

**Maya – I'll write next time!**

**Maya Nakamura** reporting  
for **Yokkaichi Rotary Club,**  
Japan

*Dateline:* - August, 2007

*Location:* - Yamba Rotary  
Club, Australia

I will write this next time. (*I've heard that excuse before Maya, I look forward to next month's report. Ed.*)

*Maya*

**Maya – I'll write next time!**

**Maya Nakamura** reporting  
for **Yokkaichi Rotary Club,**  
Japan

*Dateline:* - September,  
2007

*Location:* - Yamba Rotary  
Club, Australia

I will write this next time. (*Maya, you said that last time Maya, I will definitely look forward to next month's report. Ed.*)

*Maya*

**Maya – I did write this time!**

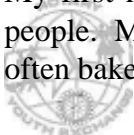
**Maya Nakamura** reporting  
for **Yokkaichi Rotary Club,**  
Japan

*Dateline:* - October, 2007

*Location:* - Yamba Rotary  
Club, Australia

Konnichiwa minasan, or hi everyone! My name is Maya Nakamura. I came from Nara, which is located near Osaka and Kyoto.

I've already been here for two months and having great time. When I first arrived here by plane, my first words were; "Gee, what a massive land!!" Everything is big in here... land, sky, trees, birds and the people have big heart as well. My first host family is really nice and funny people. My host mother is a keen cook. She often bakes breads and the meals she makes are



very good. What was surprising is that she makes tofu (curdled soy milk, which is Japanese food) and sells to people! I like cooking as well so I sometimes cook rice, miso-soup and few other Japanese cuisine. I'm so happy that my host family loves my cooking and I won't miss my country's food. (*Ok – so where's my helping! Ed.*)

My host parents are both surfer and my host father took me to the surf last month. I used a big heavy board, paddled into the sea - which is bit scary for me - and my host father pushed me forward to help me riding the wave. In the four or fifth try, I stood up on the board for two seconds!! On the first day!! It was miracle. I should try again another day but my courage fails me.

My 15 year-old host sister likes dance and piano. She is more sociable and talkative than me and she is now learning Spanish preparing for the exchange to Mexico. Ella es genial (She is brilliant).

School I go now is really different to mine in Japan. It's more like rough and lively, which is awesome. I made some friends. They are very friendly and kind. It was very very surprising that some of them bought me a mobile phone!!! I went some sleep overs and birthday party.

I'm really enjoying this stay so far. I feel like having no home sick at all.

By the way, because of my arrival was late, I missed the last briefing camp for the inbound students. I can't wait for the second camp on the 1st and 2nd of December!

Thank you

*Maya*



**Björgvin – So much fun!**

**Björgvin Gunnarsson**  
reporting for **Olafsforour**  
Rotary Club, Iceland

*Dateline:* - November,  
2007

*Location:* - Kirra  
Currumbin Rotary Club,  
Australia

The Rotary camp last weekend. So much fun meeting all the other exchange students again. (A man of many words – I like that! Ed.)

*Björgvin*

**Esther – almost perfect!**

**Esther Crothers** reporting  
for **Grafton Midday Rotary**  
Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - November,  
2007

*Location:* - Marennes/  
Oleron Rotary Club,  
France

Well I have quickly discovered this year is like a year of goodbyes and great memories. I have met so many amazing people and it's always really hard to say goodbye. (Esther, it's not really 'Good Bye' – it's more like 'See you again sometime!' Ed.) For me, my host families, people who I have gone and stayed with then when I changed schools, the Northern Hemisphere students, and now that it's all starting to come to an end I find myself wondering will I ever see half of these amazing people again. And I think I already know the answer YES! I have made so many friends for life here, especially in my new school and now I have 3 new families in Europe, and I'm thinking that maybe I should have been born in Europe! I love it here so much! The people who you meet while on exchange are what makes your year so incredible! I'm really going to miss everyone I have met here. Of course I'm looking forward to coming home to see everyone in Australia, but I'm not looking forward to saying all my final goodbyes here... for a few years at least anyway! I definitely want to come back!

Plus I don't want to lose my French now that I finally have in almost perfect!

*Esther*

**Greg – It's amazing!**

**Greg Rulfs** reporting for  
**Surfers Paradise West**  
Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - November,  
2007

*Location:* - Mazatlan A.C  
Rotary Club, Mexico

It's amazing how fast last month went and that now its December and people are counting down the days until Christmas. Early this month all the exchange students from a city that's close to here came down and spent a weekend. On the Saturday we took a trip on a boat for a tour around the islands at the southern end of the city. It was a really nice day and it was something I hadn't done before so I really enjoyed it. After that we spent the afternoon on an island playing soccer, swimming and eating. (Was that the only place you could find? How boisterous were you all? Ed.)

