

ROTAYAK 50



ALEXANDRA WORNES.

SWITZERLAND.

Hello or Hallo!

Greetings to down under....

I can't believe it's this time again, where has the time gone? Almost at the half way mark and have just received my plans for travelling home! My my...

Where do I begin! SWITZERLAND is just amazing...since the last time I wrote my Rotayak Article I have done so much and had some wonderful experiences!

Well, I will begin with all the towns I have visited- Zurich, Luzern, Bern and Lausanne. Then also Stein am Rhein, Neuenburg and Murten (which are these awesome old towns with amazing building designs, just so beautiful!) But I have now been to all the regions of Switzerland and it's so different from the top to the bottom, with the different inspirations from Italy to France and true Swiss.

Then to a famous waterfall here, Rheinfall- it's this giant fall with an island in the middle which you can climb to the top! That was so pretty...

At Easter a typical thing here is to paint eggs, or dip them in onions skin! I did both...painted a Swiss and Aussie egg, which then on Easter morning you smash against the others to see who has the strongest egg, and the Aussie egg won! We are just sooo tough! ☺

Have been camping in the Italian part of Switzerland in Locarno. This was a rememberable experience! 5 people in this little tent! But the view we had over the lake at night with all the lights and mountains during the day was amazing! Just to look at the furthest mountain you could see to believe that is Italy is so mind blowing, it is amazing how close these countries here are!

Then for something typically Swiss I have been to a cheese Factory where you can see how they made it in the olden days and how they make it now! That was so cool.... we got to go in this little house and see all the tools they used and the smoke from the fire that keeps the cheese warm, they smoke salami. They hang them from the roof until they are perfect! For me that looked funny! ☺

Also I have been to a chocolate factory and seen how it is made, from the beans to butter. We got to smell the 3 types of chocci, dark, white and milk, that was interesting and at the end got free samples! This was cool!

Have been lucky enough to see 2 Swiss games, one professional -an Ice Hockey match and a typical game from a district in Switzerland - Hornussen. I was lucky to catch this game as we were just driving past and my host father just happened to see it, we went in and they were happy for me to take some pictures with the equipment!

I have been for my first swims here, once in the Long see in Locarno and then in the Thuner see, here in my town! The water is freezing no higher than 14 degrees! But at least I can say I have been in those Lakes even if it was for 2 seconds! ☺

Have seen a typical country wedding, just out of luck I went up to this look out where an old church is

and this was interesting to see, just how 2 country people get married in Switzerland. And when they walked out there was a giant armour of people, from the jobs, clubs and of people they know lining the path as they walked down! So sweet... but as they came from the land, there was the typical Swiss cow bell, these things weigh a tonne! I managed to get a photo with one but it was a quick snap shot! Way too heavy...

Oh I have watched in true Swiss style, Federer win the French open! And the country was booming just for a couple of days as something big happened to such a small country! ☺ this was a bit of fun...I didn't quite understand it all on the TV as it was in dialect language but you could just imagine what they were trying to say!

I have been Sailing on the lake here in Thun, to a waterfall, grilled some fish over a fire, rode on a mini train and my favourite bit isn't something typically Swiss – Strawberry picking! Man can I get a giant belly ache after that! But they are Sssooo good and Sssooo big my eyes just couldn't close! Oh and for a bit of fun I got autographs from soccer players from the capital city Bern! These guys are like princes to the fans! I was in a line with over 3000 people, and I would have been number 20!

With school I ride my bike every day, really try hard in class and for lunch I come home! But now things are really better with the people in my class too! We have been out a couple of times, swimming and in the town! So that helps the fact that you have to start at 7:45am!! Every morning!!

Too early! ☺

Rotary wise I have been to an evening and dinner on Calligraphy then a special weekend my club put on for two other Rotary clubs who came. This was good as I got to find out more about the town– Thun, which I am living in and in the evening had a special dinner on a boat on the lake of Thun. I also had a flag parade where all the inbound students from my district were introduced, I held the Aussie flag with dignity!

This is just a quick description on my exchange so far, has been a wonderful time! And when I look back I'm happy with all I have done. But now I'm on Summer Holidays! Oh yeah! Also have my Euro tour coming up, which I'm so excited for!

I hope all you other 9790 exchangies are having an awesome time! Also the parents back home! Living up the cold weather you think Australia has....Swiss winter colder!

From the middle of Switzerland!

Alexandra Wornes.



NARISSA KNIGHT. SWITZERLAND Hoi miteinander!!! (Hi everyone)

Guess what, I have two periods of Geography now, but since we're working on our assignments and my partner is at home sick with our assignment my teacher said I can just go to the library and do what I want, so I'm writing my Rotayak Report. I love getting out of classes!! And it's good that I get to write this now as well as I will be busy packing when I get home today, and then tomorrow I'll probably still be packing a bit and then I'm going somewhere (couldn't understand exactly where) with my Host Parents/Family after school and then I'm leaving the next day for Euro Tour and don't get back till the

1st of July, so I actually had no idea when I was going to squeeze this Rotayak in.

No such luck for after Geography though, I've got Economics. I have to give my presentation this lesson too. Everyone was put into pairs and given a country to present the economic system to the rest of the class, since I really couldn't contribute much to my group (we had a group of three since I'm pretty much useless without enough German) my teacher gave me a separate assignment. I have to talk a little bit about the economics of Australia, a bit about the Queen, the founding of Australia, me, my family, and living in Australia for 20 minutes. I'm allowed to do it in English, which I will for the economics part and some others, but the parts about me and explaining photos I've got I can say in German. I'll try to say as much as I can in German because my class will be able to understand my bad German better than my good English!!

