



ROTAYAK 51



NATALIE O'CALLAGHAN. USA Hello from the U S of A!!

Well it seems like yesterday that I was writing the last one of these. Well what I have probably done since my last one. School started about 2 weeks ago and that seems to be going ok. On the first day back I had to speak in front of my entire school body, which is about 900 students! So I was totally freaked!

So this year at my school there are 4 exchange students. One from Germany, one from France and one from Japan and me. I haven't really been up to much lately. It's starting to turn into autumn, but its super cold! But I guess I will have to get use to it again.

This weekend I have a newbie's orientation in Douglas Wyoming to meet all the new students that are here now. That should be a lot of fun.

I moved host families about the 29th of July and I am now at my last host family. They are great and I love living with them. Last weekend I went to a Nebraskan Football game. It was absolutely incredible! There were so many people and everyone went crazy! But luckily we won!! But also that week I went to my host granddads funeral. It was very sad but it was ok too. So in November I am going to Portland, Oregon to visit my host sister and her family. But other than that there isn't much going on!

Its going to be less than 4 months and I am going to be home again!! It's gone super quick!

Well until next time

Bye!!

Natalie xxx



LIZZIE HABRES. FRANCE

Salut tout le monde!

So things are really on the way! It's been a while since I wrote last, things seem to be flying by so fast I can barely catch a glimpse. I haven't much time as it is, between packing, facebook^^, changing families, new students and school..

I've been from here to there, holidays, sleeping and eating! I spent 2 crazy weeks in the Northern Italy on a sail camp which was amazing! I met the besst people there! I remember always smiling, our group being the loudest, always singing, and kissing each others cheeks, we had no shame and

didnt care who we annoyed lol, but it was great fun! Sailing is hard by the way haha.. then strait after 15 days at Samoens, in the Fench Alps with my host family, where its absolutely beautiful by

the way! My 2nd host family have a chalet there, and thats where we stayed, my tutor - family friend - came for some days as like the cousins and aunt and uncle.
 Everyone always knew where the Australian (me) was, always hurting and embarrassing myself!
 The first was when I still didn't fully understand French, and I went down a slide type thing that twisted and turned, sitting in a little cart I flew down very fast not knowing what was going on as I nearly flipped several times. Got to the bottom and crashed into all the other carts =S very loud bang, lots of broken carts, and a little kid in the first cart which shot off and went flying. Turns out before I staring, the guys explained to me how to use the brakes...haha oops!
 The second time we were bike riding with the family, just heading down hill, of course there's a HUGE wide open space all around me, I hear someone behind me, turn to look, when I turn back, uh-oh! there was a workers sign in front of me, I had no other option but to crash.. again! Loud noises! At least I stayed on my bike, only damaging the wheel and the sign.. haha I kept my family amused. even if it was painful for me =D.
 Then I spent a week in Metz with my tutors niece who just got back from Hawaii on exchange. It was always great fun and I was always doing something.
 However, then the district left, and there was just me and 2 others from the Southern Hemisphere, it was sad to say bye, and a pretty boring time for the rest of the holidays.
 Then on the 26th September I spent all morning, all day, and all night at the airport in Luxembourg waiting for the new district. Not very fun, very boring, and pretty exciting =) it was. I already have my best friend in that district too, as she already speaks French which is better for me.
 My French is definitely underway and picking up! I understand almost all just randomly are the words I can get, but that's okay. It's all part of the experience =D
 So after the long vacation for summer here in France I started school again. I hated school here before the holidays so it was sad to see the end,
 but then the YEO here said I had the chance to change schools with my besty in the new district. of course, I was all for it! Before it was a school called Saint Pierre Chanel, and it was a private school. Just by the name (Chanel) it sounds expensive. The people there were richies, and hate to say it, but, snobby! so I changed, now I go to Lycée Colbert and I love it! I have the best class, and hilarious friends. However, most of the teachers are very cold with me because I know more about Australia than them haha and they are the teachers^^ well, derr!
 Also my English teacher thinks I can't speak or write in English.. oh well, c'est pas grève.....what can i do^^.
 Anyways, enough of my ranting, as I have so much to say.... I must get some sleep, with school tomorrow then packing the rest of my room - which is now 7 times bigger then what i came with =D , then changing families, etc...
 I'm just over 7 and a half months, there's still time yet... might go visit Holland =)

