

news from around the world

District 9930-New Zealand

June 2020

Welcome to newsletter # 1

Newsletter

2020 outbounds

Hi guys,

Thank you to for getting your reports in, they made for great reading. We never could have predicted the COVID-19 pandemic which has had a huge effect on the RIYE programme and your individual experiences. Firstly, I would like to congratulate you all on how you have handled yourselves over this challenging time. Despite the difficulties you are all still making the most of your exchanges and are settling into life abroad as well as can be expected. Please remember to share your experiences with your New Zealand sponsor clubs whenever you are able to. We look forward to hearing more about your experiences as the year progresses. Our committee and I are always just an email away, so if there is anything that you need please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kevin

Jessica Rose

Chile

My exchange so far...

I went into my exchange with no expectations and an open mind, which I believe has helped me push through the difficult times and grab every opportunity I have had with both hands.

As with the majority of exchange students, my hardest challenge has been the language barrier. I came to Chile with a basic understanding of the Spanish language but very quickly I realised all I knew was textbook Spanish. I could understand most of what people said and wrote but I struggled with conversation.

In my first two months, I completely lacked confidence in speaking. I didn't know how to say the things I wanted to say and my Aussie accent butchered my pronunciation. It is extremely frustrating not being able to say even the simplest of things and I have felt so stupid at times because of it. But after a while, I accepted that I'm just learning and the mistakes I make are just steps into the right direction (plus, not knowing what to say has definitely stepped up my Charades game).

I have met so many amazing people already in such a short time. Chileans are so chill and are some of the nicest and giving people ever. They're all so keen to have a chat and help you out with whatever you need which has made adjusting life into this country a whole lot easier. Not to mention that

Chileans can cook. I am definitely a foodie and their empanadas, asados and their completos are to die for.

I was also lucky enough to spend a week in El Tabo, a small town on the beach where all I did was eat, tan, swim and play volleyball and it was a great welcome into my exchange. I also got to visit Valparaiso, a city that has been on my bucket list forever and it was like exploring a city of rainbows. The colours and the art were just beautiful and it has definitely been my highlight so far.



I would have loved to write about school here in Chile but unfortunately, I only got to go for two weeks before they closed them because of the virus. I was just starting to feel like I was getting over the first month slump and improving a lot with my language before Corona inevitably put my exchange on hold. A global pandemic was definitely not a challenge I thought I'd face when I first started my exchange and I've had to miss out on so many exciting events and opportunities that were coming my way. It definitely hasn't been easy being in quarantine. At times I have just wanted to give up and go home but I've managed to push through. I try to read, paint and exercise often and take it day by day hoping for the best and hoping that I can continue with the amazing exchange I wanted to have.

I am extremely lucky to be in the place I am right now. I am beyond grateful for all the support from Rotary, my friends, my family and to be in a country that has dealt well with the virus. I'm very grateful to be where I am right now because most Rotary students have unfortunately had to end their exchange short. I try to make the most of every day here in this beautiful country because I don't know when my last day might be.

Just gotta keep that open mind and that positive outlook and everything will turn out alright in the end, no matter when or how it ends

Jess Rose

RYE NZ to Santiago, Chile

Thomas Henderson Switzerland

Rotary Update

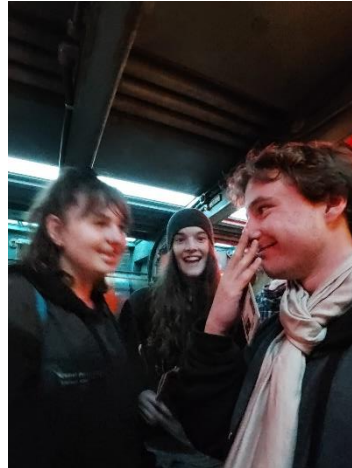
Hey everybody, Switzerland is an amazing and beautiful country and I am in love with it. My German has been progressing quite quickly, sometimes it is just very difficult because I don't have the same level of vocab that I do in English, so it can be hard to articulate what I'm trying to say.

Very recently it was revealed that our Euro tour is cancelled. SO that was really cool. Obviously with the times right now it wouldn't make any sense to risk travelling so far just for a bit of tourism.