My German is much better now though. It's actually a bit difficult writing this as my English thoughts keep getting interrupted with German ones!! It's really weird to realise you're thinking in another language!! My English is getting much worse as well, I was correcting my Host Brother's speech for him, and sometimes I had to stop and think really hard about some things, whether they were right or not, these things I would have known straight away a few months ago!! And my spelling is terrible now too, I keep trying to spell out English words the way you would in German!!

It's so exciting; in two days I leave for my Euro Tour!!!! We will be going to somewhere in Germany; Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic; Vienna, the capital of Austria; and Florence, the capital city of the Italian Region, Tuscany. I can't wait I've never been to The Czech Republic or Austria before, and I haven't been to much of Germany or Italy before either, having only gone this year during my exchange!! I'm hoping that before I leave for Euro Tour our cat will have finally had her kittens though. Doris, my Host Mum, was expecting her to have had them earlier this week, but no, Momo has decided it's not time for kittens yet and is choosing her own date. I've been telling her for about a week now though that she has to have the kittens before I leave for Euro Tour because I want to see them, she just ignores me though, and I don't think it's just because I'm speaking English and she's ignoring me like my Host Father does when I don't speak German, she's just being plain stubborn.

Just to level it out a bit, there's some sad news as well. Today when I get back home from school I have to pack up all of my things because there will be someone else staying in my room while I'm on Euro Tour, and then when I come home it's just a few days until the Summer holidays, when I'll be going away to the Alps for 3 weeks with my Host Family and then I will be changing host families for the first time so need to have everything ready to go!! It's so sad, I love my host family, they're the best host family I could have asked for. I'm definitely part of the family now, even the animals know I'm part of the family. If I stay at a friend's house for the night, Wuly (our little poodle, I almost wrote puddle then, that's what learning German does to your English!!) actually misses me, I have to stand there and pat him constantly for so long when I come home, and then when he finally lets me go and I sit down with the family, he jumps up next to me and puts his head in my lap. He's always liked me, he's only really that affectionate when I've been away and he misses me though. Also my little sister, Martina, now takes complete advantage of me!! She makes me do everything she can get away with, and is always getting me to play with her and go jumping on the trampoline!! I'm going to miss her birthday though, it's the 25th of June, so I'll be on Euro Tour!! I'll have to find a present for her while I'm away. It's ok though, she was away for my birthday, so now we're equal.

Well, almost summer holidays now!!! After the holidays I'm going to start playing soccer again, can't wait. I was having heaps of fun at training and was all excited at our first match. But then with about 30 seconds of the first half to go another girl missed the ball and kicked my foot, twisting it inwards. This was Saturday the 9th of May. As my ankle was still really swollen on Sunday, my Host Father took

me to the doctor to get it checked out. There was nothing broken thankfully, there are 3 main ligaments where I hurt my self though, and I managed to do something (that part was sign language, pull–stretch–tear) 2 or 3 of them. He wanted to put a brace on me but couldn't because I was way too swollen, so instead gave me a nice blue bandage (I got to pick the colour!!), some cooling patch things, some painkillers and sent me on my way.

The next day, Monday the 11th of May, my way led me to Geneva with my class from school, where we were to stay until Friday. I was on crutches at the time so had to borrow a big backpack off my sister so I could carry it and walk at the same time, I managed ok. It was a lot of hard working hobbling about Geneva all week on crutches as we had many tours and lots of walking to do!! We went with our class teacher, Herr Joss, and my PE teacher, Herr Boltshauser. Herr Boltshauser had taken his car with him to help transport a girl from my class and her wheel chair, so he drove me around a bit as well. It was a tight squeeze in the car for me though as I had to share the back of his tiny European car with Esther's wheel chair, she always got the front as she didn't have much hope of fitting into my tiny space. Both my teachers were very concerned with my ankle the whole time as Herr Boltshauser is a PE teacher and Herr Joss tore his ligaments when he was younger and never completely recovered, and they were both terrified I'd make it worse. I lived through the ordeal though, and I'm very glad I went too, as my Host Mum thought I should stay home and rest, I wasn't going to miss out on a week in Geneva because of an ankle though. While there we had tours around Geneva and Carouge (a little town nearby, very old) and also went to lots of places, like the United Nations, Red Cross, Watch Museum and Modern Art Museum. It was very good, just very hard work, my arms and legs were so tired the whole time!

I just recently began walking properly again, still can't run or jump though. I'm hoping it'll get better really soon though as I'm going to the Alps with my family in a few weeks, I already missed out on going once because of my ankle. Martina is frustrated as well, I used to go jumping on the trampoline with her most afternoons, but haven't been able to for over a month now, and no-one else wants to go with her because she's just their annoying little sister.

A few weeks ago I went to Europa Park with 4 other exchange students!!! It's a big theme Park in Germany, about an hour or a bit less north of the Swiss border at Basel (north–eastern city). That was so fun!! As soon as we got there we sought out their new roller coaster and went on it twice, after the second time we were very glad that we'd gone straight away as there was an enormous line after that!!! We also made sure we went on their other roller coasters, it was so fun. Also very funny as Federico (from Argentina) had never been on a roller coaster before and was terrified! Charlene, who was sitting next to him for one of them, told us that before we starting moving and during the ride Federico was swearing about it in English and German, possibly Spanish as well, she wasn't sure though. Europa Park was great fun though, it was hard to keep up with the others with my bad ankle, it was definitely well worth it though.

Last week or the week before, my Host Father took me, my little sister and our cousin downstairs with him to make some honey!!! It was pretty cool. First we had to scrape the wax off these shelve things that the Bees had built their hives on. Then we put them into a barrel and spun them round and round, which made all the honey come flying out onto the sides of the barrel then sliding down and out into a bucket through a tap at the bottom. It was cool and tasted really good too. We made about 10kg of honey.