What can I say? Other than it's beeeeen the bessstt!!!! =D greatt!! best opportunity, lovin' it..
 - **Lizzie xx**
 It's Not a Year In a Life, It's a Life In a Year =]



NARISSA KNIGHT. SWITZERLAND Hi Everyone, A lot has happened since my last Rotayak! First was Euro Tour:

Almost all the Rotary Exchange Students went on Euro Tour, we had a total of 41 Exchange Students, they were only the Exchange Students who are living on the Eastern half of Switzerland though, the Western half left for

their Euro Tour a few days after us. We all met at the Bus Stop in Zürich at 8.30am on the 20th of June, then went on our way to the Youth Hostel we were staying in, in Rothenburg, Germany. During WWII Rothenburg was heavily bombed and about 40% of the town was destroyed. From then on the town was very poor and couldn't progress with the rest of Germany and the World, this preserved it as a medieval town and is now a popular destination for tourists. It was a very interesting town to visit and learn the history

We then travelled on to Prague, stopping off on the way in Pilsen. Pilsen probably would have been a very interesting city to visit and explore if it hadn't been pouring down with rain the whole time we were there! We were very excited to find out that they have KFC in Czech Republic (they don't in Switzerland), and as soon as we were given free time in Prague we set off to find one, having not been to one since before we left home in January. While staying in Prague we visited an old concentration camp outside of the city. It was very interesting, and as it had been controlled by the Germans, all the signs were written in German! Our next stop was at an old and very creepy church while on our way to Vienna. This church was filled with decorations made out of real human bones!!!! It was the oddest church I've ever been to, and probably the oddest I ever will go to! It was such a great relief for us to be back in a German speaking country though!!! It had been so hard for us to communicate in Czech Republic as none of us could speak Czech and the locals' English and German was very poor, we had to use a lot of sign language while we were speaking, and still didn't know if we'd be understood or not.

Vienna was beautiful. One night we went to a classical concert, which was pretty good, though most of the other exchange students were bored stiff. We had a tour around some of the city, and also had lots of free time so we could explore the city in small groups. One of our activities was a scavenger hunt. We had to get into groups of about 4 people and then were given a list of questions to answer about Vienna, that was really fun, we had to work our way around the city on foot and with the trains to find information to answer our questions. My group won, our prize was a Vienna badge each for our Rotary Blazers.

After Austria we moved on to Italy! We stopped off in Verona on our way to Florence so we could see where Juliet (From Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet) was supposed to have lived. After we had arrived at our hotel and sorted out our luggage we went for a walk to a beach (at a lake) where we could all go swimming, it was absolutely freezing though. We visited Pisa for a few hours while staying in Florence, it was pretty exciting to get to see the Leaning Tower!! While in Italy we all ate lots and lots of delicious ice cream and of course pizza as well.

Though it rained at some point everyday of our tour I had heaps of fun, and I'm sure everyone else did too!

All too soon, on the 1st of July, we had to return back to Switzerland and to our Host Families. I had two days of school left for the year (school year) when I came back from Euro Tour, then we started our 5 week Summer Holidays!

The highlight of my Summer Holidays was definitely going to the Alps for 3 weeks with my Host Family!!! My family own 3 little holiday houses in the Alps, where I stayed with my Host Parents, little sister and 2 cousins for 3 weeks, with lots of other friends and family members coming and going during our stay. For the first 2 weeks we never had less than 12 people staying there. Along with all the people we also had the two dogs, one cat with her kitten (which died the first week there), the parrot, one chook with her 4 little chickens and the donkey. I wasn't too pleased when I heard the parrot in his cage in the boot behind me when we first left home, I thought I was rid of him for 3 weeks!!

