 person saunas. My family has one adjacent to the bathroom, which I use at least once a week to help relax. The hottest I have been in so far was 105 degrees Celcius (221 degrees Fahrenheit.) And, immediately after being in the sauna, we wade into the nearest Finnish lake, usually about 10 degrees Celsius. There are 187,888 lakes in Finland, and most of them completely freeze over in the winter. Tampere is located between two lakes. To the north is Näsijärvi and to the south is Puhäjärvi. They will both freeze soon, covered by a sheet of ice one meter thick. My first week of school was difficult. I have lived in Prosser my entire life, so I have never experienced what it feels like to be a new student. The Finnish language was quite intimidating too. During my second week, I was plagued by tonsillitis and had to stay in bed most of the time. I learned some about the Finnish health care system when my host father took me to the doctor. Everyone in Finland is entitled to free health care, but it is not good quality, and they are forced to wait for months in order to get an appointment with a doctor. The other option is Private healthcare, which costs the patients money, but is high quality, and very prompt. After recovering from tonsillitis, I began to go to school regularly again and make new friends. My school's name is Tampereen Lyseon Lukio, but it is more commonly known as Rellu. I have started Finnish language classes at school, and am also taking evening courses on Mondays and Thursdays at another school. On Tuesdays I go to the local sports club to play ping-pong. I have a trip planned for Greece in October, and another planned for London in November. I am extremely excited to really begin to absorb the Finnish culture and language in the coming months, and travel as much as possible in Europe. Thank you for showing interest in my stay here in Finland, and I miss you all!

Hey Everyone! My day count in Finland is up to 65. Since first arriving, things have been pretty casual. I have made some good friends at school who I study with and spend time with. Finnish names are not difficult to pronounce, but unfortunately they all sound the same, male and female. For example: There is a girl I know named Jonna and a guy I know named Joonna. I have had difficulty remembering exactly how to say which name. Our school year is divided into fifths, and each fifth is called a Jakso. At the end of each Jakso, final tests are given for the material covered up to that point. Also, when the Jakso ends, schedules are changed, new classes begin, and old classes end. I finished geography and one of my English classes, and I began Psychology and Russian, both taught in Finnish. In Psychology, I had a private conference with the teacher and he provided me a book in English, so I kind of do my own thing. In Russian, the teacher

does not speak English. Luckily, I have a friend in the class who translates the important things for me. Russian is a crazy language. I do not recommend it to any English-speaker who is interested in becoming fluent, but I do recommend it to anyone who is looking for something completely new and different. Russian is difficult because there are some new letters that make new sounds, some new letters that make sounds I already use, and some letters I already know that make different sounds than I am used to. In Russian, P is R, B is V, N is "EE", X is H (almost), G is D (sometimes), and M is T (usually). You can imagine, it can get very confusing. Also, there are some completely new letters that I have never seen before that make completely new sounds. To make it harder, we have to learn printed Russian and cursive Russian, which are almost completely different. It is fun though because it sounds so strange to sound words out. Hopefully I will know enough to manage when Rotary take us exchange students to St. Petersburg next year. My Finnish is coming along well. I can efficiently find my way around, purchase necessary items, and ask someone to pass the ketchup. I leave for Greece tomorrow morning, it will be my first time out of Finland since arriving here. School is on "Syysloma" (fall break) so I will not miss too much. The winter is beginning to come, and I can feel it every time I go outside. The snow is supposed to come very soon. I will take many pictures in Greece and hopefully post some of them here. Thanks for staying interested!

83 days since leaving the United States, 8 of them now spent in Rhodes, Greece. We traveled to Rhodes on the 10th of October and returned on the 17th. We stayed at the Epsilon Hotel on Faliraki beach, and enjoyed soaking up the sun. For the first two days we relaxed by the pool and the beach, enjoying ourselves and eating wonderful Greek food. On Saturday, we drove up the road a bit to the Water Park of Rhodes, a huge amusement park with slide for people of all ages. We spent the day there, but were unfortunately interrupted by heavy rain and thunderstorms. On Sunday we drove down the east coast to Epta Piges (Seven Springs), where we hiked around and enjoyed the Greek nature. After lunch, we climbed to the top of a steep rock to a monastery overlooking the Aegean and much of Rhodes. Our final stop on our sight seeing tour was at the old town of Lindos. It was declared a world heritage site, so there are not hotels in the area. There is an ancient Greek acropolis on top of the city, overlooking the Aegean as far as Turkey. There is a temple of Athena, and various medieval buildings constructed by the knights of Saint John. Monday and Tuesday we spent playing beach volleyball and going into the town of Rhodes (the capitol) to shop and walk around. At the end of the day on Tuesday, I was swimming in the sea and encountered a sea Urchin. It punctured my foot in several places, and I had to go to the doctor in the town of Faliraki because the wound was deep. I spent an hour on the operating table while he dug out the pieces of urchin in my foot, it was quite unpleasant. I survived, and will have a limp for a week or two. We returned on Wednesday, and now I am on fall break from school. We start again on Monday. This will probably be the only update for October, but if anything exciting happens, I will be sure to post it. We have a trip planned from the 22nd to the 25th of November to London to watch an Arsenal Soccer Game and see a Broadway musical, so until then...