The 7th of July should be a rather exciting day for me as well. I will be going to the Zürich airport with my Host Family to pick up Daniela, my host sister who has been in Australia on exchange since the middle of last year and is finally coming home!! I've talked to Daniela a few times via Face Book, e–

mail and Skype and can't wait to meet her in person! Daniela will be coming to the Alps with us, so we should have lots of good talks about our different adventures! Also my Host Parents said I can invite some other exchange students with us! They aren't sure how many yet, they have to count up who's going first, my exchange friends are all lining up already though!!

Today is soooo hot!!! It feels as though I'm back in Australia! We have about 30 degrees today, and I'm baking. Tomorrow it's supposed to be about 18 or so and raining, I'm just hoping I'll have better weather than that while I'm on Euro Tour!! I'm so excited, can't wait till we leave!!!!

Ok, I think that's enough now. Till next Rotayak,

Tchau (Swiss form of ciao), Narissa.



TARRYN GARLICK. CANADA.

Wow.

I can't believe it has been 5 months already. It has gone past so quickly.

I have been so busy lately, and have hardly had time to relax, but when I have it has been great.

I must be turning 'Canadian' because I'm wearing short shorts in 12 degrees and I go swimming in 20 degrees. I have almost completely lost my accent, which I am rather sad about. People say it is just part of the experience but I still miss my Aussie accent.

I moved to my 2nd host family, who are Italian, which is great. (they love pasta). And as most Italian families, their cousins live next door. They are a really great family and I'm having a blast with them. I will be sad to leave.

I have been to Whistler Mt. Where the Winter Olympics are going to be held in Feb 2010. It was really cool to be there, but considering now it is summer in Canada, there is not much snow. I went to the Bob-sled track and got a picture with the Nichuck. (a Canadian Rock). Also in Whistler, Amy (swed exchange student) and I went Zipling. It was like a giant flying fox, although you were flying over rapids and are going across upside down. I am now not afraid of heights at all. It was so much fun.

Schools out and it is summertime for the wildcats; on the last day at my school 'Burnaby Central.. home of the wildcats' it was crazy. It was just like the movies. Everyone running everywhere with year books to be signed and people were playing pranks on each other. I had to be super careful not to be caught in one. I was not lucky. I got hit with a massive water balloon, either way, I had a great day. I got lots of people to sign my yearbook, even people i didn't really know. But being the only Aussie lots of people seem to know me. I had a blast of a semester.

The Exchange students came down for a week, for RYLA reunion and Distract Conference in Victoria, Vancouver Island. The first thing we did was have a RYLA reunion so all the RYLA people would be present. Of course we had all been hanging out, but it was great to catch up with everyone together. It was at the 'beach' or what they call a beach. It was rather funny for myself and the Brasilians. The 'beach' had dark sand and like a river / lake / it runs into the sea eventually. We played soccer, beach volleyball and went rollerblading. Over all it was a great day.

Whilst the Exchange students were down we went out to lunch to a Brasilian Restruant, and ate Brasilian food. We all had a massive amount of food for our main meal. For dessert they gave us chicken heart. I tried it, and I must say it is not that bad, the texture is gross but the flavour is rather nice.

was not too bad. But it was different.. my first. I'm still unsure of what exactly it is! but shhh. Then monday I went to DISNEYLAND PARIS!!!!!!! with some other exchange students - we organised it =) it was so good. It was like the best day of my life. We met Johnny Depps character from Pirates of the Carribean and they were exactly alike. Iit was hilarious!!

My Rotary club in France is great. I dont think I could have got better. They are involved and always want us to have something to do and they don't keep a really tight rope on the exchange students. They let us go out and have fun as long as we bahave =D

my Rotary Club organised a trip to Italy for me for 2 weeks=) It's a sail and nature camp on the beach in Milan. I think it was very gernorous and I'm greatful =) I have something to do during the holidays.

Actually I have a lot. I go to Mt Blanc for 2 weeks, visit a friend in Metz, then another Rotarian is taking me to Switzerland for a week.

Life has so much to offer when you are an exchange student so I am making the most of every oppurtunity that comes my way and I'm loving every minute of it! I'm really trying to make the most of everything. We only get to do this once.

I'm living and loving life!

Lizzie Habres



ANTHEA SIMPSON. BRAZIL. G'DAY Australia

One, I can not get over the fact it's been 5 months. I'm sure that they have shortened the weeks, they're just going too fast !!! I'm really, really enjoying Brazil and have seen so much already. I go on my big 27day trip on the 3rd of july and will see Rio, Brasilia, Salverdoor and many more, 27 sleepless nights can't wait!!

I just moved to my second family and I really like them. I do sometimes miss my old one but I still get to see them. I see Ana (exchange student in Mooroopna last year) two times a week. My new host dad isn't even Brazilian, he is from Argentina, so I get double bonus with my exchange now with a taste of Argentina..

My new family is taking me to the beach where they have a beach house next weekend (26th/June) so I'm excited about that even though its FREEZING !!!!

Back in May I went to the AMAZON and just loved it. It was amazing, so nice I wish I could go back, it was really fun but you soon got over sleeping in hammocks. Got to see sloths, monkeys, fish, dolphins, spiders, big spiders, even bigger spiders, red spiders, black spiders, brown spiders, spiders eating other spiders, spiders that liked water and many many more spiders.

I just loved it, it was the best week of my life (and trying to save my life) a week with no internet, no paper, no connection to the world, just 3 big ships and 48 exchange students.