But regardless of all that, I have been here for four and a half months and what a ride it has been. Of course we started out in LA and got some time to meet the other NZ outbounds. Lordy what a fantastic group of people. I am very glad we got that time together to get to know each other and bond a little bit before we all split off again. It was in the Auckland airport that I made friends with a girl because I asked to have some of her chicken nuggets. Like what a ride. But yea, three days together for Disneyland and Universal studios only to go and split up again at Heathrow definitely hurt a lot, but still really good.

So much has happened since I arrived in Switzerland. The highlights, oh the highlights. We had two weeks in a lovely little town called Fiesch for a language camp. To date it was the most action packed two weeks of the exchange so far. All of the

January inbounds together for two weeks with a 10 O'clock curfew. It was really really intense with the learning side of things. Our amazing teachers had to impart as much German as they could into our brains and it was full on. But it was honestly the most amount of learning that I've done in my entire time at school.



Meeting the oldies was perhaps the most insane thing ever. We had two days in a youth hostel together, all totally supervised by Rotex of course. And they were just some of the freshest people I have ever met, I think. In every idea I had of the Oldies, it never occurred to me that I would be older than half of them? It shook me to my core. But still, they are very very cool to hang out with and I cannot wait to hang out with them again. But at this stage, assuming the second wave of the virus doesn't cripple the country, it is unlikely that we will be able to do that before they go back home. And it also doesn't seem likely that we will have any inbounds in August either, because I don't think that Rotary Switzerland wants to risk that either.

But regardless I will continue to do my best to enjoy my exchange in every single possible way I can.



Thomas Henderson,
Rotary Outbound to Switzerland

Xanthe Waldon Belgium

After 5 months in Belgium, I can confirm I am in love with this country. While my exchange hasn't necessarily been the most typical experience, I've loved it regardless. In preparation of coming here, the main thing everyone told me was "do not have expectations" and they were beyond right.



My first 2 months were filled with exciting adventures with my new exchange friends. I. Am living in the capital of Belgium, Brussels. I am truly blessed to be where I am as this has made transport so much easier and everything is so accessible to me. I ate lots

of Belgian fries, chocolate and waffles and even wound up with an extra 10kgs! We took trains around the country and it felt amazing to have so much independence. Everyone I have met here has morphed my exchange into one of the best experiences of my life and I am so grateful for that. Every weekend was an adventure, and every weekday was an opportunity to make friends at school and develop my French ability more.

Covid-19 changed a lot for Belgium, just like the rest of the world. We were put into a strict lockdown, and suddenly the most I was allowed to explore was the park next to my house for about 3 months. In all honesty, this was a tough period for me. I had to watch nearly all of the friends I had worked so hard to make leave me as their exchanges were cancelled. I had the constant fear of my exchange coming to an end and felt very uninformed on what was happening with my exchange. On top of this, my host sisters from my first and second families had their upcoming exchanges cancelled and so I felt guilty for even being here in Belgium while they got nothing. Just before lockdown started my phone had been pickpocketed, so on top of all this I had no phone and felt quite isolated. Being away from my family during a time like this was definitely challenging, but I appreciate having the opportunity to grow and mature from it. On the upside, I began to truly appreciate how beautiful Belgium was as we left the dreary winter and entered spring. The park next to my house became something of a safe place for me where I could just calm down and fully take in the beauty of European springtime. When I could, I tried to meet up with a few friends for bike rides

around the city which was always very refreshing for my perspective and attitude. The lockdown also gave me an opportunity to develop my relationships with host family members because we were always together and I really appreciate that time we shared together.

Sadly, sometime in May as we were beginning to come out of lockdown, I got the news that my exchange was being cancelled. This was difficult for me, and still is, because I felt like I had fought through the hardest part and just when things were getting better I would have to go home. Luckily for me though, there were no flights back to New Zealand so I bought some extra time here in Belgium. Since lockdown has been lifted, I have changed to my second Host family. I really adore them and they always try to take me to see as much of Belgium that they can offer. They took me to a massive zoo here called Pairi Daiza, take me for lots of bike rides, we visit family in other cities like the beautiful Dinant and have even taken me to a beautiful historic city called Bruges. They've taught me so much and I'm really grateful that I have them.