Dana Schepp

Sponsor: Vernon

Host: Thailad 3340

I arrived here in Thailand on the 3rd of August and I have been loving it ever since. The culture is so diverse and different from anything in Canada, and I have already been able to experience so much. I live in the big city of Korat, northeast Isan and have met so many amazing people. My host family is great, they made me feel welcome and at home right from the very beginning and try to take me traveling when they aren't working or are too busy. And I know I will miss them when I change host families on the first of December. Here in my city we have 9 exchange students and already in this short time I feel like I have been able to make life long friendships, especially with my friend Clementine from France. Of course the Thai people are very unique. They are very generous, easy going and always smiling or laughing. But I was very shocked at first by how many homosexuals there are and how free it is. There are many gatoys (men who dress as women, sometimes more beautiful than Thai women), lady boys in the schools and Toms (women who are men). Often telling the difference between the two can be impossible. But also refreshing in the idea that people here can be whoever they want to be without discrimination.

I started school after being here for three days and many things about school were very unexpected. The fact that I'm going to an all girls school of over 5000 students and have to wear the ugliest uniform (Big puffy blouse, long navy skirt, black rubber shoes and it's very hot). Well to say the least, I would have never imagined it for myself six months ago. But everyone is super nice and for the first month I was treated like a movie star. Everyone wanted to take pictures of me, feed me, touch my blond hair and white skin (everyone wants white skin and are horrified when I sun tan). But in general the school is very boring and everyone wants to speak English with me to improve their English. But Clem and I are able to practice Thai boxing, Thai dance, cooking and art. And just recently we have started learning to read and write Thai with the other farang (foreign) teachers. The language is sometimes sooo difficult though, it's a tonal language meaning the same word can be said differently five times and all mean different things, and reading and writing is even worse. But with a lot of hard work I plan to speak the language before I leave.

The food was a little shocking at first too. I didn't expect to eat so much rice, sometimes at every meal. My family was also very happy that I can eat spicy food. And the food is also very delicious and cheap. For under one dollar, I can buy a meal, bottle of water and fruit. Oh, the fruit is so amazing too. The best is rip mangos! Aloy!

So far I have been to Bangkok many times to see the royal palace and go shopping, which I love and my host mother calls me Nackshop. Everything's so very cheap. Phimai, Phnom Rung, Chon Buri, spent a couple of days at the ocean. Ayutthaya, rode an Elephant!! One of my goals here in Thailand. Nakhon Panthom seen a elephant and crocodile show (meanwhile in Korat my city flooded when I went to Nakhon Panthom and 36 crocodiles escaped from the farm by my city!) Roi Et, went to the Laos border but unfortunately couldn't go into Laos. And I'm very excited to go on the first trip to Phu

Kradung. I will finally be able to meet the rest of the 40 exchange students in my district, feel cooler weather and go jogging in fresh mountain air. I cant wait...

Over all its been a wonderful experience and I feel incredibly lucky to be here. I've been homesick a couple times, but if I keep myself occupied I fine. Oh, almost forgot. My Thai name is Darunee which means the young beautiful women and my nick name is Prae which means silk or soft cloth. Cool, eh. Well, cheers everyone. Make the best of it and I guess I will be seeing all the exchange students not to long from now...Bye

Gabby Valenzuela

Sponsor: Quincy

Host: Sweden Multi

I have been here in Gothenburg, Sweden for 3 and a half months! I really love it here so much and I havent been homesick once since I have been here:) I dont miss very much from home:)

Well lets start with when I arrived to sweden on August 1, 07 at 2:50pm! The plane ride was long, I didnt sleep at all I was soooooo excited that I was going to be in Sweden:) When I got off the plane I started to get nervous that I didnt want to go though the doors where on the other side where my 3 host familys waiting for me. We said our hello's and then I went home with my new family and was going to my new home for the next 6 months!