On Sunday we all participated in a Rotary event that one of the clubs organised which was this bike ride down the entire city. I'm not really sure what it was for but it involved about 60 people biking through the city with a police escort to the other end of the city where we had breakfast. It was pretty fun but hot and a lot of riding. After we had eaten all the students went and spent the afternoon on the beach again which was a lot of fun. (Greg, you had me worried there, when you said: - 'After we had eaten all the students...' I was starting to think how we'd explain all this to the parents! Ed.) I enjoyed the weekend because it was the first time I'd been able to meet all the students around here. The following weekend was a big rotary event to raise money for a rotary project. I spent all day cooking meat, heating tortillas and making quesadillas and I was pretty tired after about 5 hours without a break but it was fun. Also this month was a big Rotary conference that I only

got home from at 4.30 this morning. It was a conference for all the Rotary students in the country which was pretty incredible. I think there were about 600 students from all over the world there. It was a pretty unreal experience spending 5 days getting to know people from countries all over the world. At the end of it I'm felt feeling a little bit sad that I'll be leaving in a few weeks and that I won't have the opportunity to go through the year and do my exchange with this year's group of people. I guess that's how it is on exchange, at the end you're going to end up missing people no matter when you arrive or when you leave so I'm looking forward to coming to the end of the year full of experiences and happy with the things I've been able to do and the people I've met. (*Excellent – sounds like you've really had a great exchange! Ed.*)

*Greg*

### Karen Anna – too much to write!



**Karen Anna Braak** reporting for **Brunsbüttel Rotary Club, Germany**

*Dateline:* - November, 2007

*Location:* - Warwick Evening Rotary Club, Australia

(*Karen's reason for nothing in her November report! Ed.*) Tooooo many... way too much to write it down. Actually I'm always on the go

*Karen*

### Maya – went camping!



**Maya Nakamura** reporting for **Yokkaichi Rotary Club, Japan**

*Dateline:* - November, 2007

*Location:* - Yamba Rotary Club, Australia

I went camping with my host family to Washpool National Park. I walk along in the forest and had swim in the creek. I also joined the Year10's excursion to Sydney and Canberra.

I visited many places such as Parliament House, National Museum, Australian War Memorial, Harbour Bridge, Paddy's Markets etc.

*Maya*

### Megan – a travelling went!



**Megan Parmenter** reporting for **Murwillumbah Central Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - November, 2007

*Location:* - Colfontaine-Borinage Rotary Club, South Africa

I went to Paris with Rotary and saw the Eiffel tour, and then my mum came and we went to Denmark, Germany, Austria, Budapest, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Switzerland. (*Wow! Ed.*)

*Megan*

### Samuel – the commentator screams!



**Samuel Brown** reporting for **Grafton Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - November, 2007

*Location:* - Butanta Rotary Club, Brazil

A skilled attacker swerves around on defender, pivots to beat another, balances himself before launching a missile off his boot headed for the top corner of the goal, despite the keeper's wild leap and flailing arms he never stood a chance. As the ball hits the back of the net many things take place simultaneously. Inside the stadium the attacker runs to the corner post before being swamped by his teammates, the stadium shakes as forty thousand people scream, shout, hug and even let off fireworks. On the television the commentator screams "GGGGGGOOOOOOAAAAAAAAAALLLLLLL!" stopped only by a lack of oxygen left in his lungs, as is tradition in Latin America. (*Samuel – you nailed that one! You definitely have to hear that*)

*cry to make you breathless!* Ed.) Around the city fireworks can be heard going off and car horns toot throughout the streets. Some people on the sidewalks hide their shirts for fear of the other team supporters seeking retribution. I sit and enjoy a moment when in an often fragile country people from all walks of life are brought together in joy or sorrow.

When it comes to national obsessions I cannot think of one stronger than Brazil's obsession with football. Many may say that Australia loves there sport than any other country but no country loves a single sport as much as Brazil does football and with this passion has come amazing success. With five World Cups, Brazil is histories most decorated football nation. Having been substantially involved in three of them and with 1280 career goals, Brazils Pelé is undoubtedly the greatest football player ever. Brazil attacking midfielder Kaká is currently ranked the best player in the world, having succeeded another Brazilian Ronaldinho. Brazil are also the current world number 1 team in men's and the under supported Brazilian woman's team were runners up at the 2007 Woman's World Cup. Even their most hated rivals respect Brazil's record as the greatest football nation in history.

Football in Brazil runs a lot deeper than this success on the pitch though. In Brazil football is the culture. More or less every child male or female, rich or poor will learn proper technique to kick a ball. At every gathering of friends a ball will inevitably emerge and become part of the fun. Every person has a favourite team and everyone is judged by the team they cheer for, even if they know nothing about the team. Oh and did I mention that Brazil stops when the international team plays. Many workplaces even put up big screens to allow their workers easy viewing. Elections that are held in the years of World Cups are often won or lost due to the performance of the national team.

Football is a mini economy for Brazil, in some year one of their biggest exports will be football players moving from Brazil to the highly cashed international clubs in Europe, Asia and even Australia. The amount of money made from

shirt and memorabilia sales is astonishing and the TV rights are like a gold mine.