When we arrived at our Alp we first had to unload everything and then wait for the helicopter to come to take it all up for us, as we had lots of big boxes and bags all full of clothes and food and other things, plus three tress that my host mum wanted to pant while we were up there. I got to go up in the helicopter as well, which was so fun! And much faster than walking, too fast, it only took about 2 minutes to go up by helicopter and over half an hour to walk. It was really amazing seeing the Alps from the view in the helicopter!! It was so beautiful!

Our toilet and shower weren't exactly wonderful though. Our toilet was sort of like a drop toilet without the drop. We had a big wooden box with a bit of hole under it, as you can probably guess it really started to stink after a while as we had 12 or more people using it everyday!! It also wasn't very good if it was raining, as you first had to go for a bit of a walk to get to it, and then for the first week or so it didn't have a roof. We put a tent up over it one day though as it was pouring down with rain, the tent stayed up until a roof was finally built over it. Our shower was a bucket hanging from a tree branch, with a shower head at the bottom. First we had to heat up our water in a great big boiler with a fire underneath it, then carry the water from the boiler to the shower and pour it in, then pull the chain and voila, a shower!! My big brother Thomas came with his girlfriend, Manuela, a few days before we left, and as he was showing Manuela the shower and how it works he asked me if I'd used it already, I was like are you kidding?? I've been here for almost three weeks now, of course I've had a shower!!!

We didn't have any running water in the house, only hoses outside, and the kitchen didn't have a sink either, so we had to take all the dishes outside to wash them. My little sister Martina complained constantly because she had to wash the dishes a lot more often than I did, I tried pointing out that I was up making her breakfast almost every morning while she was still asleep, apparently it doesn't count if she's not conscious to see it though. Breakfast for most days in the Alps was Bircher Muesli, which is lots of fruits all cut up into little pieces and mixed together with natural yoghurt and a little bit of honey. I loved it!! A couple times a week we baked fresh bread as no one really felt like walking all the way down the Alp, to the shop buying bread then taking it all the way back up again, also it tasted better anyway. Quite often when we were making dough for bread we also made pizza dough, everyone always returned to the house quite early on the nights we had pizza, it was easily the favourite meal in the Alps. We cooked our pizzas, bread and sometimes cakes in a pizza oven they've built down there, I'd have to say that Alps Pizza is some of the best pizza you can get!

We spent a lot of time walking up and down our Alp and going swimming in the river down the bottom, which was absolutely freezing, Andy (Host Father) said it would have been about 10-12 degrees in the water the first time I went!!! We also had to keep walking down to do the food shopping and then carry all our supplies back up with us, that took a lot of work, it was very steep to walk back up there!! One night we were there my sister's friend and I both got sick. I was throwing up from 10.30pm till 6.30am, I didn't realise it was possible to throw up for that long until I did it. My little sister and cousin were very quick to collect up my sleeping, blanket and pillow and make the bed downstairs for me when I first started throwing up, I think this was more because they didn't want to share the room with me while I was throwing up though, rather than actually trying to be helpful. I was stuck lying down for two days after that, which wasn't too fun. All but a few of the people staying that week got sick at some point. Overall my three weeks in the Alps were great fun though. I can't tell you how nice my first shower, when we got home, felt though!!! It was so good after having to use a bucket for three weeks!! On Saturday the 1st of August I went to Romanshorn with my older sister Daniela (she'd been back from Australia for about 4 weeks at the time) and some of her friends to celebrate the birthday of Switzerland. We went to Seenachtsfest which translates literally as Lake-night-party. We sat by Lake Constance (the lake that separates Germany, Switzerland and Austria) and watched fireworks which were being set off from a boat on the lake. That was great fun! The next day I had to pack up the last few things that weren't already in my bags and then go through the traumatising experience of changing Host Families!! That was not fun. I get along with my new family though and we have a lot of fun together, even if it's just me and one of my sisters picking on the other one. I now only have 2 sisters instead of 4 and 2 brothers, and only 1 cat and 4 rabbits, rather than the zoo my last family had, not quite so interesting.