I really love my first host family "The Carlson family"! The are so wonderful they treat me so great like i was there own daughter:) I will live with them until January 6, 08 and then I will move with my 2nd host family "The Olson Family" I like to call them the tall family. The first couple of days I didnt do much I was getting used to the time difference! From Quincy Wa to Sweden the time difference is 9 hours. The first 3 weeks I was here my host family took me around the city and showedme around Gothenburg:) On Aug 22, 07 my host dad took me and 2 of my friends

to the Sweden Vs. USA soccer game! It was soooooo much fun! Sweden Won:)

I started school on August 27, 07! I really like my school that i am going to its called Frölundagymnasiet there are about 1,100 students. They have very different schedules then I do back home they dont start at 8 they start at different times not always at 8. I am not taking many classes the classes I am taking are English, Photo, Swedish, Biology and Dance! All my classes

are in swedish so its rather hard to figure out what they are talking about. But I just sit in class and study swedish instead. Swedish is a really hard language as im sure your languages may be hard too. But I am getting better everyday:) My classmates are so great I really like them all:) The lunch in school here in sweden is free!

I went to Stockholm Swedens capital on October 12-14 I really loved it there! I also had my 18th Birthday here in sweden! October 15th:) I spent it with my friends it was such a great 18th birthday I couldnt have asked for more:)

I have made many friends so far from Rotary exchange students, people from school, girls from my dance class, my host sisters friends and other people I have met:) I dont miss home yet which I think is a great thing:) I usally call home once a month and email twice a month. I attend my rotary meetings once a month and I will give my final speech June 08. It doesnt sound like I have done much but I have its just that it would take more then one page to write! This weekend I am going to Denmark with my host family and 2 of my friends they are also exchange students! I cant wait to go! I love to travel:)

So far my exchange has been amazing, wonderful and great! I have a great family, I have made so many friends and I do so much here then I would do back home. The time is going by to fast which is really sad. I have about 8 more months here in sweden and i will make the best out of these 8 months! I really do love it here so much and its going to be hard to say goodbye to all of these wonderful people that i have meet. I hope you are all having a great time in your countrys. Take care. Until next time! Hej då = Goodbye in swedish:)

Jordan DeLorenzo

Sponsor: Okanagan / Omak

Host: Argentina 4820

Wow, how does one even begin to explain their year abroad... Well, I stepped off the plane walking boot and all (I managed to break my leg a few days before departing) and made my way through the ever small Buenos Aires International Airport. I was soon greeted warmly by my first host family. My host father put his arm around me and said "a new son" (for those of you that don't know me, I am a girl). I was so jet lagged that I was barely able to appreciate Buenos Aires for all of its beauty. We soon departed for the two hour drive through the country to my host city, Arrecifes.

After getting all situated, a strange feeling swept over me, a feeling I was hoping not to feel, homesickness. Unfortunately for me, the feeling lasted rather strongly through my first week in this strange land. I knew from the start that Argentina was going to be very different from anything I had ever experienced before, but when I toured my school (leaking ceilings and little electricity) I wondered if I had made the right decision. Well, my first day of school came around and I was able to make some great friends, though there was not much communication between us due to a slight language barrier. Before I continue to tell you about my first day of school, you must understand that it works very closely with farming and veterinary skills. So, about mid afternoon my whole class loaded onto a bus and headed for the country side to... castrate bulls, now whose first day of school can top that?

After my first day of school here life has only gotten easier, I have made so many friends and have been fully immersed into their culture. I could not have asked for a bet-

ter host family or sweeter friends. The sickening homesick feeling has left me (hopefully for good) and I feel I have adapted to life quite well, but what will the holiday season hold? Tune in for the next update...

Katie Dittrich
Multi

Sponsor: Kamloops North / Aurora

Host: Austria

In order to make our world seem smaller, we must leave the known. For some people, moving across the world to a city of close to 2 million, knowing no one, might be scary: however, for others it can be intriguing.

My name is Katie Dittrich. I am originally from Kamloops, British Columbia, yet this year I call Vienna, Austria, my home. Not only is my beautiful city the capital of Austria, it is also the musical capital of Europe. Having said that, I have already enjoyed my first ballet and opera! This new home of mine has so much to offer. I already know that one year is too short for this exchange, however I did not always feel this way.