We didn't know if everyone had died of swine flu, we didn't know what day it was and spent a lot of our time fighting over the day of the week. Didn't know the time but we knew when we saw the green ship coming it was time to eat and that's all we wanted and needed to know.

Swimming in water falls and 20 meatew deep water! It was truly the most amazing time of my life and I'll never forget it !!!

Made friends with amazing people from all over the world and picked up German better than Portuguese (13 germans on one boat with 24 people on it you soon see why)

I'm in love with Brazil in every way and can't wait to see more and more and more.

All the other exchange students are leaving now which is sad. I've been to the airport and back again almost every weekend for the last 3 weeks and good bye Rotary dinners all over the district for a chance to see them one more time before they go home. My mums not going to be happy when she finds out I have told around 50 people our door is always open if they ever come to Australia, but I'm sure she will get over it lol. I love you mummy....but at the same time I'm excited about the new exchange students coming.

Bejios

'till next time

Anthea Simpson

(late news. NE Trip postponed until November)



NATALIE O'CALLAGHAN, USA

Hello everyone!!

OMG!! Its almost been 6 months already!! It has gone so quick! I can't believe it!! Well since my last Rotayak I have done so much! Well I finished school for the year on May 21st. But for me that wasn't the end!! I had to take finals which are kind of like exams that you take to get your grade up higher in the class. Lucky for me I ended up with all A's and B's by the end of my first semester. I was very happy with that result.

I have now been off school for a little over a month and I have been loving every minute of it!!

I had a District Conference in May which was in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. That was so much fun!! We had to dress up a lot but that is what made it so much for all of us!! The exchange student that will be going to my town in just a few weeks and I had to speak in front of 400 people about the 50 years of Rotary Youth Exchange and how it all started. It was rather scary but I have now gotten over the fear of speaking in front of large crowds! Which for me is great! This is because I know I will have to do more of them this year and certainly when I go back home to Australia. The Rotary Club of Jackson Hole put on an International Prom for all of us. Some of the students missed out on their prom because of the Conference which you had to attend. All in all it was a great 4 days of fun!

My trip was the next biggest thing on my agenda. From June 6th to June 20th I was on the trip of a lifetime. 39 exchange students, one bus, and 2 adults spelled out MEGA FUN to all of us excited exchange students. But of course we behaved ourselves!!!

We started our trip in Fort Collins Colorado where I met up with all my friends that I had made from the past District Conference in Jackson Hole. We set off to Denver to pick up another District that will be going on the Bus trip with us. We all soon became best friends and it was the hardest thing ever to say goodbye to everyone. But we all said it wasn't goodbye, it was see you later!!

Our first day was mostly travelling but we stopped at the Treasure Falls to take some photos and for a break. Our stop for the night was at Pagosa Springs in Colorado which had a natural hot springs that we were going to go to that night.

Day 2 was more travelling but we did do some sight seeing of course! We went to the Mesa Verde National Park and we travelled to the Grand Canyons. They were both amazing places! Day 3 we were up at 4:30am to go and watch the sunrise over the Grand Canyon which was amazing and so pretty! Also that day we travelled through the Arizona Desert and went to the place where they filmed Cars the movie! It was a really cool place. Later that day we finally arrived in.....LAS VEGAS!! OMG! It was an amazing experience there! We were allowed to go by ourselves on the Strip in Vegas for 5 hours!! We mainly shopped and took a lot of pictures but it was still so much fun!!

Day 4 we didn't do much but travel. We stopped in the Mojave Desert in California and we went to Historic LA and we had a Mexican dinner., Day 5 was Disneyland, California Adventure and the beach! The beach was freezing at 8 in the morning but we made some fun out of that! After the beach we went to the 2 amusement parks which was amazing! I went on this ride where you're sitting down and you fly up 2 stories! then you drop one and go back up a story and you do that maybe 4 times! omg! it was so scary but so thrilling!!

Day 6 we travelled to Hollywood and went to Hollywood Studios where we got to see where a lot of shows were made, like Desperate housewives. That was also an amusement park and I went on my first Rollercoaster!! fun!!!

Day 7 we travelled to a Danish Town and had a Danish dinner. We had a group dinner in China Town on day 8. San Francisco is next on day 9. We had a scenic tour and got to see the Golden Gate Bridge. We also had lunch at the Hard Rock Cafe and we met up with another group doing their tour!!

Day 10 we had free time in San Francisco all day which was a blast.

Day 11 we travelled to Lake Tahoe and we had some lunch.

Day 12 was when we travelled to the Great Salt Lakes and we then stayed the night in Salt Lake City. We were allowed to go out and have dinner and go to the mall too.

Day 13 we had a Rotary picnic in Craig which is just out of Steamboat Springs Colorado. We travelled to Steamboat that night.

Day 14 was the day we had a raft trip on the Colorado River. MAN! That was so much fun!! Me and my friend from Italy got stuck at the start but we eventually got the hang of it!

Day 15 was the saddest day ever. We all had to say goodbye to your newly found friends and some new best friends. It was a terrible day but we all know we will see each other again.

Well that is pretty much it for me! I will be moving host families very soon which will be interesting! I will be with them for about a month and then I will move again to my final host family.

Thank you again to my Rotary Club in Myrtleford and to my Parents for giving me this fantastic opportunity of a lifetime!! I love you all!!

Natalie xxxxx

America!!



MADELINE NICHOLSON. GERMANY Heyy everyone!

Oh gosh, it's so hard to believe that 2 days ago was my exact 5 months here in Germany! It's really gone so fast, it's nearly already half over!

Well I've been extremely busy the last few months, with travelling, meeting new people, improving my German and having the time of my life!

