

BELGIUM

Lil Coleman

*Host Club : Wavre-Europe
Sponsor Club : Redlands Bayside*

No reprt Received

BELGIUM

Madeleine Slater

*Host Club : Hastiere
Sponsor Club : Sumner Park*

Halfway Already!

Well since my past boomer report much has changed as I have changed families. I now live in the small village of Sevry, which is so small it doesn't appear on maps, with the Marchals who are absolutely lovely. The thing that has remained the same though is that I still live on a farm. It's pretty cool, there's the house the back yard and then the farm. Talk about a short commute to work! And funnily enough I still take the same bus to school.

My new host parents are Jean-Marie and Chantal. I have a 10 year old host sister named Chloé who has a never ending supply of energy which is fun and a 23 year old host brother, Amelien. We've all been working hard because he's just opened a new accounting office and we had to get everything ready in time for the grand opening. Chloé and Amelien also have another brother, Florian who's currently on exchange in California. And of course then there's the dogs, cat, horse, chickens, rabbits, and cows.

The farmers in Belgium are a bit stressed at the moment because there hasn't been enough



rain. It's strange though because to me everything looks so lush and green but everyone keeps saying how dry it is. It does mean though that the weather

has been lovely and sunny, lucky for me I guess!

Well, I wrote my last Boomer just before I headed off on a Rotary trip to Italy for 10 days. It was so amazing. We were really lucky and able to see a lot of the country in a pretty short time. We drove overnight, going via Switzerland and our first stop was Rome. What really struck me was how strange it was to see all these amazing historical buildings and ruins alongside the modern bustling city. We visited the Vatican and ancient Rome, it was fascinating. Next we headed to Naples and the Amalfi Coast, including Capri. We drove along the coast, stopping at

different small towns along the way. It was kind of funny though; our guides told us that the Mafia was insisting we use local buses. It was either that or because we were better off using drivers who knew the road considering we were basically driving along a cliff, but I think I



like the Mafia story better. We also visited Pompeii, complete with people preserved in ash, Pisa, Florence and last but definitely not least Venice. Italy was really one of the highlights for me so far and not only because of the amazing things we saw but also because of the wonderful friends I made.



Just after I got back I had to get packing in preparation to change host families. But my packing was interrupted by a trip to the farm to see a cow have a caesarean. The extra muscular cows they have here can't actually have normal births because the claws are too big, so they do a caesarean

Madeleine Slater

(cont.)

every time. It was very interesting, kind of gross but mainly interesting And I was really lucky because while the first cow was getting chopped open a second started labour. So I was able to see two caesareans in the same afternoon. Bonus!

At the start of May I was able to take part in a camp held for the Belgian students who'll be heading off on exchange in July. Basically our job was to do a little presentation on Australia and to answer any questions the students had. The most common questions were "have you seen a shark?" and "how big are the spiders?" and other variations on that general theme. So it seems that we have a bit of a scary reputation but that's ok.



On ANZAC Day I was able to the services that were held in Flanders with the help of the Australian Embassy, which organises a bus from Brussels. There were about eleven exchange students who came on the bus. We attended several services during the day and met Dr Brendan Nelson who's currently the Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union, and a very friendly chap. It was a little odd though, everyone was so easy to understand! But it was really wonderful to be able to spend the day with other Australians.



I was pretty lucky because one of the students at my school dropped out of the trip to Versailles which meant I was able to go. It was remarkable! The first day we toured the interior and the second day the gardens. It's astounding to think of people actually living there, just surrounded by all this gold and such. The gardens are incredible too, just when you thought you'd seen all the amazing fountains there are too be seen there are more! And to top it all off before we went home we got to take a ride through Paris on a Bateau Mouche. It was brilliant and really cool to be able to spend some time with friends from school.



So at the end of the school year we have those wonderful things known as exams. I was all geared up to try several of them but as it turned out the trip with Rotary to the Czech Republic I was going on left before several of my exams took place. So it turned out that I just tried the French exam. I can say pretty confidently that I failed miserably! But I'm glad I gave it a go, everything's an experience right?



So just after that I headed off on the trip to Czech Republic which was excellent! It's an incredibly gorgeous country. We spent three days in Prague and two days in South

Bohemia. We saw some really amazing architecture and castles especially the castle at Hluboka, which really looks like something straight out of a fairy tale. The great thing about the trips organised by Rotary is not only that we get to travel with a whole pile of friends but our guides really know the countries and they're able to show us some amazing places and some

Madeleine Slater

(cont.)

areas aren't quite so touristic which is cool. At one point I was that sitting on the steps of a fountain with a couple of friends eating ice cream when I heard an Australian accent. There was an elderly couple who



came at sat down near us. So I just thought hey why not and went and said hello. Turns out that they were from Victoria and were in fact Rotarians themselves! So that was pretty cool. We had a lovely chat and I gave them my card. So there you go, it is indeed a very small world!



! I've also visited some cool places in Belgium with my host family. A while ago we visited the Chateau de Bouillon which is this amazing medieval castle perched up on a cliff complete with birds of prey. We also visited Durbuy, which claims to be the smallest town in Europe. I don't know if that's true but it might well be one of the cutest. It's really nice to get to see more of



Belgium. It's funny, some of the places we've visited my host family hadn't seen before either so we all get to discover new places together.

So I'm halfway through my exchange now, I really can't believe how fast the time has flown by! My friends from the northern hemisphere are all heading home which is sad. And soon lots of new students will be arriving, including Diego from Brazil who'll be hosted by my club here. So it'll be my job to show him the ropes which will be fun. I'm still always so grateful for this opportunity and basically I'm just going to try and make the most of the time I have left because I know that it's going to go even faster!



Alice McNeill

Host Club : Londrina

Sponsor Club : Mt Gravatt

Alice In Brazil

Boomer, boomer, number two. Oh what, oh what should I write in you? True be told, I do in fact have quite a lot to write in here so I'll try and split it up into categories but forgive me if it's all over the place!