At the beginning it was a struggle for me to sit in a grade eleven class while all of my friends in Canada were sitting in university lectures. Yet, I now realize that I am learning much more during my exchange year than I could ever learn in a university course. Furthermore, I have the rest of my life to go to university and I am never going to be an 18-year-old young adult living in a cultural capital such as Vienna.

The saying, "If it's meant to be, it's up to me," holds so much truth during an exchange. You can't sit back and wait for experiences to come and knock on your door. You, yourself, have to go out and find them; otherwise you'll let so much pass you by. My exchange up to this point would be so uninteresting if I did not venture out of my comfort zone. One example from my exchange is ballroom dancing. My Viennese Rotary Counselor asked me if I would be interested in taking part in a "Vienna Ball Opening". At this time I had no idea what that meant, however I quickly enrolled in a ballroom dancing school and applied to take part in the ball that opens the dance season. Imagine this scenario: 84 couples, the ladies are dressed in full length flawless white dresses, long white gloves cover three-quarters of their arms, the men are all in smoking black tuxedos, they are in a beautiful palace's ballroom; and then there is a Canadian girl in the midst of it all waltzing away. She has never danced the formal waltz before coming to Austria, but she took hold of a new experience and threw herself into this cultural event. The ball-opening is not until January, and so I am incredibly nervous, yet when am I ever going to get this opportunity in Canada?

I must say there are some variables that alter the outcome of exchanges. You must be a sponge who wants to soak up everything. Ignorance is the biggest flaw that an exchange student can have. You need to be willing to really step into the new culture. In the modern world it is extremely easy for English speaking exchange students to speak English their whole time abroad, thus it is a personal obligation for them to say no to English and be persistent in trying to speak the new language. Of course at first it can

be a struggle if you have little to no language skills, but if you don't try to speak the new language, how will you ever learn it? The most important words to learn before arriving in the new country, if not more, are "please" and "thanks". It is amazing how far these two words can go. You have no idea how much people do for exchange students. They have never even met you before but they welcome you into their family and community. Showing appreciation is essential. Furthermore, it is the attitude of an exchange student that will make their year. If everything isn't going in the direction they hoped for, it is up to them to take control of the navigation and direct it back on course.

I truly am having the time of my life right now. If anyone is curious about the exchange program in Austria, or just Austria itself feel free to contact me! kjdittrich@gmail.com

One last note: Thanks Rotary!!

Katie Tackman
3060

Sponsor: Wenatchee Sunrise

Host: India

Wow! It is amazing how three months India can seem like three years! All in all things are amazing, and I have been experiencing tons of out of this world experiences that I wouldn't have imagined. Each day is a learning opportunity whether it is about the culture, life, or myself.

Life in India pretty much came to a running start with busy, busy right from the beginning, and I am predicting that the rest of the year will continue on running quickly by. One of my most hilarious memories was on my first day I went to the birthday party of a friend of my host brothers and I experienced my first Indian force feeding. Now it isn't quite how it sounds, but let's just say that the Indians I know love their guests to eat a lot. Well, everyone at the party is eating away and there is a dish of kind of donut holes in syrup left. The host takes up the pot, and starts stalking the room for anyone unaware of the danger they are in by sitting with their mouth open. Then out of the blue she starts shoving the sweets in peoples mouth, gesturing, laughing, and saying some random things in Gujarati. From then on I have gotten used to being offered tons and tons of food, and expanding the volume of my stomach, and the food is so amazing that you can't help but eat more.

School in India is quite different from school in the US, and the students have to study very rigorously. Most of the students from 9th on, and sometimes younger have tutions (extra classes) every day for about 3 hours on the weekdays, and 6 hours on the weekends, but during school classes aren't taken quite as seriously. Boys and girls are segregated in the classroom in my school, we have exercise in the morning, wear a uniform, and walk everywhere in lines. When the teacher enters the room everyone stands, and you also stand to speak. Also by 11th grade you either choose Science or Commerce and focus almost solely on those classes. I get what I can out of the lessons, but they are incredibly dry, and because the exchangers don't have tutions it is like we miss 75% of the important lessons. Because of this school is pretty frustrating, but a lot of my friends are at school which makes it more enjoyable.