Easter holidays were a lot of fun for me! I went up to north Germany, to stay with a friend who's also an exchange student from Australia. We had a lot of fun baking Anzac biscuits, Chocolate Crackles, Lemon Slice and Pancakes for her host family. We were lucky enough that her host parents took us for a week away down to Middle West Germany. It was extremely pretty down there on the Mosel and Rhine rivers, and we made a lot of day trips to nearby small towns with really beautiful castles and old buildings. We also went to a wild animal park, with lots of strange animals, and a high ropes course in the middle of the bush. We even went to Luxembourg for a day! Which was really beautiful and expensive!

The rest of the holidays, and the Easter days, I was with my host aunty and cousin, at their grandmas place. It was also really nice there, and I was extremely spoiled with a lot of cake and chocolate! We even handpainted boiled eggs for Easter :)

I went to my first soccer game as well with my Rotary Club and a few other exchange students. That was a lot of fun, watching all the die hard fans go crazy and we got free scarves for the team Hannover 96, which won that day.

I've also been to my first basketball game here in my city, with my host family. That was a big match of the season, and the stadium was packed and really loud and crazy! Even though this was German basketball, the majority of the players were huge black Americans.

I was lucky enough a few weeks ago to be able to go to Paris for four days! It was with my class from school, and for an end of year break up trip. I was so amazed by the beauty and charm of Paris. I'd always heard it was amazing, but I never thought it really could be that fantastic! All my class did the whole way there and back though, was complain about how long it was, even though it was only 10 hours!

Last weekend, I went to Hamburg, with my host family, to go to a wedding of a friend of theirs. It was really interesting to go to a German wedding, even though it was pretty much the same as an Australian wedding, except there was no bridesmaids and groomsmen.

While we were in Hamburg, we went to see the musical 'Der Koenig der Loewen' (The Lion King). It was absolutely amazing! The costumes, the scenery and the music were all fantastic and it was probably the best stage show I've ever seen!

Well now I'm really happy, because on wednesday, school finished so it's now summer holidays! Although it really doesn't feel like summer because it's nearly always raining! Anyway, I'm really looking forward to travelling, catching up with friends and partying!

Til next rotayak,

byeee

Madi





NATALIE BRIDGES. FRANCE.

Bonjour from Chambéry, France

Well gosh now I have to look back at what I have done since my last report which was such a long time ago, so I have a lot to write! I'll start with Pacques (Easter), I changed families a week before at the beginning of the holidays but already had plans with my first host family to go to Strasbourg on the French/German border for a week, which was lots of fun and very interesting to see what happened during the war to this region that changed between French and German territory.

I have been on a few Rotary weekends to various areas of France. It was really good to get away, have fun with the other students and to see other areas of France that I hadn't been to yet. Sadly now I have said goodbye to most of the students which was difficult as I was very close to a few of them but we all have to leave at one point.

So now I have reached the Bus trip! All I have to say to begin with is 5 countries, 53 students and 10 days! So you can only imagine the amount of fun that we all had! We began our trip in Paris which was the first time I had been and I was just so amazed, every time I turned my head I would see something else that blew me away! The Eiffel tower was amazing although we didn't get to climb it we still saw it in all its beauty. We continued our journey in the bus through Germany, Austria and then finally arriving in Italy which was one of my favourites, we began in Verona where Shakesphere's play "Romeo and Juliette" is set and we went to Juliette's window and wrote on the wall our love messages, following Verona we went to Venice which is absolutely gorgeous, it was what I expected in a way but then it totally blew me away! I took a private couples gondola cruise with Isabella Lindsay from district 9790 and took in the beauty of Venice. After our 2 nights in and around Venice we moved on to Milan which was again so beautiful and rich just as I had expected one of the fashion capitals of the world to be like. The trip moved across to France but to a tiny country built on the beach called Monaco which was very luxurious and classy and expensive might I add! The bus then moved through parts of France to arrive in Genève Switzerland we saw the United Nations offices and walked around the city before departing for a few smaller French cities then finishing in Paris.

Tomorrow I will be off to Cannes, Nice and again to Monaco for 10 days with my host family who have an apartment in Cannes and lots of family along the coast. It should be a lot of fun as the weather is now a lot warmer here and will be a nice 32oC average whilst I'm there with lots of sun and maybe meeting the occasional celebrity who all have houses down there.

A bientot!

Natalie



ZANE FOOTT. USA

Hi

Well six months has flown by and I don't really know where it all went. School has finished for the year which is both good and bad because although I do get to sleep in every day till September, the year 12's are all leaving for college. Since the last update I have attended the prom which is just like a school formal and a lot of fun. I played a season of tennis which was interesting especially when we were told that practise would continue regardless of weather conditions, this meant two training sessions were held while it snowed!!! Although it has taken a long time it is starting to warm up which is fantastic, but with the weather warming it somehow means that all it does is constantly rain! there was a storm last night and there is another going while I write this. A few weeks ago I went up to

Raquette Lake in the Adirondacks for a weekend where a Rotarian has a cabin, because of the pine trees and the needles that drop the waters in the Adirondacks are a lime green. On the 1st of July I leave on the USA bustrip which will take 31 days and go from New York right across to California and then back up to New York which is very exciting!

Zane



JACQUIE SIMONDSON. FRANCE

Hello everyone!

So it's another Rotayak article!! Time is flying by in a haze of good times and new experiences.

I recently completed the Eurotour of June 2009 with about 55 other exchange students. So far I have to say it was the best time of my life. We were a roudy crew of Australians(mostly), South Africans and South Americans. We travelled 6 countries in 12 days, seeing things we'd only dreamed of setting eyes on at 16. We ate pretzels in Germany, pizza in Italy, rode in gondola's in Venice, and comparing

our experiences with each other.