Alice McNeill
(cont.)

Starting with host house activities:

For the past 3 months, since the last boomer, everything has been going pleasantly here. In the warmer weather I was doing canoeing but now that it has become colder this has been postponed. I'm sure my coach during winter schoolgirls rowing season would not be too proud of me but I just can't seem to get the momentum to go! I have also been making or attempting to make sweets for my family. They have taken a great liking to pavlova and I'm just short of making one every week!

In mid April, the expo came to Londrina. This is just like the EKKA but with a lot more rides and food stalls and less of the art and knitting. As you can imagine, this made it quite a lot better! For Easter we got 4 days off school and my family and I travelled up to my uncle's farm for a nice quite lunch. It was quite different to not experience the 2 weeks holidays and a whole heap of crazy cousins and family but it was nice all the same.

School time:

School here has been going along enjoyably. We are in holiday period at the moment but before holidays I participated in yr 12 pajama day where, on one of the coldest days, we all wore PJs to school. Many people also bought along blankets and pillows. This was definitely one of the best days I have ever had in my schooling life! I also participated in Festa Junina or June Festival where my grade and I got dressed up danced and got dressed up in the dresses and 'cowboy' style outfits. We danced in pairs in front of the large crowd gathered and I actually had a very fun time. My school went all out and set up



huge stalls and they had a jumping castle and balloon making and it was indeed a very enjoyable night.

Last but not least, Rotary things:

In May I was fortunate enough to go on a 10 days Amazon trip with some very wild exchangers. This trip was definitely a highlight of my year so far!

When we first arrived we got a tour of the city, Manaus which was very pretty and on the next day we got on 2 different boats, approx. 25 on each, and started our journey on the Amazon River. At nights we would sleep in hammocks on the boats, under the stars which were so bright they were reflecting in the river! During the day however, this area would be turned into a chill-out area with couches and mattresses where card games could be played and journals could be written. We had staff on our boats who were wonderful. They would cook, give us tours, drive the boats and most importantly keep our messy area tidy. This I'm sure was a very difficult job!

Some of the things we did on this trip included meeting the native Indian tribes and watching their dances, walking in the forests, going fishing for Paranas, searching for Jacaré (alligators), feeding the pink



dolphins (they are pink because of the black acidic water which they swim in), learning how to make traditional food such as Tapioca (like a white pancake) and Mandioca (like mashed potatoes but a different texture), playing and swimming in the river and playing soccer with some of the Native kids. One night we were lucky enough to be able to pack up our hammocks and blankets and go sleeping in the forest. This was definitely an experience and one which I wouldn't want to try again without 30 other people around me! Not that anything bad happened to us but there is something about sleeping in a forest which you know contains jaguars, spiders, anacondas and other lovely animals that just makes one on edge about sleeping there. Even though it was a little scary it was a very unique experience and one which I'm glad I partook in.

Alice McNeill

(cont.)

On the last day of the trip we went to a beach in the Amazon. This 'beach' was pretty much just brownish sand surrounded by Amazon River water but it was still good. This was where the tourists and rich people came to enjoy the sun. And there was quite a lot of people there! Here was all got to dance with the locals and buy some of their handmade jewelry.

At the end of the tour we were all very sad to have to say goodbye but it had to end sometime. Throughout those 10 days I had made many new friends from around the world and have planned many visits with them.

So that's about all the news that I have at the moment. Turns out this boomer wasn't as long as I imagined but that should be good for all you readers at home!

Hope everything is grand in brizzlyland. And I guess you will all hear for me again for boomer number 3!

Beijos from Brasil

Alice McNeil

DENMARK

Savannah Barber

Host Club : Roskilde
Sponsor Club : Roma

And so apparently it is July.



I am a happy spirit. I love being an exchange student. I love experiencing a culture which is completely unfamiliar, and doing it independent of those who have nurtured me, who have always been there to

protect me and who have fostered me in my growth and development my entire life. Reports like this though, are little epiphanies that the clock is ticking. And I really wish it wouldn't.

It's not because I don't love Australia. It's just because I know that when I get back to Australia, I will have to take a rain check on the singing and dancing and smelling the flowers. I am yet to be emancipated from the bonds of productivity that *reality* place begs.

Time is of the essence, so I am going to embrace every single minute of my time here.

Prague, Czech Republic

I guess, you are interested in hearing about all that I have experienced over the past few months and how special and influential that has been. It's lucky, because I love to write about it.

Well, I study music in Denmark. As a part of one of our assessments, we were required to form small groups and prepare a performance piece for an evening concert before our peers. I formed a group with the four boys in my class. Since I can't play an instrument, my role was that of the lead vocalist.

My role got trickier when the others decided they wanted to perform 'Dancing in the Street'- the Mick Jagger version. I am no Madonna, so singing in front of my very impressionable peers was daunting enough. It was something more when I had to try to discover my inner rock girl.

The boy on the drums clapped his drumsticks together. That was the countdown. The others in the band started to play. I had no choice but to open my mouth. So I did. I looked out at all of the people watching. I stopped worrying about a bad singer and embarrassing myself, and instead started thinking about how brave I was to be standing on that stage, performing in front of all of those people.

This was no torture. This was an opportunity.

I sang and I danced and I smiled. I didn't want to feel like there was pressure to entertain, so I made it my priority to personally enjoy it. It turns out, people think it is kind of sweet to



Savannah Barber

(cont.)

see a girl who had been standing there with frozen lips and fear in her eyes, stop being afraid and instead start enjoying it and really start having a party on stage.

I am blossoming with confidence now.

There were 3 very special weeks in particular. I climbed the Eiffel Tower. It was just about dusk when I reached the top. When we got down the tower was lit with the most beautiful lights. There is something very magical about the Eiffel tower at night.