I'm truly enjoying my exchange again, especially being able to travel, see my friends and experience new things again!



Xanthe Waldon

Zara Newman

France

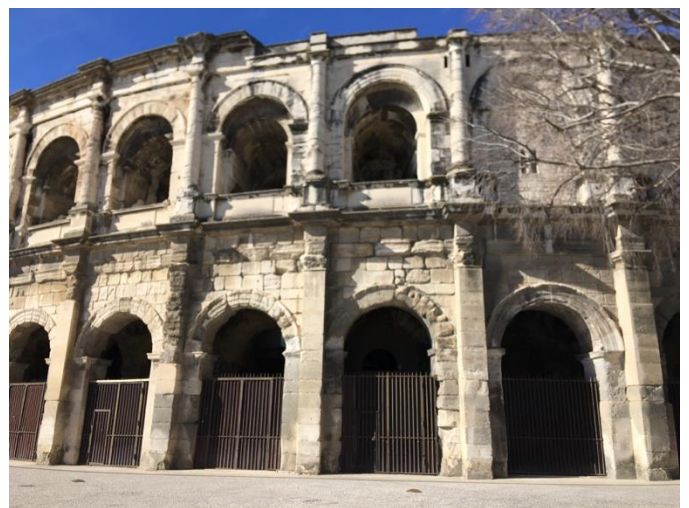
I have been living in Nîmes, France for four and-a-half months now and I have been having a great time. A couple weeks after I arrived, I got to meet up with the other exchange students in D1760 for a food fair where we all made dishes from our home countries. It was amazing meeting all these new people and learning about their host countries while also sharing a little bit of NZ culture with them.



I also had the opportunity to travel to Avignon with my host family a few weeks before confinement started. Things have been difficult since the start of



confinement, I missed out on a lot of the events that were planned for the year such as the Euro Tour and the district meet up in Reims. I missed being able to say goodbye to many of my oldies, but we have still kept in contact. It has been difficult keeping up with online school, but it has been getting easier as time goes on. While things are slowly starting to get back to normal, I am looking forward to starting to travel again once the situation gets better.



I also had the opportunity to travel to Avignon with my host family a few weeks before confinement started. Things have been difficult since the start of confinement, I missed out on a lot of the events that were planned for the year such as the Euro Tour and the district meet up in Reims. I missed being able to say goodbye to many of my oldies, but we have still kept in contact. It has been difficult keeping up with online school, but it has been getting easier as time goes on. While things are slowly starting to get back to normal, I am looking forward to starting to travel again once the situation gets better.

Zara Newman

Sarah Eastwood France

My Exchange

It feels insane to me that more than four months have passed. It has all been a blur.

The first month was full on, my French felt so inadequate and the new school was so much bigger than I could've imagined. Nothing at all like the small New Zealand high schools I was accustomed to.

I visited Dunkirk and tried to fit myself into my family. The second month saw no visible improvement to my French, but my host family took me with them on a holiday and I visited so many old and gorgeous places. They introduced me to their family, and I saw La Rochelle, Paris, and Lourdes. I have been so lucky with my host family; they have been welcoming and funny and so passionate about their country. I loved every minute with them.



Image A

Month three brought a deep fatigue around school, and no small amount of fear around the Corona Virus. But the subsequent confinement did amazing things to my French, and I picked up a few new skills with all the sudden free time.



Image B

Month four saw me changing families in the middle of the confinement. It was difficult to leave the family I had grown to love, but it was the best thing I could have done. The new family spoke very little English so my French was forced into every single part of my day, and once confinement ended and the spring broke through, I could run amok in my

city mostly unencumbered by the language barrier. Plans over plans over plans are being made, and I cannot wait for whatever the rest of my exchange has before me.

A: My host sister Victoria and her cousin in a church, La Rochelle

B: A beautiful park commemorating new Zealand soldiers, Les Quesnoy

Sarah Eastwood

Rotary Outbound to France