The trip was full of no sleep, new friends and go, go, go all the time. It was truly great. We visited Paris, Germany, Austria, Italy, Monaco, Switzerland and more of France. In those days I made some of the best friends of my life. It was great to spend some time with kids going through the same experience, from the same background. It was a true highlight of my exchange.

Well, I've finished school for the summer! And it feels great! While all of my friends were studying hard for their exams, I was still learning French in my workbook, and may I say it's coming along very nicely. It feels great to be able to have a conversation with someone in a new language, knowing all the while that 3 months ago it would have been impossible.

The weather has been beautiful here in the south of France. Sun everyday, swimming in the lake nearby and seeing more and more tourists coming into the town. It's quite bizarre to hear English being spoken walking through my French town, I haven't quite adjusted to understanding other people's conversations without concentrating yet. I wonder what it will be like hearing all those Aussie accents again at home!

I have been with my second host family since May, and am very comfortable here with a lovely family and a beautiful old house typical of this area of France.

Well, I'm nearly at the five month mark, it has been an adventure so far and I still have six months to go which is great. Time goes so quickly here, I still feel like I've only been here for a short while, but for a 16 year-old, five months is a lonnnng time.

I have gotten used to the culture here now, and certainly the language. Although it still is difficult at times and sometimes all I want is a pie and a cuddle with mum, it's easy to get distracted with a new experience. The great thing about exchange is there is always something to learn, something new to see, something to immerse yourself in.

Jacquie



SEB NICOLSON. GERMANY.

Hallo!

Damn we're already onto number two of these, where does all the time go? I just know it'll be no time when I'm sending in that last one and taking up my rope to tie myself to a pole and say NO! I'm not going home!

Well what's happened since the last installment I've had my Germany tour where we went all over Germany, a bit of France and Belgium which was pretty two weeks straight of all partying where I made friends from basically every corner of the world. I'll never forget those two weeks on a cramped stinky bus, best fun I've ever had.

Well besides that I haven't been doing too much travelling a day or two in Cologne or Bonn or Koblenz but nothing like what I've read from some of the others. I'm more of a homie person.

Well I've joined a good two Bands here in Germany, one a Jazz band with my friends Max, Gina, Dennis and Mark, it's quite awesome and soon I play in a street fest with them (they told me I had to add them into this because they are just so awesome)

Well I know I'm not much of a writer but I hope that's sufficient haha now time to jump back into my last weekend with my first host parents, cya in another quarter year.

Seb



ISABELLA LINDSAY. FRANCE.

Hello again to all from sunny France!

Well approaching 5 months here in Oloron Sainte-Marie and I haven't looked back. Since my last Rotayak I've changed to my second host family and have settled in really well. I now have another 4 siblings!

I'll start with my first French Easter. With over 20 people at my house for a delicious lunch, I noticed many differences from Aussie Easters, in the celebration. The family does not exchange eggs or presents, instead there are big Easter egg hunts for the children. This is the only tradition kept every year. The food and people change each year unlike at home. I helped to hide the eggs and had such fun helping all the kids to find them again. And of course the chocolate was all LINDT!

I have had two Rotary weekends since the last Rotayak also. The first was held at Toulouse with all Rotary exchange students in France at the same conference! There were over 350 students. The second at Bordeaux with my local district. We participated in the "Fete du Student" and all students were required to present an act to over 200 people. I along with 5 or 6 other Australians performed the 'Nutbush' and wrote a small skit in French about the funny differences we have noticed during our exchange. On this weekend we got to meet the outbound students going to Australia and some Rotex students who had been in Australia last year. I met one girl from France who spent her exchange in District 9790 and stayed in Benalla!

EuroTrip = 53 students, 13 days, 5 countries, 2 berets, a kid named Brian and 1 bus. A recipe for mayhem and some of the most beautiful memories of my life.

Of the 53 students the majority came from Australia, followed by New Zealand, Argentina, America, India, and South Africa. Starting in Paris we travelled through Germany, Austria, Italy, Monaco, Switzerland and back up through France. My favourite cities included; Strasbourg (German/French border), Venice, and Milan. We stayed at the Lido di Jesolo (the beach just before Venice) for 2 nights and I have some spectacular memories of those 2 nights. Karaoke, swimming in the beach for the first time in 4 months, bike-pedalled carts, Italian gelato, and romantic gondola rides for Natalie Bridges from District 9790 and I. So many laughs and memories with all the students in all countries. Although leaving your new exchange student family after 2 weeks on a bus together was so hard I would do it all again! And again!

I'm currently two weeks into the Summer Holidays and I have over three months! It's crazy. Next week, my best friend from Australia is coming to Paris and I'm very excited to see her, afterwards I'm travelling up to Chambéry to visit Natalie Bridges from district 9790. I also have a summer camp with my district. There are just 8 students attending with 6 of us Australians and 2 South Africans. The camp will be held at Marmande and the Rotary Club has planned a lot of activities for us.

Afterwards I'm travelling with my host family to a coastal town near Montpellier for a week. Also spending time with my sisters from the last host family before they head off to University. Then in August my parents arrive! It will be 7 months without seeing them, wow.

The time is passing so fast and in a couple of months holidays will be over and back to school for 'terminale'. The last year of French high school.

Then Christmas and home! Almost 5 months already has just gone so fast. I have made some beautiful friends and family and don't want to leave. But ask me again when I have a return ticket in my hand after New Years Eve.

A la prochaine fois, **Isabella**



RACHEL RYAN. SWEDEN.

Hey!