I visited Auschwitz concentration camp from WWII in Prague. That was heart-wrenching. It is not until you see something like that, that you really begin to count your lucky stars.

I walked alongside the Berlin Wall and visited Check-point Charlie.

I accidentally walked through a nudist park. I was just walking, and then all of a sudden a naked man and woman emerged from behind a bush. I tried to turn away, only to discover naked men and woman of all ages and shapes and sizes, sun baking and frolicking about the gardens. There was a man nearby, sitting on a bench. I giggled and I asked him if I was walking through a nudist park. He said, 'Well you can expect to see this in any park in Berlin. Don't forget you are in Europe.' He was right. I guess I still forget sometimes. When they say prepare yourself for a culture shock, they really mean it.

I ate a Belgium waffle. Two actually, because they were really really good.

I took a stroll through the Red Light District in Amsterdam. How confronting it is to see women selling themselves behind glass windows. How unusual it is to almost get high just from breathing.

I was bought roses by a Macedonian boy at a club in Italy. That was sweet.

Berlin Wall, Germany

I cruised down the Venetian canals in a Gondola.

I sunbaked and ate very expensive ice cream in the gardens of an Austrian Palace. And it is crazy to think, that beforehand all I really knew was that I was about to embark on a bus tour around Europe. I didn't know what to expect.

I have so many special memories from Europe tour. It was so special to be together with people from all over the

world. It is very sad to think that many of them I may never see again. If ever the day comes that I can afford to travel the world though, it is lovely to think that I have exchange brothers and sisters to pay a visit to in every country.

Australian Girls - Prague, Czech Republic

And then there was Roskilde festival - an entire week devoted to good music and good beer. When thousands of people



gather in a space which is not especially big, with little other intention than to party and have a good time... well that makes for quite an atmosphere. I loved that because it was Roskilde festival, I didn't need a reason to sit down and have a conversation with a group of strangers. I was able to meet so many interesting people. I loved that because it was Roskilde festival, I could be walking and see a man dressed up as a nun or Barack Obama, and for no reason other than because he felt like it. I loved that I was an Australian girl, and that that made me an exotic fruit, but that I could speak Danish, so I really had the best of both worlds.

I still find it a little difficult to fathom all that I experienced that week, so maybe it is not so easy for your imagination to conjure up an image of this place.

I love Denmark. I don't feel like I am existing in a foreign country with a foreign culture. This is very much a home for me. It is not a replacement for Australia, but it is a very special place I can maybe retreat to sometimes in my life.

I love to be an exchange student. I have no worries, only one thousand blessings. I love that this is my year to do little else, but experience.

So, I will soak up every second of it, while I am here... while I can. Only 6 months on the clock, so I better fly.

Thank you Roma Rotary Club. Thank you YEP Committee. Thank you Mum and Dad. You gave me something very special, when you gave me this opportunity.

DENMARK

Katie Byrne

Host Club : Randers Østre

Sponsor Club : Archerfield

So, as the time has come for me to sit down, once again, and write my beloved Boomer and I can't help but feel completely overwhelmed with how fast this year is passing by. On the contrary, one year is a very short period of time.

In a year we, as exchange students, are expected to create a new home for ourselves, filled with multiple families, friends and just as many memories. While to some outsiders this notion may sound absolutely ludicrous, with the language barriers and such, I however disagree. I believe that living in a community where no one is familiar forces you to reach out to other people, like you have never done before.

It's strange because my exchange life has ceased to be exciting. Of course there are days when I simply cannot believe how incredibly fortunate I am, to be standing where I am, doing what I'm doing, but my actual day to day life has settled down into a pleasant routine.

I say pleasant because, I finally feel at home and in a place where I belong.

There is no longer that need to try and impress Rotary Clubs, host families or even people at school. Life is just, like it has always been this way.

This last quarter of my exchange has been hectic! I have moved families, been on a hyttetur, to Prague, done my Euro Tour, been sailing on the Limfjorden, finished



another year of schooling and currently, I am in Limbo Land.

NEW FAMILY

I moved from my first host family on the 12th of May, out of the city and to St. Sjørup, a tiny, tiny summer holiday town, on the beach. While at first it was a bit of a shock to the system, to live an hour commute from all of my friends, I am starting to settle down and appreciate the simple life.

HYTTETUR

I love Danish schools! A hytte is small wooden house usually located by a beach. One weekend in April my class hired a house, by the beach for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. During this time we went on a treasure hunt in surrounding streets, dressed as cowboys and pirates! We played lawn bowls, soccer and went exploring on the beach. Basically this weekend was the perfect opportunity for me to really bond with my class. It was perfect.



PRAGUE

I love Danish schools! During the Easter break a group of people from my school went to Prague. It was amazing! Prague is one of my favourite cities in Europe. From the stunning architecture, to the people that I spent these amazing four days with, it was a trip that I will remember for my entire life!

EUROTOUR

Oh Eurotour, These 19 days were the best of my exchange so far. In year to come, looking back on Eurotour, I will remember the sunshine, ice cream, the beautiful

Katie Byrne

(Cont.)

scenery, the Grand Prix and most importantly, my number one family in Denmark. The exchange students. Throughout these 19 days we discovered the magic of Europe together, we saw the sites we delights on every foreign shore!



LIMFJORDEN

This was a cruise with my district though one of the seas in Denmark. We literally did nothing throughout the day, expect sit on a boat, that was doing circles. Although this was perfect, it was the perfect opportunity to say our last goodbyes, to all of the Oldies in our district. It allowed us to become that little bit closer, turning what may have been goodbyes into, "see you later's." Although saying farewell to these people has been the hardest point in my exchange so far, I feel privileged that such wonderful people have entered into my life and each in their own way, made an impression.