The first week with my new family was also the last week of my Summer Holidays, as my whole family was working that week my first host family took me out with them a few times to keep me occupied and stop me from getting lonely with just the snobby cat and 4 wimpy rabbits for company. One day we went and saw a movie in Konstanz (Constance), the next we went and picked up the horse (he had been staying in a stable while we were in the Alps), then next I went walking up a great big mountain and the next I went to a horse show, so I was pretty well entertained for the week.

I started the new school year on Monday the 10th of August, I'm now in the second class. School hasn't changed much since we were in the first class, it can still be fun at some points and desperately dull at others. We no longer have Economics, which I'm thrilled about as I find it extremely boring in both English and German! Another big plus is my ankle is a lot better now so I can go back to sport classes!!! My sport teacher, Herr Boltshauser, is my second favourite teacher here (my favourite being Herr Joss, my English and class teacher) and what's even better is he likes soccer, which means we get to play lots of it!! Our music teacher gave us a plan of our upcoming tests for the school year, this includes tests my class will be having next year as well after I've gone home. Not quite all of the tests had dates next to them though, I'm desperately hoping that the singing test will also be next year, as I really don't have any wishes to put my teacher and class through the pains of me singing!!!!

I now have three weeks of school holidays, we started yesterday, the 26th. Since I'm in Europe and I don't know when I'll be back again, and also my family will all be working, I'm going to Portugal for two weeks of my holidays!!! I have friends there which we met when we were living in the Maldives in 2006, I can't wait to see them again!! Yesterday morning my old Host Grandfather took me to watch a cow show in Moulen (a nearby town). It was pretty cool. All the cows from surrounding farms came parading down the street with their enormous bells clanging! Then they went up to the exhibition area and showed off how pretty they were to the judges. Later on I then went to Zürich with my Host Parents, where we went to watch "Walking with Dinosaurs", that was cool. My Host father is the manager or something of his bank, which is why we got to go. It was my host parents, 10 important clients and I who went. First we had dinner and then we went up to our own private lounge up above everybody else to watch the show!! It was cool. The only problem was that the dress code was "Elegant", my sister dressed me up in her clothes, I still don't do elegant though, no matter what I'm wearing, elegant just doesn't quite work for me. Well, I think that's about everything now. I hope all your exchanges are going great as well. Tschau (ciao), **Narissa Knight**



RACHEL RYAN. SWEDEN.

Hej! So last

time I left you I was just starting my euro tour!

The first place we visited was Berlin, Germany. The first night in Germany we went out for a traditional German dinner. After that we then could look around for a couple of hours. The second day we had a city tour. We looked around and went to check-point Charlie and the Berlin wall.

The next day it was off to Poland. In Poland we stayed at Cracow. That night we went out for a traditional Jewish dinner. The day after we had a city tour. We learnt about the legends of Cracow and some of its history. We visited Schindler's factory from the movie Schindler's list. The last part of that day was not as pleasant as the first. We went to Auschwitz concentration and extermination camps. I have to say that I don't regret going but I would never go back. There are no words to describe it.

We went to the Czech Republic the next day. We stayed in Prague. The day after we had a city tour. We went up to the castle and took pictures with the guards. Then we went down to the city. There we had some free time. We looked around at little shops and had some lunch. That night we had a Czech buffet dinner on a boat. After that we could choose to go and fika or go out with some Rotary people to the biggest club in Europe. I chose to go to the club. It was so big and lots of fun.

The next day we went to Austria. We were staying in Zell-am-see but on our way we stopped at Salzburg. There we walked into the city then had free time to explore. Then we continued to Zell-am-see. We had an early night. The next day we climbed a mountain. all 75-72 of us made it to the little café near the top. It was the best any exchange group has done. When we got back down I found out that I had pulled 2 muscles in each leg. Then I remembered doing it in Prague.

Then we were off to Italy the day after. In Italy we stayed in a place called Lido de Jesolo. The next day we had a free day. I went shopping with one of my friends then went back and hung out with some of my other friends cause it was too hot to go out again. That night we went to the beach. The next day we went to Venice. When we got there we had a gondola ride. After that we had free time. My friends and I went for a walk and had pizza.