So last time I left you I had just gotten back from Are. Since then I have been to Kiruna, lulea, Hudiksvall, my winter house, Stockholm, Goteborg and Bollnas. I have also finished school. I am now on holidays till the 24th of August. Then I will change school to a cooking and hospitality school.

First off I went to a place called Kiruna. I spent 3 days there with other exchange students from my district, the district below and the Stockholm district. The first day we went for a walk around the town and got to our hotel. That night we went out for dinner and played games. When we went tobogganing one of the kiwi's accidentally ran into me and I chipped her tooth.... I got the good end (only a chunk out of my cheek and some blood in my mouth). We also played rugby with no rules. That got rough but it was great fun. The world V.S. Sweden, and the world won!!! We also had a game where we put on beer goggles and had to run a course in the knee deep snow!! Now that was an interesting thing to experience and watch. The second day we went out on skidoos. We got pulled along in carts behind them. I'm telling you now it was a very cold and bumpy ride. We saw reindeer being herded. Then we took off the carts and some of us went up to the top of the mountain. My driver and I ran into a tree... but at very low speed (we were checking if the people behind us could keep up) and no-body got hurt. When we got back lunch was ready. I ran over to where people were ice fishing and took a photo just to say that I have done ice fishing then ran back and had a burger that was cooked in a hole in the snow. After that I got to drive a skidoo. I got the fastest one there! The only problem was that I had no goggles so when I went too fast I could hardly see! That night we went to one of the schools for dinner. One class had helped and organized two days of the three day trip. The last day we went to ES range space centre in the morning. It was very interesting and we got to see a lot. For the last part of our stay we went to the Ice Hotel. It was amazing!! I can't put it into words but wow that is a place to see!!

Next I went to my winter house. I was there for a week but I got sick right before we went so I walked around

the village and read my book.

Three days later I went down to a place called Goteborg. I stayed with my mate Corinne. I was there for 3 days. Kiwi Jack and Josh from Australia also stayed with us. The reason I went there was that I had been invited to an A.N.Z.A.C day celebration! Yes they celebrate it here in Sweden! This was not a Rotary thing but most of the Australians and New Zealanders came. It was in the 2nd biggest cemetery in Europe! It was HUGE!!!! Then we went to a park and had lunch after that. Kiwi Jack was lucky enough that he got to hold the new Zealand flag for the ceremony. That was a great weekend. It helped open my eyes more to how special that day is and how far away we really are. Another three days after I got back from Corinne's place we went back to my winter house. We were only there for a couple of days. We celebrated Firsta Maj. It is a traditional Swedish celebration. You light a huge bonfire and sing songs. This is meant to chase away the winter and the cold and welcome the heat and spring. It was good but there was still just enough snow to go skiing.

The next trip was a while later. I went to a place called lulea for Rotary District Conference. It was a good weekend. The other exchange students and I did some little speeches and then just sat and listened into what was happening. We got to meet the GSE group from the U.S. it was very interesting listening to them and what they thought about Sweden. We had a very nice dinner one night and we watched the sun set on the sea at 12 o'clock at night.

As I have informed you I have now finished school until the 24th of August. Graduation was a love week. We did different activities on the Monday, a picnic on the Tuesday, a lunch at my teachers house and a graduation dance on the Wednesday. I learnt how to couple dance. It was the most fun ever. The dance was called the bugg. They all have to learn how to dance in school here in Sweden. I think it is something that we should do. They couldn't believe it when I told them that I didn't know how! Thursday was the last day. We had a ceremony at the church and then it was all over! Some people cried and other people seemed very relieved. Everyone in my class got their grades and a rose, but seeing as I don't get any grades I just got a pretty pink rose.

For that weekend some of my class went to Stockholm. It was so much fun. We went to museums and to amusement parks!! I am one of the brave ones. I went on the 'tilt'. It takes u up 80 meters then tilts you toward the ground and then drops you and the insane, a CRAZY rollercoaster (and I got over my childhood fear of rollercoaster's).

For midsommar I went and saw my old exchange student. It was awesome to see her again. The one thing I will not forget about this weekend was eating herring!!!! NEVER AGAIN!!!! It was an awesome experience. I even danced around the midsommar stong with flowers on my head!

At the moment I am on my trip around Europe. I have been to Berlin and I am just sitting in my hotel room in Poland! I saw the Berlin wall, and wrote on it. I have had a traditional Jewish and German dinners. Today I went to Auschwitz. Words just don't describe the feeling and what it was like. It is something that I think will be with me forever.

I must be off now cause I am going to Prague tomorrow and it is a very very very long trip!!

Have fun and take care!

Rach xx



BROOKE DAVIS. DENMARK.

Hej alle,

So the time has come again. I can't believe that 5 months has already passed. It's all going so quickly.

In the last few months so much has happened. Summer house, host brothers school production "Mama Mia", Bakken (amusement park), school parties, Tivoli (amusement park in Copenhagen), Euro Tour, cycling tour, France, moving houses and so many other things

Over Easter I went to a summer house for a few days with one the Rotary members. It wasn't very far away but it is so common for Danish people to have a summer house. It was on the beach and even though it was cold the views were absolutely incredible (like all the views in Denmark). I had an Easter lunch with my host family and my host dad's sister's family. The way they celebrate Easter is a little different. I didn't actually get to do a chocolate Easter egg hunt. Instead we threw coloured in hard boiled eggs onto a blanket which had chocolates on it. And if we hit the chocolates then we got to eat it. I had another Easter dinner with a family from down the road to where I was staying and the Easter egg hunt was searching normal chicken eggs and you had to find all of them but you weren't allowed to pick them up.