LIMBO LAND

And now this is where I am! Halfway through, not quite a newbie anymore but still not an oldie. While I am very excited about the coming of the new exchange students, I cannot help but feel the pressure of my year slowly coming to an end. Although, I feel like I have lived in Denmark for a lifetime and seeing as though I am one month short of half way – I still have a lifetime and one month left!

Vi ses!

DENMARK

Alyssa Ford

Host Club : Ry

Sponsor Club : Wynnum & Manly

Since I wrote the first boomer, so much has been packed into the last couple of months. Not even days after the last one, was a get together for all of the current Rotary exchange students in Odense. If I had known that the people I casually met that weekend would go on to be some of the best friends I've ever had, I would have taken every advantage and spent as much time as I could have with them before they travelled home. Unfortunately now we're at the changeover point with the oldies leaving, and the newbies coming soon.

It seems the past couple of months were the times to go travelling. I had three tours squeezed into April and May, along with school and the Easter break.

The first tour was with my class to the very historical and beautiful city of Berlin, Germany. I spent 5 days visiting countless museums and monuments and getting



lectures and speeches from tour guides and the teachers but it was a fantastic trip. I was actually quite surprised at the amount of freedom we were allowed, especially since we were in a completely different country. But it was so great that the school trusted 60 students not to act up in Berlin city.

When I returned from my study tour it was straight into Easter celebrations. It was enlightening to see how Denmark celebrated Easter without the use of chocolate eggs. Although even though I missed my annual chocolate session, it was

Alyssa Ford

(cont.)

still such a Hyggelig week of lunches, dinners and tea parties.

I was lucky enough to have a Rotary club with a good relationship to a club in England. The Rotary club of Ry, Denmark and the Rotary club of Louth, England have annual trips to visit each other. My club decided to take me along and I was so excited to have an opportunity to go to England. Louth is a very, very small country town in Lincolnshire that has a huge history that the locals are immensely proud to boast of. Even though I was the only person under the age of 40, I still had a wonderful 4 days meeting people, driving on the proper side of the road, antiques and drinking copious amounts of tea.

After my trip to visit the Queen, I had a total of 6 days with my class before the much anticipated Eurotour. These days also happened to be the 3rd years final days so the school was pranked somehow every day. From the 3rd years



painting themselves blue and dancing in the lessons, so camping on the sports field, to causing a standstill in the canteen line, it was entertainment at its highest. I know that the 2nd years got some ideas for their own graduation in a year.

Eurotour, what can I say. Honestly, this trip was indescribable to anyone that was not on the bus. I'll try to explain though. So basically it was 18 days on a bus, with 58 exchange students and 7 countries. If that isn't a recipe for chaos, I don't know what is.

So we started with Berlin and learnt a lot about the history and saw the city on busses, trains, trams, and even a 7 person bike. Prague was next and its culture was such a beautiful thing. I'd have to say it was one of my favourite cities. Next was Vienna and I swear ever since I was there every time I watch the Sound of Music I can say "I've been there!" Lido De Jesolo was a welcome relief from the Danish weather with 3 days on the beach in the sunshine

visiting cities such as Verona and Venice. Avignon was fun, with the Australian students on the bus getting into a vegemite fight in the hotel. We may have nearly gotten kicked out of the hotel, but it's a story that makes us laugh. Paris was one of the top cities we visited. I have so many



fond memories there; from my Canadian friend "accidentally" breaking my shoes on the Eiffel tower stairs, to running through The Louvre and also feeling proud for

understanding the metro system after getting lost and confused countless times. However 3 days in Paris was not enough, so I will return to Paris one day. After Paris was Brussels, a city of chocolate, waffles and a famous little fountain. Unfortunately we only stayed overnight but it sure looked like a wonderful city. Amsterdam was after Brussels and we were there for 4 hours before going to Arnheim for our last night together as a group. A lot of tears were shed the next day, as we said goodbye to some of the most amazing people. I have been so lucky to have this eurotour.



After the trip it was time for me to move host families. After hurriedly unpacking and repacking everything I had accumulated in the past few months we packed the car and drove to Skanderborg which is 10 minutes out of Ry.

Alyssa Ford

(cont.)

I was welcomed by my new family and Living with them has been packed full of adventure. There is never a dull moment in this house.

Since then I've been occupying my summer break by visiting as many friends as I can. Travelling in Denmark can be a little scary by yourself, but the train systems are so reliable it's quite easy once you've gotten the hang of it. And after the amount of trains I've caught I can nearly be called a pro.

My family took me on a holiday to a place in northern Denmark called Skagen. It's a very beachy town where a lot of people in Denmark go to holiday. All the houses have to look the same by law and when you get there it's like walking into a land of doll houses.

My town's music festival is coming up and I'm really looking forward to it! We're spending the week listening to music in a forest by a lake. It'll be magical.

Until then Vi Ses!!

FRANCE

Amy Holt

Host Club : Vernon

Sponsor Club : Chinchilla

It doesn't feel like much time has passed since I wrote my last boomer ; the last four months have come and gone so quickly that I can hardly believe it. I've done so much since the last Boomer, I don't even know where to begin.

My second host family, the Crescimbene's, were amazing . I truly felt like a member of the family, and in just three months we created so many memories that I will never forget. I became extremely close to my host sister Manon , as we lived together, went to school together, were in the same class, ate lunch together, sat next to each other for the 2 hour bus trip to school everyday, and spent nearly all weekends together. We spent numerour days together at Paris. Shopping, sight seeing, eating a

picnic under the Eiffel Tower ; things that before this year, I had only dreamt about.



I was also lucky enough to go to London for a week for the Royal Wedding with two other Australians who are exchange students in France. We had lots of fun, and it was great to discover London, and definitely weird to speak English again for the first time in a while. For the first few days we often said 'merci' and 'oui' to people that talked to us. It was really quite embarrassing and hard to explain as we obviously weren't french.