India is such a diverse country, and I am having the opportunity to experience a ton different religious celebrations, and it seems like almost everyweek there is some celebration going on in one religion or another. Most recently was Diwali and the Hindu New Year, and one of my favorites: Navratri! Navratri was nine amazing nights of dancing garba till 3 or 4 in the morning to celebrate the 9 incarnations of the goddess Durga, Usha, Parvati and other names, but the consort of Shiva. One very cool experience was walking with my host family 14 km on the side of the highway and then country road to go to a temple of Hanuman (monkey god) and ask for the granting of one wish.

Everyday I have to stop a moment and pinch myself because I am in India! I am learning so much about myself, what I can handle, adapting to new environments, religions, communication, and I have a new appreciation for my own country. Always so hard to believe that I have already been here over three months, and the next two are mainly touring and seeing the country. Many Greetings!

Lisa Hodgson

Sponsor: Kamloops

Host: Germany district 1890

It seems as though the first quarter of my exchange has flown by in some ways while in other ways I feel like I have been here forever. Germany is a great place to be. The people are a lot different then in Canada but they are all really nice and helpful.

I will be moving to my next host family this weekend and I have mixed emotions about that. On one hand I am excited to meet a new family and see another way of life here but on the other hand I love my family I am living with now and don't want to leave them. I am living with an older couple whose kids are all grown up so they take two exchange kids in at a time. Lu, the other exchange student who is from Argentina and I are practically sisters now. We have become so close in such a short period of time. It's really nice to have somebody else who understands everything you are going through.

I have been able to travel quite a bit since I arrived here. My city is in between Hamburg and Lubeck so I have visited both cities many times. Hamburg is a great city for shopping and going out and Lubeck is a beautiful city to walk through and see the sights. My Rotary Club also took us to Berlin for a couple days and that was very interesting. Berlin has so much history and culture to it. In Berlin there was an art exhibition from The Metropolitan Museum of Art and we toured that. It was all so beautiful. We also saw the government buildings, Checkpoint Charlie and a few smaller museums. In October my host parents took Lu and I to Spain for two weeks which was absolutely amazing. They own a house in Nerja, a small town on the coast not far from Malaga. We went to Malaga, Granada and some other smaller cities near there. Our host parents also sent us on a day trip to Gibraltar. The town we were in was very exciting because a big festival was going on the second week we were there. There was a big fair in the center of town and dancers in the street. It was defiantly a lot different culture from Germany or Canada. We have also had one Inbound Meeting and that was of course very fun. We have about forty students in my district and we all get along great.

Things here are not so different from in Canada but there are defiantly a few things that stand out. The people in Northern Germany are a lot quieter then in Canada until you get to know them. The school system is a lot different too and they don't seem to have a lot of school spirit or pride. I think this is because people always have classes and breaks at different times and they don't have any school teams or things like that. I find the fact that things are so old here very interesting as well. My school is about as old is Canada maybe older.

All in all, I am having a great time in Germany and I have no complaints. This is the best experience I have ever had and I can't wait to see more and meet more people. I think things will get even better as I continue to learn more language. That is a key point to being an exchange student. Thanks Rotary!

Miguel Arias Rozo

Sponsor: Shuswap

Host: SWITZERLAND Multi

So it's now been 3 months since I arrived here in Switzerland and sometimes it seems as time has been going slow and sometimes I ask myself how 3 months have already passed by. All the experiences that I've gone through have had until now a significant effect on my life and the way I view my world. Switzerland being a small country is a country that offers different places to see, different languages and cultures; it's a place that I'm glad to be in. All the experiences that I've had, have made me a stronger person, this exchange until now has enriched my knowledge very much.

A place that I had always heard of and seen only through means of communication is the one I'm getting to know. A language that I could only barely speak at school in Canada is the one that I communicate in daily. A culture that at first didn't completely understand is one that I get to experience both in its positive and negative aspects. Languages that I've always wanted to learn are just a few hours away from where I live, French in the West, Italian on the South, and of course German.

This exchange until now has been one that I won't forget and I'm quite sure that it'll have a significant effect on the path I plan on pursuing in life.

So a few things about Switzerland and first impressions, three days after I arrived in Switzerland I was taken to the Zürich Street Parade (Europe's largest street party) in which people dress really... interesting, so that was my first impression of Switzerland, a very weird place. But over the past three months I've seen both Urban and Rural Switzerland and I have to say they both have things that appeal to me, and every time I get the chance to get to know a new place in Switzerland I'm always up for it and ready to explore! Although anytime someone goes to St. Gallen which is 30 minutes away from here, I think about how long that takes because now 30 minutes seems to be a long time to take the train, which would be the same as a trip from home to school in Canada.