My host brother's school production was really good. It was the same story line as the movie but it was in Danish and the songs were in English. And I understood most of what they were saying. After that I went to my schools party. Basically the whole school was there.

I celebrated Anzac Day at Bakken, an amusement park north of Copenhagen with my counsellor and his family. It was so much fun and the rides were awesome. I also met some of his Canadian friends who are the funniest people.

EURO TOUR... one word... **WOW!!** 18days. Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Verona, Lido De Jesolo, Venice, San Remo, Avignon, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Arnheim and back to Denmark. Climbed some big tall things, saw lots of pretty things, walked lots and lots, looked at lots and lots of famous things, saw lots and lots of bizarre, spent lots and lots of money, went on lots of canal tours, took a lots and lots of pictures and ate lots and lots of good food . Now I just want to go back so I can spend more time looking at everything that I didn't get to see.

I went to the south-west of France the week after euro tour to visit a friend from Australia. It was so pretty. The day after I got back from France I moved host families. I'm in a little country town and my family owns a motor cycle shop.

I am on my summer holidays now. Have been for about a month and will be for a few more months. Going to Poland this week with my Rotary Club (who are so awesome that they are letting me take another exchange student so I don't get bored with old people). Then I'm going to see 'Kings of Leon' in Copenhagen. My mummy and my sister are coming to visit me.

Så vi ses til næste gang og farvel.

Brooke -xx-





CAITLIN McDONALD. DENMARK.

Hello everyone,

I'm having the time of my life here in Denmark.

Since the last Rotayak I have been so busy, I have been to so many family, school and friends parties, it has just been so great meeting other people, making new friends and just having a good time.

My Rotary Club here in Denmark (Aars) just had its 50th anniversary so the Aars Rotary club had guests from Japan and England here to celebrate. My counsellor Poul Anderson received an Paul Harris Fellow Award for being the best Counsellor in the Rotary Club of Aars, because he is so wonderful with the inbound and outbound exchange students. He also spends much of his spare time helping with charity events and working in the community. (Poul's kone er fantastisk og hun er som en mor for mig).

WOW! the Euro Trip was just simply amazing... I won't bore you with all the places I went to because there are too many, but I will tell you the places I thought were the best. I loved Austria that was so beautiful. We stayed in a hotel up on a hill overlooking the city, we watched the sun set over the beautiful city and sang songs to the tunes of those who brought guitars to play. The next day we toured the city of Vienna. I saw statues of famous musicians such as Mozart, and we also went on a horse and cart ride while we sang songs from the movie, "The Sound of Music." It was so much fun. I also loved Italy, just lying on the beach and relaxing and getting a tan was great as there is no sun in Denmark and I was very white. Paris left a BIG impression – but not a good one. We were walking down the street and my friend from New Zealand was mugged by a guy in a hoody. When she did not hand over her wallet straight away he punched her in the face. I tried to stop him but he pushed me away and ran off with his friends. It was all very horrible at the time but we are all over it now and it is just part of the experiences that make us grow up. My best memory of Euro Trip was driving around all those fabulous countries with 40 people I love and having so much fun and making many wonderful memories – it was the best time ever.

When we arrived back in Denmark we went on a 'Friendship Cruise' around the lakes in the north of Jutland. It was made up of almost the same people as the Euro trip and was a time when we became a lot closer as we were sailing together and doing activities for 5 days. During this time the weather was a bit rough and some of us became sea sick which wasn't much fun at all. One night we stopped at an army camp and the activities we did there were fabulous. There was an obstacle course that was quite difficult and many people got scratches and bruises but it was fun all the same. The best fun was when we put on big, fat sumo wrestling outfits, we looked so funny and had a competition to see who could knock the other person out of the ring.

I moved families about 2 weeks ago and it was a little nerve wracking but it was great as my new family made it so easy for me to move in. I meet up pretty regularly with my host families so I know them quite well which makes moving much easier. My new brother spent a year in Newcastle near Sydney 2 years ago and he loves to talk about Australia with me. My new family lives on a dairy farm and I have jobs to do to help out. They speak Danish to me all the time which hurts my head but I'm getting a lot better at Danish so it's not so bad.

I have been helping out with 'The Children's Polish Camp'. When I first heard about it I thought it was going to be boring but these kids have the best and most amazing attitude considering what they have been through. These children are from Poland and either have no parents or were taken away from their parents because they weren't being looked after as well as they should. They are always so happy and wanting to have fun. I loved those kids so much and when it was time for them to leave we were crying and really didn't want to part with each other as we had all connected so well. I guess I became like an older sister to all of them. I just hope everything turns out well for them.

I have just returned from the most wonderful time. Nibe festival was FANTASTIC I loved it so much...☺☺☺...a big thank you to my counsellor for organising it. I was working selling burgers, hotdogs and chips and it was right next to the big stage where all the awesome bands played so I got to listen to music eat as much free food as I wanted and hang out with my friends who were working there too – and not have to pay for the ticket into the festival was also GREAT... because my bank balance is getting low. ☺

The really sad thing now is that all the loveliest, funniest people are going home in the next 2 weeks - they are the Oldies of Denmark, the exchange students who have been here the longest. I can't begin to tell you what wonderful connections and friendships I have made with people from all over the world, friendships that I hope will last for ever... yet the reality is I will probably never see them again which makes me so sad. The year is going by so fast, all too soon it will be at the end of the year and I will have to say goodbye to all this - but I'm so grateful for this experience - I would not give it up for the world! Oh, why am I being sad? I still have another 6 months, 1 week and 3 days and when I finish writing this I'm off to the beach for 1 week with two of my friends and my counsellor. ☺

Caitlin

P.S. Love you mum and dad.