We took a hop-on-hop-off bus tour and saw most of the 'big touristy attractions' in London, *Big Ben, Houses of Parliament, London Eye, West Minster Abby, Buckingham Palace, Trafalga Square, Picadilly Circus, Oxford Street, Harrods, Tower of London, London Bridge, and did a River Cruise.* London is a beautiful city, but my favourite is still Paris.

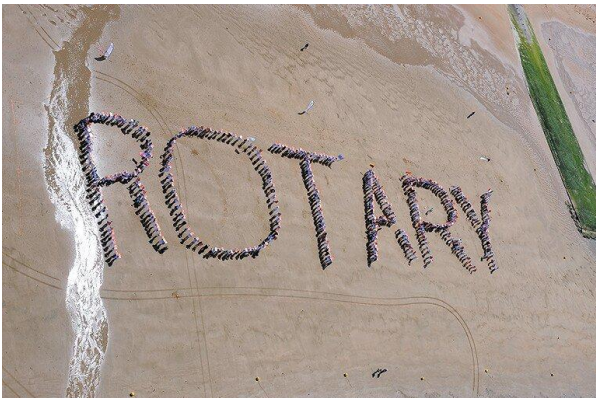
Come the night before the wedding, we decided it would be a good idea to take our sleeping bags, and sleep outside Buckingham Palace, to ensure that we got a good spot for the following day. After an extremely cold and sleepless night, we woke up and decided to head down to the Church to see the Royals arrive, rather than keeping our spot at the Palace. I unfortunately, did not see the Royals (only their cars), but it was a great experience nonetheless, and the atmosphere was amazing.

Amy Holt (cont.)



There's also been several rotary events held for us. One was a replica of the 'Repas Exotique' that I did in my first week in France, but this one was with the other students in my district, which was great. There was about 250 people that came, and we each cooked a dish typical to our own country. I cooked 4 pavlovas (again). Everybody seemed to really like it, and I was quite proud of my cooking efforts.

I also participated in a day of advertising and celebrating Rotary in all that they do, and in particular the Polio Project. We spent the day at Cabourg, and took the photo below.



Myself and Alonso (the Mexican exchange student in my club) went to a beach in Normandy with a rotarian couple, to learn all about the history of D-Day. We went to the Museum of the Debarquement, the 360° cinema, The canons and the block houses, the beaches, the château of William the Conqueror, the museum of Normandie, and the Memorial of the country. It was really interesting to learn all about the war, and to see the sights first hand, rather than reading about it in a book.

Geologically, in France, I am very luckily placed. Forty-five minutes from Paris, 45 minutes from Rouen. Living in Normandie, a beautiful region, (although notorious for miserable rainy days). I am also placed 5 minutes away from the house and gardens of Claude Monet, which I visited with an American in the district. They were absolutely amazing, and it was truly magnificent to see his paintings come to life.

I was also asked by a Rotarian in my club if I would like to work for a night in his castle (yes he owns a castle), as he knew that I was really interested in the hospitality industry, and it would be a good experience for my French. So I worked at the castle for a night. It was a massive Jewish wedding, which was absolutely beautiful. I walked around with the started and nibbles, cleared tables and helped arrange everything at the end. It was quite easy, but it's definitely cool to say I have worked in a castle!

My Rotary club, like many in Europe, have a 'Club Contact' each year. This year, accompanied by a club from Belgium and Germany, we went to Ile of White, England for a long weekend. It really makes you realise how small the world is when your an Australian sitting at a table with a Mexican, an English, a German, a Belge, a Brazillian, and a French, and it's not the first line of a joke.

I spent the day in Paris with all the students in the district, it was a great day but the purpose was to say a final goodbye to eachother. As I am the only student from the Southern Hemisphere in the district, their year didn't coincide with mine. It was hard to say goodbye to them all, as they have had such a huge influence on my first 6 months in France, but I will never forget them and all of our memories.

I've recently changed host families. It was sad to leave the Crescimbene's, but my new family, the Aussudre's are really nice, and we all get along really well. We spent the week climbing the Alps near Italy and Switzerland. It was honestly the hardest week of my life, both mentally and physically. I'm very proud of myself for finishing, and I think that it was the influence of my exchange that kept me going, as I'm not sure I would have kept going if I was in Australia.

Amy Holt

(cont.)

I love my exchange, and I love France. I



have no regrets so far, and I am having a fabulous time. I've experienced so many new things in my life, and I am having the time of my life. I've eaten snails, horse, 'pate of head', blood sausage, and many many more things that I've said 'pourquoi pas' (why not) to, even though they don't sound the least bit appetising. It makes me realise just how much I've changed within the last six months, by looking at the chances I've taken, by being open and willing to accept a new culture. I miss home, but I'm not homesick as I know for a fact that the next six months will fly by just like the last six months. So my aim is to profit from the next six months as much as possible, and to continue to try new things... like frog legs.

GERMANY

Roisin Davis

Host Club : Pulheim

Sponsor Club : Toowoomba

So, here we are again, this time all settled into our new life for this year. These past three months have gone by so very quickly, I can't believe that soon it's the halfway point for our exchanges!

So much has happened since last we wrote, that I cannot fit it all into the limited space we are allowed, so I shall just give you the Sparks note version ☺

The first exciting experience was the Germany Tour with the rest of the 80 plus exchange students in my district. We saw so many interesting towns including

Heidelberg, Stuttgart and of course, Berlin and Munich. Hamburg was on the itinerary but due to reasons that need not be mentioned, the trip was cancelled early so we missed Hamburg. Despite this, the trip was an amazing experience with a wonderful 86 students from all around the world!! In terms of looks, Heidelberg was my favourite city. There is an amazing old castle on top of a large hill and from there, you get the most beautiful view of the city on the Rhine surrounded by mountains. Of course, Berlin was my other favourite city. Being the capitol of Germany it has so many interesting things to see. My favourite site was the only memorial to a



member of the Nazi party to be found in the world. You may be thinking, why are the Nazi's being memorialised? If you have seen the movie Valkyrie then you will know what I mean. The five men were the leaders of the most famous German resistance plot from within the Nazi party and were the closest to assassinating Hitler. All plots failed as you know, however this is the most famous of them regardless of the failure. So, being the history buff than I am, I found this site particularly interesting.