About my feelings, some days are difficult and some days are wonderful, but one thing that I always keep in mind is that everything that is worth in life is gained through hard work, so I persevere with the struggles that I encounter, and it seems to be working! I didn't think the language would be such an issue as well because I like languages very much, but even though I can make a conversation in High German with no major issues, Swiss German makes things a bit tough! Another challenge that I'm willing to take, the learning of two languages at the same time and trying to make friendships with a culture that is not always open to new people, but again, if one makes the effort, no matter how different you might look, it works! So I'm working on that, and of course the support from other exchange students is essential because they understand exactly how you are feeling because they are going through the same experiences.

I am very glad that my Host Club provided me with a GA, which is very generous of them; it's a pass to take any train, bus and even ship anywhere in Switzerland for free! I've already gotten to see quite a bit of Switzerland for only three months. However going out in Switzerland can turn out quite expensive, so I've also learned how to keep my budget in place while having a good time or for instance being able to go on a nice trip to an unknown destination, I absolutely love those days! However, I now have to concentrate more on school and of course on my German so now it's been a while since I made a long trip (by Swiss Standards) but I would be ready for one! And about school, it's much more different than North America with much more material to cover, a school day sometimes lasts from 7.10 until 17.30, yes that's quite a difference.

The Rotary Club members are very nice people, open, and have quite interesting lives, I actually love going for Rotary lunches which is held in a place that was built 1000 thousand years ago, yes 1000 years old, it's in the old part of my city, it's very nice. My Host parents are great cooks and almost everyday they come up with a new Speciality, and if I go out for a full day then I certainly miss the cuisine from my host family.

Overall, this exchange has been one of the most enriching experiences that I've ever had in my life and the thought of getting to live in a different place and getting to know the unknown, is now real. The experiences that I have had, have made me a stronger person and I think of them as a tool to build a great personality. And of course, the best University in life is to learn from others, because one can't learn wisdom from a classroom, same with the culture and language, these are priceless knowledge which will have a significant effect on my life. Thank you very much for those who have helped me achieve this great opportunity, I'm very grateful for it.

Molly Nelson

Sponsor: Chelan

Host: Brasil 4600

On August 29th, I got on a plane to go to Brasil, and it was not until then that I realized what I was really doing. When I got on the plane, I started to realize that I would not see my family and friends for a whole year, and it was so crazy thinking that I had my life packed up in two suitcases to live in a different country for a year. On the plane ride here, I was really nervous, but luckily there were about seven other Rotary

Exchange Students on the plane with me, and it helped being with other teenagers who would be going through the exact same thing. It was six o' clock in the morning when the plane landed at the Sao Paulo airport, and after getting my luggage, I went outside and was greeted by my first host mom, second host mom, and second host sister with flowers and balloons!

The first things I noticed about Brasil that is so different than in the United States, is that there is so much poverty. On the drive to Pindamonhangaba (the city I live in) from the airport, there were little shack houses covering the hills alongside the rode, I had never seen anything like it before. The thing about Brasil though that I now realize, is that there is a lot of extreme poverty, but there are also a lot of extremely wealthy people. For example, my host family has a maid that is there every day to cook, clean, and do the laundry.

Also, my school here is completely opposite of the school I go to in the United States. In the U.S., there is one main hall in the school, and it is inside. Also, there are computers in almost every class room, and every teacher has their own classroom that they stay in all day, the student come to them for classes. Here, it is opposite. The teachers do not has their own classroom, the students stay in the same classroom all day, and the teachers move around to students for every different class. The school I attend here is one level, there are only computers in the computer lab and not in the classrooms, and the hall is outside. When you walk out of your classroom, you are in the outside hallway. The biggest difference is that school starts here at seven in the morning and ends at noon. I really like the schedule, it is nice having the whole afternoon to do other things. It is really awesome having such a huge change in schools!

My host family is absolutely amazing. They help me so much with everything, and I am really lucky to have them! I also spend a lot of time with my second host family because they live just down the street to my first, and they have a daughter who is my age. They are also really awesome. Brazilian people are very outgoing, nice, and love meeting new people. I think that having a good host family really helps with what kind of experience you have, even though you make it for yourself, they do help a lot!