The day after we were off to France. We had to go to Lyon. That day we sat in the bus for 12 hours. The next day we went to Paris. That night we went in and had dinner in the city then went to the traditional cabaret. The next day we went to the Eiffel tour. We went to the top and had a look around. After that we had a city tour. We were left in the city to have free time. My friends and I went out for Chinese then looked around. We made our way back to the hotel via the metro. That night we had a fancy French dinner and a city tour by night. We stopped up at Palais de Chaillot and took pictures. The next day we had a free day. My friend and I got up late so we went off by ourselves. We went to the avenue des Champs-Elysees. There I got a very nice jacket for quite cheap.

The next day we left Paris and went to Belgium. In Belgium we went to Brussels. We had free time then had a city tour. Then we went to a little place in Germany. That night we had a breaking up party with lots of tears.

The next day we were back up to Sweden.

1 week after I got back my host mother turned 50. We had a party with friends and family. It was a nice event with lots of dancing.

A week after that I went down to a place called Bollnas to see one of my old exchange students I met last year. That week I was with her family at their summer house. We travelled around the area. We went shopping and we baked. It was very nice to see her again.

When I got back from visiting her I met my new host family. It was a very nice meeting but I couldn't get two words in with my Rotary Club counsellor talking all the time about him and his childhood.

About a week and a half later I went to Finland with my friend in Bollnas and her family. We went over on a boat. It was an awesome weekend!! On the way over we had a nice dinner and then danced the night away and watched a Brazilian show. The next day we went shopping in Helsinki. Helsinki is a very nice city and I enjoyed it a lot. Then we got back on the boat to go home. We had a lovely dinner and an early night because we were all so tired.

The Tuesday after I started school again. I am now in yr 2 Gymnasium. I am doing the hotel and restaurant program. My new class is awesome and so much fun. I get to cook in the restaurant on a Friday. I even have a chief's uniform. I also met the new exchange students in Sundsvall. They are all girls. 2 from USA, 1 from Italy and one from France.

That weekend I changed host family. My new host family is really nice! I enjoy staying with them. They have two little girls. The girls are 6 and 8 so they can't speak English. The first weekend with them we went out on their boat to the islands around Sundsvall. The second weekend with them I went moose hunting with some Rotarians. It was lots of fun and very exciting!! We got one the first day but none on the second day. It was annoying not to get anything on the second day cause we got up at 4:45am and walked out and sat in the freezing cold watching the sun rise.

I have had a great time so far and don't want to come home. Sweden now feels like my home.

Rachael



BROOKE DAVIS. DENMARK.

WOW!! I can't believe over 8 months have passed since I have been in Denmark. Everything is still going fantastic. Since last time I wrote a few things have happened. I have moved host families, my mum and sister came to visit, I went to Poland and Sweden, saw Kings of Leon and Aqua, started playing handball and had a Rotary get together.

The first thing I did was go to Poland with my Rotary Club. There were a few members and their wives and I got to take a friend with me. We got to stay in some really nice hotels and we also got to go to the beach for a day. A few days after I got back from Poland I went to see the Kings of Leon concert in Copenhagen. They were fantastic live and we got there early enough to only have about 4 people between me and the stage.

The next week my counselor took me and his son to Sweden. We went for a few days because my counselor had to help out at a wood shopping show. The show was interesting and the area that we stayed in was incredible. We stayed in a little cabin on the lake. The only bad thing about it was the really big mosquitoes.

My mum and my little sister came over to visit me for a few weeks. We travelled around Denmark and I also took them to Sweden for a few nights. We visited the very north of Denmark and stood with one foot in two different oceans. I took them to meet all my host families. On one of the Friday nights I took my sister to see Aqua at Tivoli (an amusement park in Copenhagen). There were so many people that they had to close the gates so that no one else could get in. We visited Lego Land. A really awesome amusement park which is made out of Lego pieces.

I started playing handball. I went away with the team to play 4 games. In two of the games I scored one goal in and in one of the other games I scored two goals.