On the bright side, Rotary disagreed with the decision to send us home early, and as a consolation prize, gave us a free weekend trip to Paris! This was the most amazing weekend I have had so far. Everyone says Paris is nice, but I never really realised just how nice it is! We saw all the typical tourist sites: Eiffel Tower, Louvre, Notre Dame...everything! We were only one night in Paris, and about 6 hours or more each way on the bus, but it is a weekend I will never forget. I absolutely love all the time I have spent with my exchange friends here. It didn't matter if we were in Paris or Gummersbach (there is nothing in Gummersbach, but we were also there for a Rotex weekend) it was the people that made the memories special. Even the last 2 hours of the bus trip were made so much better because of who was there!

Roisin Davis

(cont.)

While on the Germany tour, we wrote a song that is now our special exchange song. One boy from Venezuela was hosted with an extremely musical family and they owned their own recording studio. They

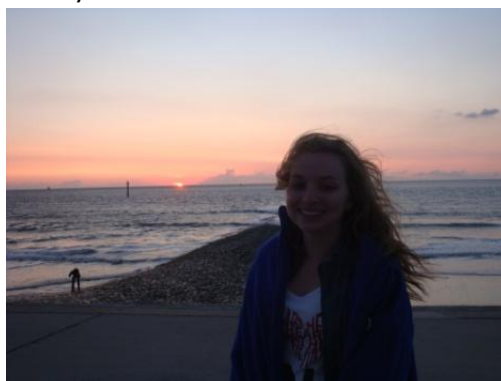


helped us record the song to be sent to each exchange student. Each verse was in a different language with the chorus in English so we wrote it for everyone on the tour to understand. I thought it was really fun to sing in a real recording studio!!

I was also invited to Nordeney, a German Island in the North Sea with my Rotary Club president and his family. It is a really beautiful island, but it was very surreal to be at the beach, but have to wear warm jumpers! The wind from the North Sea was icy cold! The weekend that we were there was the weekend of both the National Beach Volleyball Championships and the National Windsurfing Championships. So there were many many people there. Much more than usual I was told. I still am not used to how much Germans get into barracking for their sports. I suppose that's what German beer will do to you though, there is no doubt that more than half of the spectators had had their fair share of beer that weekend!

On a non travelling note, I did move to my second host family at the end of May, but am now back with my first family as my second have gone to Singapore for the summer holidays. As my second host mum

was from Singapore the family wanted their children to be bought up bi-lingual, it was an English speaking household so I was worried about my German not improving. I asked my Councillor if I could have another



German course to make up for this. Coming back into a German speaking family, I can tell that the course really did help me. I can understand so much more than I used to and am starting to speak without having to look up words or ask!

So, that is my spark notes version of the past three months ☺ Hope all is well back home!

Until next time

Roisin ☺

GERMANY

Leila Gard

Host Club : Dachau

Sponsor Club : Mt Gravatt

I CANNOT believe I've been here for nearly 6 months already. You know that feeling where you look down for one second, and when you look back up an unbelievable amount of time has passed? That's what I'm feeling right now. My exchange is half over and, even though I still have 6 months left, I'm already dreading its end.

At the end of my first Boomer, I was about to embark on what was soon to be the best three weeks of my life (so far!). Three weeks spent with some of the coolest people on the planet, travelling around Germany, discovering its beauty and its history. I'm talking, of course, about the Deutschland Tour.

We went to so many cities that it was impossible to keep track of them all (but luckily, I have a list!). We went to Rothenberg, Bamberg, Weimar, Dresden, Quedlinburg, Wolsburg, Lübeck, Hamburg, Bremen, Köln, Aachen (The Netherlands!), Rurberg, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Strasbourg

Leila Gard

(cont.)

(Helloooo, France!), Freiburg and Augsburg. I have a feeling there were definitely more than that, but that's all I found – shows how important it is to keep a diary!

It was unbelievable. I just wished it would never end! If I told you the whole D-tour story, I think we might be here until Christmas. So, in saying that, I think I'll just stick to the highlights. Rothenberg was our first city and we were already deeply impressed. It's an old town and it was really beautiful, but I just love saying I went there because one tiny scene from Harry Potter 7 was filmed there (speaking of – 3 days until the last film! Who's excited?).



^Rothenberg

We then continued on to a few other towns, until a few days in we stopped in Dresden, and I have got to say... what a beautiful city! Unfortunately, it was raining the two nights we stayed in Dresden so it made our city tour quite an adventure! Expecting sun and warmth, a lot of us (including yours truly) weren't dressed as well as was needed for the lashings of rain and the cruel whip of the freezing wind. The amazing thing was, even through all the rain and our frustration at the abysmal weather, we could still see and appreciate that Dresden had some memorable places. The next place of note would have to be Lübeck. It's a town situated right near the



sea in Northern Germany, and it was there that we met about 20 or so Canadian pirates! Haha, no, they weren't really pirates... they were high-schoolers who were on a 9 month trip, sailing their ship to 28 different countries. But I swear, their ship looked exactly what I pictured a pirate ship to look like! Unfortunately, no Jack Sparrows or Will Turners were present.

^ The Pirates!

And then came our 3 night stay in Hamburg. That city... ahhh! I wish I could've stayed just a little bit longer. On our first full day there, we started by going to the famous Fish Market. And wow – what a sight. People packed in everywhere, retailers shouting themselves horse trying to sell anything and everything... it was just so exciting. I ended up splitting a basket of fruit with my best friend here in Germany. A whole basket for 10 euros! Best money I ever spent.