I am really happy that I am having the opportunity to go on an exchange through Rotary, because as a person, I am already growing so much. I have learned so many new things about people and a different culture, and am understanding a lot of Portuguese, and speaking some too. It is harder for me to speak, but I am starting to speak more and more. I love learning Portuguese, it is one of the things that makes the exchange so worth it. Also, the people I have met and the new things I have seen make everything so worth it also. The Rotary Club here is so helpful and nice. Right now, there are three exchange students in the Pindamonhangaba club. But soon, we will receive Robin Bove (d. 5060) so I am really excited for that, and in January we will receive a boy from Thailand! All the exchange students are in the same classroom at school, so we have a lot of fun. Well, thank you so much Rotary for all the support, help, and this amazing opportunity!

Natasha Garner

Sponsor: Okanagan Mission

Host: Switzerland- District 1990

I have to begin by saying that my first three months in Switzerland have been absolutely amazing! When I first applied and started preparing for this exchange I had no idea of the opportunities and experiences that awaited me. Since arriving here on August 7th, 2007 I have began learning not one but two different languages (Hochdeutsch (High German) und Schweizerdeutsch (Swiss German), though at this point I'm just learning more to understand a bit of Swiss German than be able to speak it), I've met new friends, both in school and from around the world, and I've tried and seen so many new things I feel overwhelmed just thinking about it.

When I first arrived, I knew practically no German. "Hello", "Goodbye" and "My name is" were about the limit of my vocabulary. In the first few weeks I found that I was constantly struggling to figure out what people were saying to me; I found it strange that I could no longer understand everything and this made me feel lost, sometimes a little isolated and extremely tired. Slowly but surely with a lot of hard work (watching a lot of German TV) and a ton of practice I have been able to achieve a level of High German where I can now have a conversation with someone with only the occasional English word and am even starting to understand a bit of the Swiss German (since kids in school don't really like speaking High German...they'll speak it to you, but together it's always Swiss German). I am still having a bit of difficulties with reading and writing but I see myself improve every day so that's a good feeling.

Swiss school is nothing like North American school! There are no spirit days when people dress up in School colours (my school here doesn't even have school colours), or PJ days. Here school is school; you go to school to learn and that is it. I've noticed that with most teachers, the students are very respectful and maintain a very professional relationship, which for me was really strange because I considered a lot of my teachers in Canada as friends. School is also different here because unlike back home, where your schedule is completely different from everyone else's, you have one group of students who stay together for all of their lessons. This can make things sometimes a little difficult. I was fortunate that I got a really good class and that people were fairly welcoming to me, but its not uncommon that for the first little bit people can be a little cool towards you and seem to show no interest (they've all been friends for several years and becoming a part of those friendships, especially when you don't speak the language, can be a bit of a challenge). I've found that the best way to try and form friendships is if they ask you to go out somewhere, GO!!! Show interest in what they're doing and they'll want to do more stuff with you; if you don't then eventually they'll stop asking and loose interest in you. I've also found that in general, people here are really busy...so if you get an invitation, go, because you might not get another one for a long time.

Since coming to Switzerland (or as it is called here, der Schweiz) I have seen and experienced more then I could have ever imagined. I'm actually not sure how to

describe all that I've done; I just feel overwhelmed and have no idea where to start. I've had the opportunity to see parts of the country, the Alps, some of the big cities (Bern, Zürich, Luzern, etc...), the three famous mountains, the Eiger, Mönich and Jungfrau (where I had the opportunity to see one of the biggest glaciers in Europe and well as one of the hardest marathons in the World (I'm still in awe at this...they actually run up a mountain!!!)), as well as the Rhine falls (the biggest waterfalls in Europe). I've experienced cultural events that are unlike anything back home (football matches, a hockey game (more like a football match with the cheering and crazy crowd), street festivals and traditional music). I've climbed mountains, seen a lot of cows, learned to understand and ride the trains (and gotten lost in doing so...). All in all my time here has been absolutely amazing!!! I've found myself having to learn to adapt and change my perspective on certain things but feel that after 3 months I've adjusted (fairly well) to everyday life here and am feeling quite at home. I've loved these last three months and can't wait for the rest of my exchange!!! Merci vielment!!!