I have also gotten to see N.E.R.D, The Kaiser Chiefs Infernal and Aqua again. The second time I got to see Aqua was during Køge fest uge. A week in the town where I got to school that has a week where a bunch of bands play in the towns main centre. It was fantastic.

Last weekend I got to go gliding. A daughter of one of the members from my Rotary Club invited me. I got to go up two times for about 15 minutes each. And on the second trip I was controlling the plane the whole trip apart from the taking off and landing. I was up about 400m in the sky and travelling at about 120km/h. it was fantastic and the views were incredible.

Not much else to write. I've been back at school for a few weeks.

Så vi ses til næste gang og farvel.

Brooke

-xxx

JACQIE SIMONDSON. FRANCE.

Hi everyone,

So now I am well over half-way, I've been in France for nearly eight months and the time has gone faster than ever. I'm back at school, and it's going great. It's a nice feeling to be able to sit in class and participate, all I can think is, when did my French get so good?

I have just returned from a holiday with my mum, sister and grandma. They arrived at the start of September, and stayed with my host family for two weeks. It was such a strange feeling to have them in my town, meeting my host family and my friends. Up until then I had been trying to describe the place to them, but it was only when they came that they understood how great it is

here. They were absolutely amazed at how old the buildings were and how beautiful it was. After living here for a while, it was strange to see them get so excited over the small things. I now know what it's like for the locals to see tourists running around with their cameras. They really do seem a bit crazy!

After two weeks at home we took off, and started in Bourges, staying two nights with Clemence, a French Rotary exchange student who stayed with us last year. It was great for our parents to meet and to reunite with Clemence again. After that we went to Paris for three nights, we did all the touristy things like climbing the Eiffel Tower, visiting the Louvre and walking down the Champs Elysses. It was my fifth time in Paris so I acted as the guide and translator. We then headed off to London and Scotland. When in Scotland we stayed in Glasgow with our aunt, who we hadn't seen for 9 years. It was really great to catch up with her, but it was really cold! In London we stayed for five nights. It was a very busy week, we saw as much as we could and only rested on the tour boats, buses and the London Eye. We caught up with some more family before saying our goodbyes at the London airport. It wasn't as hard to say goodbye as the last time, I couldn't wait to get back to France. It was weird to talk in English the whole time, it took a while to adjust before I started saying thankyou in the right language!

When I got back to France I was exhausted, but glad to get back into things. I started school again the next day and got my French back up to speed.

I am now in my last family, and am very happy to be here. We've been lucky enough to have a great summer that is still going even though it's supposed to be autumn now. I love the idea of finishing summer here, only to go back to summer in Australia!

I still have more than three months ahead of me that are sure to go too quickly. For the moment all is well, the French is going great and I guess I'll see everyone sooner than we know it!

Jacquie.



MADI NICHOLSON. GERMANY

Hi guys,

I can't believe it's yet again time for another Rotayak! This year just keeps going by faster and faster!

Well, I've had an amazing summer, as weird as it was to have summer from June – August, and done a lot of exciting things.

Summer holidays were great, with amazing, warm, weather (that I honestly didn't think Germany was capable of). I went to visit a few other exchange students that live all over Germany and it was really nice to catch up with them and see their towns and part of Germany they live in. A friend of mine, who's also an Australian exchange student (that I met on the plane, funnily enough) came to visit me, and we saw Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince, because it came to the cinema in my town in English.

My host family and I went on holidays to a small, pretty town near Dresden, in East Germany for 10 days. My host sister (who's studying in Brazil) came back for the holiday and it was really nice to finally meet her. Unfortunately, I was sick with a bit of a cold for the first few days, so I missed out on going on the bike tours with them, wearing the traditional costume of lederhosen and dirndl. I was there with a couple, which from the photos, looked really pretty and a lot of fun. But, we did go to Dresden twice for day trips, and Dresden is a really cool, nice, old city. We even went to Prague one day on a bus trip which was really exciting!