^ Fruit Basket in Hamburg

The following day was probably one of the funnest days in my life. We visited an apple farm just outside of Hamburg, where we spent the

day playing a weird version of bowls through the trees, pulling our little wagon of specialty beer and apple juice and basically having a very chill, fun day. My team one, by the way (woop woop!). I know it doesn't sound particularly exciting, but after a week and a half or so of visiting breathtaking architecture, museums and war memorials, it was refreshing to have a day where we could take everything slow.

We then went to Bremen and visited the famous statue of the rooster standing on a cat, who is standing on a dog, who is, in turn, standing on a donkey. We rubbed it for good luck! We also visited the Becks Brewery. We even had to wear little fluorescent vests haha. And after Bremen came Köln (known in English as Cologne). Köln was also really fun. We spent one of the days at Phantasialand – an amazing theme park just outside the city. We also

Leila Gard

(cont.)

visited the famous cathedral and the bridge with millions and millions of locks (put there by happy couples).



Köln Bridge

Our next stop was Aachen, just over the border of the Netherlands. That day was also really fun, as we went into a hedge maze. For as long as I can remember, I've always wanted to go into a hedge maze. I was convinced that it could not be as hard as people made it out to be. Boy, was I wrong. It took me nearly two whole hours just to get into the middle of the maze. And this maze was not that big, trust me.



^ Aachen hedge maze

After Aachen came Frankfurt, where we just visited the city looking at all the wonderful places there, and looked forward to Easter Sunday, which was the next day. For Easter we went to Heidelberg. And let it be known, that I have never seen a city as beautiful as Heidelberg. It was a-maz-ing. We went up to the old castle and, seriously, I cannot even explain how beautiful this place was. And we had an Easter egg hunt!

^ Heidelberg castle

Then came Strasbourg. Strasbourg was also a really cool city, but the coolest thing about it? It was in France! My German, at

that stage, still wasn't at the level at which I would've liked so you can say it came as somewhat of a relief to go to France and be able to speak the national language fluently (especially when I was the only one who could understand and speak any French! Hehe).

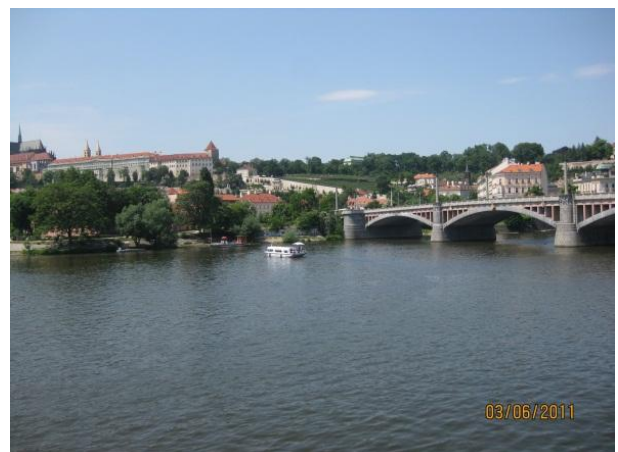
Strasbourg was the last big town on our



trip, so it was sadly the sign that it was coming to a close. It was the best three weeks of my life and I would gladly repeat it over and over if it were possible.

After D-tour, I changed host families. Saying goodbye to my first family was hard, because they were really awesome people, but my new family is still really cool. I feel really lucky to have landed such good families. In my new family, almost no English is spoken. When I was in my first family, my host sister spoke fluent English because she went on exchange in the USA, but here I was left to fend for myself. I was honestly surprised at how much I knew. My German lessons were pure gold. Now, I can understand 90% of what everyone is saying and I can speak fairly well (sometimes I get the words mixed up, but everyone knows what I mean so it's all good!).

The next big event after D-tour would definitely be my 4 day trip to Prague with the other exchange students. And wow, what a city! From the clock tower, to the giant metronome, from the Charles Bridge to the famous Prague castle, it was just amazingness after amazingness. Not to



Leila Gard

(cont.)

mention that because of the different currency I felt really rich! I don't really know what to say about Prague. It was the best, and I made memories there that I will cherish forever.

^ PRAGUE !

Last weekend was our farewell weekend. Although I, along with 6 or so other exchanges, arrived in January, the majority of the students in my district came to Germany in September. Therefore, their exchange was soon to be over. Although it was a sad weekend, and the last time I saw a lot of my friends, it was still really fun. We finished a high ropes course (which I'm very proud of, as I've got an incurable fear of heights) and finished off the night by making a huge bon fire and relaxing in each others company. Now, two of my best friends have already flown home and I know that within this month, the rest of my friends will have followed suit. It's a sad time, but I know it's not goodbye. I'll visit Mexico, the USA, Canada, Argentina and Brazil one day. It may take me a while to get there, but it will happen if I try hard enough.

And so we come to now. At the end of the month (19 days, to be precise), I leave for my Eurotour. Which, needless to say, I'm so excited for! 8 countries in 4 weeks... who knows what's going to happen? I'll just have to tell you next time ☺

Until then, as the people of Bavaria say...
SERVUS!

SWITZERLAND

Megan Trotter

Host Club : Zurich-Dietikon
Sponsor Club : Sunnybank Hills

Megan Trotter, Land of chocolate, Boomer2

So much has happened since the last Boomer article I wrote. I don't really know what to include and what not to include because I suppose it's all been pretty interesting. The Home Economics camp that I went on for 3 weeks with my class was great fun. I could list all the exciting activities we participated in but I think the

best one to tell you about is the second last day at the camp. In the afternoon we had the chance to go air-rifle shooting. I went, along with 3 other boys in my class and we made a competition. We each had a piece of cardboard with 5 little targets on it, about 10 meters away. We were then given 10 shots, and who ever had the most points at the end would win a prize. It was my first time shooting and out of the 3 boys and me I was the winner ☺ I was pretty proud of myself.