Nicole Gobeil

Sponsor: Armstrong

Host: Norway Multi

I LOVE NORWAY!!!! Especially my new big citylife in Oslo. My first time living in a city, so it's been a couple every exciting months! Oslo, the city reminds me a little bit of Vancouver and the forest surrounding Oslo reminds me of me of our forests back home, so nature wise it's like I haven't even left Canada! Although once you get in to the city you realize this isn't Canada, the language is big give away. I am starting to finally get the language though, slowly but surely. I even had a conversation with my host mom's mom who doesn't speak english and it seemed we understood each other so that was nice. And my host family is amazing! The Rotary club here doesn't do much with me, but my host family always has something for me to do and are helping me find things do to. My family has three cabins and I've been to all three and they've even taken me to Turkey!!! One cabin is on the ocean and the other two are in the mountains. The cabins are so amazing! Turkey was also amazing, it kinda reminded me (the part where I was Antalya) of Mexico. But besides from my family just taking me travelling they have also helped me become involved with horseback riding and a outdoor club. Oh and they also live a 10 minute walk from Holmenkollen Ski Jump. So, i'll be sad to leave them when I will be moving. I have only met my second host mom once, but she seems very nice. They have no children living with them, so it'll just be little ol' me living with my new host parents.

My school is very different from school back home. I usually get two Wednesdays off in a month and on Fridays I only have two classes. My school here is also an economy based school, I'm not to sure if that was the best choice for me. I have no interest in economy and I'm not even taking an economy class. But I've met lots of amazing people and their all so nice to me and besides the school use to be the main base for the German troops posted in Norway. There's even a bunker in the basement of the school! Which I found pretty cool. The classes that I'm taking are Norwegian, Historie, Japanese, English, Historie and Philosophy, Geography, and Gym. So I'm happy about

the classes I'm taking and I've found out (or it seems like) that some Norwegians have proper English compared to me. Such as one of my friends goes to English camp at Oxford! It's really crazy.

I'm so happy to be here and feel so lucky to be able to have come and experience this all! A trip like this really opens your eyes and you realize the little things that you take for granted mean so much to you. Such as getting hugs from your parents or a stamp costing 50 cents not 2 dollars. It's sometimes not fun living in the world's richest country. At least I think it. Or it's one of the richest. Until next time, ha det!

Nikki Krogfoss

Sponsor: Penticton Rotary Host: Japan 2770

This is such a difficult thing to write. So much has happened during these first few months that it seems impossible to fit it all onto one page. Honestly, I don't even know where to begin!

Living in Japan is like living in a unique limbo: a world that is filled with some of the most impressive technologies, yet at the same time manages to seem incredibly old-fashioned and traditional. The trains are amazing, and can take you anywhere you want to go (as long as you can read the signs), but at the same time, the schools and houses have a much older feel to them, as though they have been excluded from all the modern conveniences and luxuries that we take for granted. The houses are much smaller, and have very little personal space. They are often filled with only the bare minimum technologies, choosing practicality over style. It all seemed so strange (or rather, different) when I first arrived, and I'll admit, I was a little shocked. I was used to large, open spaces, with trees and plants and animals everywhere you look. This was really different from the paved lands and tiny house-filled streets of urban Japan! But there is so much more to Japan than just small houses and good trains.

Back at the beginning of my exchange, I was given a chance to participate in a Japanese tea ceremony. It didn't seem like much on the outside (just some people serving tea), but when I looked deeper, it was full of subtle actions and gestures that made the whole thing really elaborate and unique. This is the same of Japan. It gives off a certain appearance that has been stereotyped all over the world: the ideas of girls running around in uniforms and dressed as geisha; cities so large they merge into each other with no clearly defined boundaries; impressive technology that's known all over the world; and people eating raw fish. These are the things that people often think of when they hear 'Japan', and, while they may be true to some extent, I've come to realize that the real Japan is not what you see on the outside, but rather, it is something that is hidden just below the surface. It's difficult to explain (especially in only one page), and can only really be experienced. I'm just glad I get the chance to experience it!

It looks like I'm running out of room here, and I have yet to touch upon what I've done so far. Well, I've definitely had my ups and downs. The first month was rough, and I'm still struggling with the language, but I've had more than enough ups to

compensate. For starters, I just got back from Australia! Every year, my school (Kasukabe kyoei) goes on a five day trip to Australia. It not only gave me a chance to spend time with the kids who I've gotten close to, but it gave me a chance to practice my Japanese, as I was somehow placed in the role of unofficial translator. It was an amazing experience! Then, as I mentioned before, I've gotten to participate in a Japanese tea ceremony, and I have also gotten to see the beautiful and traditional Nikko, not once, but twice!

All in all, this exchange has been absolutely incredible. I've seen and done so much, and yet I've barely seen anything! Although there are still times when I miss my family and friends back in Canada, and although there are times when I'm really frustrated by my inability to understand the language, I am still glad that I get this unique and life-changing opportunity, and I wouldn't change it for the world!