As soon as I got back from this little holiday, school was due to start again. But, lucky enough for me, I still had my 'Euro Tour' for 28 days! It was really the most amazing month, probably even the most amazing month of my whole exchange, full of unforgettable moments and memories. We were a group of 40-odd exchange students from 8 different countries and 4 Rotex Tour guides. We travelled to 17 beautiful cities in 8 different countries. We started in Germany in Frankfurt, then continued on to the Czech Republic to Prague for one night, then drove over-night to Budapest in Hungary for two nights. We were then off to Austria for four nights, 2 nights in Vienna, 1

night in Dachstein, a day in Abtenau where we got to do a 'white water river tour' (travelling down a white water river in rubber rings, which was the best fun) and one night in Salzburg. It was nice to be back somewhere German speaking, and able to easily communicate and understand signs again. After that, it was finally time to get down to Italy, which I was extremely excited about. We were there for 9 nights, 2 nights in Venice, 2 nights in Florence, a day in Pisa, 4 nights in Rome and 1 night in Milan. Then from Italy, it was on to France, with a day stop-over in Freiburg, in Germany. We were in France for 5 nights, 1 in Strasburg and 4 in Paris. I do have to say, that Paris was overall my favourite city! Everyone always says this, I know, but it truly is the best European city! It just has such an amazing atmosphere, and is extremely beautiful all over. After Paris, we went up to Belgium, and spent 1 night in Bruges, and 1 night Bruxelles. Then, sadly, it was almost the end of our tour, and off to spend our last 2 nights in Amsterdam. The end of Euro Tour was extremely sad. We'd all been together for so long, had become really good friends and therefore there were a lot of tears shed. But we do get to see each other again at the end of October, for our rebound Euro Tour meeting, which I'm really looking forward to!

In September, I had two big district exchange student get-together weekends and one daytrip. One weekend was in Hannover (the state capital) and one in another very small town further north. The day trip was to Hamburg, a really pretty big city up north Germany with a harbour. We all had a lot of fun getting to know each other (as the exchange students now are all new, except for 7, as most of them come in August, not January) and being all together.

Also, everyone knows what September in Germany means, OKTOBERFEST! Unfortunately, I never got the chance to go down to Munich to the real one, but in my town, Goettingen, there was a small festival for it. It started on the 19th, with a small parade through the city, with a horse and carriage, a brass band, and a few people of other exchange students, and we even marched along with them in the parade!

Well now its autumn and everything's once again turning grey, and getting colder. Autumn holidays started yesterday, and I'm looking forward to a couple of small trips I'm making, one to south Germany, and one to the north. I'm still really enjoying every minute of my exchange, even more so now that my German is fairly decent, and taking every opportunity I can.

Til next time!

Madi



CAITLIN McDONALD. DENMARK

Hello everyone, ☺

Well I've started back at school again after the amazing and very busy holiday. It's great to be back. I missed my class mates so much I've become so attached to them it's going to be so hard to say goodbye at the end of the year. ☹ I'm still going to the school parties and making heaps of new friends. My town 'Aars' just had an annual festival that was great fun. I was involved in the big run they did, I had to run 5km and to make it harder I had to run with my first host families little girls and that was hard, at one point I carried one of them for awhile. But after the run there was a carnival with loads of rides that I went on till I got sick. A week after that my parents came to visit me that was great, when I went to get them at the airport in Copenhagen I was a couple of hours early so I waited for about 4 hours and I was so anxious and excited I couldn't sit still, then when the doors opened I kept jumping up and down hoping they were the next to come out and then half an hour later my mum came out and I couldn't stop hugging her and then we started to cry, it was quite funny, then 20mins later dad came out and we left to find the train to Copenhagen centre. Wow being in Copenhagen with my parents was the strangest feeling, to think that they're actually there with me in the capital city on Denmark. Well for that wonderful week we went to so many museums, it was good to learn so much about the Danish culture and history, I wouldn't have learnt it if my parents hadn't have come. My parents friends friends took us around the island and showed us amazing castles and the deer gardens where princess Mary would go riding. During this amazing week I had to abandon my parents and go to a Rotary District Conference so my host family looked after them and they said they had the best time, staying up later drinking wine and talking about me, yer wow that sounds like so much fun. The District Conference was great fun we put on little skits for the Rotary men about the Rotary Exchange program, we came up with some pretty funny stuff. Then after that we went into the bush and got into teams and had to climb trees and throw axes and do a giant obstacle course. Me and my