That night, the big group of us did a small hike up one of the mountains. Along the way we stopped and had a picnic dinner, and when we reached the top, there was a hot tub outside with a fantastic view of the Alps that we could sit in. It was an amazing experience to sit in a hot tub, outside in the freezing cold, and watch the moon rise over the mountains.

The first weekend of the holidays was Easter, and I was lucky enough to have my eldest brother, Andrew, and his girlfriend, come to visit me. The first night we stayed in Luzern in an old jail that had been turned into a hotel. The following day we checked out Luzern and then made our way back to Zurich where my host family put on a great feast. What a great beginning to the



holidays that was! In the next two weeks I was very busy catching up with friends (both Swiss and exchange students), but I was also invited to spend some time with a family from my Rotary club.

Megan Trotter

(cont.)

One day we decided to jump over the border into Germany and have a coffee and a cake, and that night we stayed in their little cottage house in the forest. It was a lovely little setting, roasting marshmallows in the fire and watching movies. The following week, I went with the same family to their holiday house in the Italian part of Switzerland. On one of the days we took a day trip to Milan and I was lucky enough to see the amazing Cathedral there! Interesting fact: When you order a "hot chocolate" in Italy... you literally get a hot chocolate.



At the end of the holidays I had the difficult experience of changing host families. But luckily school began quickly afterwards and gave me something to occupy my mind. Over the last term, I have become sooo close with my school friends, and my German has improved a great amount. In the beginning of June I had a 3 day trip to Paris with Rotary. I went with the "oldies" so I was the only Australian there. Those three days, I would say, would have to be the highlight of my exchange so far. I became really great friends with one of the Canadian girls, AND I GOT TO SEE THE EIFFEL TOUR!!! I've made a "note to self" to go back to Paris one day.. It's seriously an amazing city!

Two weeks later I had trip to Berlin with my class which was another great week. Unfortunately all the tours were in German with a Berliner accent.. and it's amazing how different Swiss high German is to real German German, let alone Berliner German. Any of you who have been to both Switzerland and Germany will understand what I'm talking about.



Anyways, I think I'll end this here otherwise you might not be bothered to read to the end. Summer holidays begin soon, and I'll be heading off to Italy for a week with my Counselor and his family, then from there to the Alps with the family who took me to their holiday house in the Italian part of Switzerland.. and thennnnn I change host families for the last time ☺ I'm very excited.

I hope everything is going well for everyone back home. Missing you all terribly, not counting down yet.. but by the time you read this it won't be long until I'm walking through the gates at the airport waiting to greet you all after a year of being away.

Lots of love,
keep smiling

Megan

SWEDEN

Lachlan Wicks

Host Club : Vallentuna

Sponsor Club : Toowoomba East

Swedish summer is something amazing. Never-ending sun and t-shirt weather even at 3 in the morning (the sun has been up a while by then) is something I had heard all about but couldn't actually imagine. Everything is so green and colourful, plus the best bit of all: you can eat wild stuff! Beside paths you can find wild strawberries and sometimes red wine berries, deeper in the forest you can find blueberries, lingon berries and mushrooms.

During the summer holidays we also had our Swedish Euro Tour. It was an absolutely crazy and incredible trip, visiting some of the most famous cities in Europe as well as meeting some of the most interesting people ever. 80 kids on one double-decker bus for almost 5000 kilometres was probably more than everyone had bargained for, but it turned out to be so much fun and something that will never be forgotten. We visited a heap of European countries (Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, and France) with some of my favourite places being Krakow, which was just a very authentic and real city, full of friendly Polish people, and Berlin, which I found fascinating with its mix of Roman-inspired, huge majestic buildings and sculptures along with the communist era buildings and art.

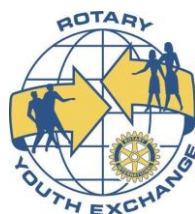
I also had the chance to travel a little around Sweden as well, including Dreamhack in Jönköping, one of the world's biggest digital festivals. Basically, it was around 8000 people playing computer games in a really big dark room for 3 days straight- definitely something completely new and very interesting, to say the least.

School is about to start again as well, which I think will be very different now that my Swedish is much better. I am at the point where I can always follow the conversation, maybe missing a word here and there. I have the same class as last time, except this year we are 2nd years, much more mature and responsible. My class is really great, they are so welcoming and I feel like I have made some real friends during these months. They are all devastated that I won't be here for studenten (end of school celebrations) and say that I will have to come back for it or they will send me rude messages on facebook- so I guess I will have to plan a trip!

Stockholm is a very busy city, and living in Vallentuna means that I am in town pretty often. Everytime I go in there is something different going on, whether it's a food festival, really good buskers or crazy Finnish ladies.

Maybe to finish with something a little more thoughtful and not just an update of what I have been doing. Something that I have found very interesting is the choice of whether to integrate or keep your individual or societal peculiarities that make you different from everyone else. For instance, Swedes are generally very reserved and passive, and not that interested in making new friends outside their established friendship groups. When confronted with this, I have to choose between being a 'normal' Swedish person and accepting what is and being content with the great friends I already have, or being an Australian who likes to have a chat with all the blokes and sheilas. Of course there is an in-between, and I think that is where I mostly am, but I can also feel myself in different stages every day. I think that being an exchange student also adds another element, and you are often expected or put into situations where you must be very outgoing and friendly. The hard part is doing this at the same time as trying to get the language, although my Swedish is going alright- I can go without English pretty easily now. Everybody always wants to speak English with me though, so it is maybe not as good as it could be.

I have learnt so much through both the people I have had contact with as well as doing things for myself. I think that the biggest lessons that can be learnt on exchange are the value of responsibility and relationships. As a final note, I would like to once again thank everyone who has helped me through this whole experience. I look forward to talking with you all when I get back!



**Rotary District
9630 Youth
Exchange**