first host dad drove my mum and dad to Germany so they could start their euro trip, after 2 weeks they came back and told us all about their trip and how amazing it was and the beautiful German castles there are. The other day my new host family drove my mum and dad to the airport where they caught the plane and flew to England, after that they came to get all my things and move me to their house. It was great to be moving but it was sad to leave my other family. When my host dad came to get me I had too many things so he had to make 2 trips, one with all my stuff and one with just me. When I arrived at the house I found my room was not so big so everything of mine was flowing out my bedroom door. My family has the cutest little dog it's a cockerspanial and is so well behaved I think when I get back I'm going to beg my dad to get me one and if that doesn't work I'll ask mum she'll say yes, actually I might just go to her first. This new host family is so great they're taking me to Tunisia for a week just for a holiday it's going to be great fun. We'll be sitting on the hot beaches getting a great tan, I might even get to ride a camel. I'm so excited. This family is great fun and they're so nice. I met their son and daughter the night I arrived and they are so nice they're in their 20s and the son has a wife and 3 very handsome little kids with lovely brown skin and blonde hair, like every Scandinavian person. I have become a lot better at my Danish now so I have great conversations with my family and I can understand some of the Danish sarcasm. This year has gone by so fast, I only have 3 and a half months left and they're going to go by so fast but they're going to be the greatest Christmas, new years they're going to be amazing. Well till the last Rotayak I'll still be here having the time of my life.

xxx Caitlin xxx



These two pictures are from Seb Nicolson (Corowa) and were attached to an article but I was unable to open the file. ED

Natalie Bridges, France



Bonjour tout le monde !

Wow so I cannot believe that as I'm writing this article I have just seen 8 months go by! Okay so ill begin with my holiday to the South of France and my adventures there.

I was taken to Grasse; where all of the perfumes are made; we took a tour of a perfumery and got to see how all the perfumes are made and how long it actually takes to create the smell for the perfume. I suntanned and swam in the Mediterranean sea, spent lots of money in the main shopping streets of Cannes, and learnt all about the south of France and its history in Nice.

Once returning from my beautiful 2 weeks in the South I spent some time with friends, visiting the family of my host family and absorbing the hot weather as it didn't last long at all.

Towards the end of July it was time to pack my things and change host families for 2 months until I reached my last host family's house. Changing host families was very hard as I was very close to my host mother in particular. So after a few tears and lots of hugs I moved families.

August welcomed a 2 week trip up to the mountains full of hikes and lots of fresh air. Spending time without a phone or internet and becoming close to my host sister in particular who was in Mexico last year and my host family.

On the 24th I headed over to Lyon which is the biggest town in my region with the rest of the Rotarians and Southern hemisphere students, to greet all of the new students who had arrived to my district from the Northern hemisphere. Well by the end of the day I ended up with a huge headache from translating all day, lots of new friends and excitement with the amount of fun I knew we were all going to have in the last half of my exchange. By the beginning of September I was ready to go back to school and see some of the friends I hadn't had the chance to see while we were on holidays. After receiving my new timetable I knew the excitement would rub off very quickly with school from 8am until 6pm and 8 hours of Philosophy each week. On the 3rd I welcomed my grandparents into my town and celebrated my 17th birthday. In the days they were here they got to see my life, town, friends, host families and how much I had changed throughout the year I had been gone for.

Changing host families in the middle of September was again difficult, but this time it was even harder to fit all my belongings in the suitcases I had to put them in than anything else!

So here I am with my new and last host family loving my French life! Living every second of every minute twice before I have to sadly say goodbye to this country which I have called home!

See you on the 19th of January at 6.30am which I love my mum for so much for coming to collect me that early!! ☺

Natalie Bridges, France.