Though once again football culture runs even deeper, this time to a vein even more important. Football unites Brazil, like nothing else can unite a country and provide hope to even the most impoverished people. The many stories of players and their families escaping poverty through playing football are uplifting to all who hear them. My host father who was a professional footballer for ten years is testament to this, from a very poor migrant single parent family to a comfortable living in an apartment with a very nice job selling insurance. He owes a lot of it to the contacts he made when playing football. Football also provides an escape for many of the impoverished, it only took one trip into a favela with my father for his volunteer job of teaching football to the children who live there to see that through football these children can escape their sad, often very hard lives and enjoy this simple rush of kicking a ball and running around as carefree as the wind. In Brazil once you are on the pitch nothing matters except a little round ball, the huge social problems faced by poor Brazilians, the massive amounts of corruption in the government, the lack of proper shelter for many people and the pressures faced by those who have escaped poverty to stay above and keep working away from where they were. All this is whipped from ones being, replaced by a single desire to do what it takes to get the small white ball into the goal at the other end of the field. It is the ultimate equalizer.

As for me, I have played football here and can attest first hand to the natural flair and talent of Brazilians, having been skirted around a few more times than I would have liked. Despite this their passion for football is catchy and I continue to practice and slowly improve. I have even found myself thinking of myself playing the beautiful game, as they call it, instead of rugby when I get back to Australia.

*Samuel*



**Anna – my month!**

**Anna Mayr** reporting for  
**Wien Gloriette Rotary  
Club, Austria**

*Dateline:* - December,  
2007

*Location:* - Ballina on  
Richmond Rotary Club,  
Australia

I went to the Outbound and Inbound Weekend at Tyalgum Ridge. (*Wow! – Don't stretch yourself now! Ed.*)

*Anna*

**Billie – Wow, it's December!**

**Billie Mertens** reporting for  
**Tamborine Mountain  
Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - December,  
2007

*Location:* - Verviers  
Rotary Club, Belgium

Wow so it's December already finding it hard to believe that a year that I thought would seem like a lifetime has flown by and I am now dreading the thought of saying goodbye to all of the amazing friends and families I have here!! When we leave Australia yes it is sad but at the same time it's exciting because we are off to explore the world and we know that we will be seeing all our friends and family in a year and although that seems like a very long time in reality it really isn't, however when we leave our fabulous host countries we really have no idea when we will be back, when we will get to see our friends and our new families again and that is oh soooo much harder. We can only say thank-you to technology which makes it that little bit easier to stay in contact even for those of us who are too slack to write letters by hand or mail msn is GREAT!!! So now I am off to make the most of what little time I have left in my own little world before coming home and growing up!!! (*You may be surprised that you've*



*accomplished that already, without really noticing! Ed.)*

Bisous à tout

*Billie*

**Esther – doesn't want to leave!**

**Esther Crothers** reporting for **Grafton  
Midday Rotary Club,  
Australia**

*Dateline:* - December,  
2007

*Location:* - Marennes/  
Oleron Rotary Club,  
France



This month my host family took me to Pau for the weekend to see my host brother who is studying business commerce there. So we started our Christmas shopping there. We then we to Biarritz for the day to have a look around there, with its beautiful beaches and real waves. It was freezing and there were still at least 20 surfers because the surf was up. (*I bet that they were all wearing warm wet-suits! Ed.*)

I had my last days of school this month which was really sad. But my class were lovely and bought me a present and took me out to lunch. The friendships I have made have been excellent. Also the newspaper of the region came to my class and interviewed us about my stay and asked me to prepare a little article to put in the newspaper which was cool so now everyone knows I'm here and am leaving so my last few weeks have been really hectic.

**CHRISTMAS IN FRANCE:** - Wow! Here it works a little different they have a huge dinner and open all the presents on Christmas Eve. Dinner included caviar, and champagne, oysters and salmon, quail and special potatoes, and a magnificent dessert, each course served with its only special wine. We opened all our presents, which my host family were very generous, and made my Christmas away from home just as amazing. I even had a big pile of presents! Then I attended my first ever catholic and first church service in France. Christmas Day we all slept in as the excitement of the presents early Christmas

morning doesn't exist here and it was my first Christmas without Santa, then we had a huge Lunch... Caviar again, the Snails (love them) and oysters then the big turkey and roast vegetables, cheese and Grande dessert, again all with their certain wines. Just a lazy afternoon with the family after all that eating before we ate again! This time foie grass (goose liver pate) but that was all as none of us were very hungry after lunch and the night before. In my region of France the traditional food for Christmas is the Oysters and Foie Grass. I don't think I have ever eaten so much in my life!

**NEW YEARS:** - For New Years I went to Strasbourg with a friend and his family, where I went to church for a second time, except this time it was an African Evangelical Congregation where I was the only white person and was surrounded by people speaking in tongues and praying out loud crying and singing. An interesting experience to say the least! For New Years Eve the fireworks are amazing all private. Strasbourg being close to Germany they follow German tradition of setting them off to ward off all the bad things that happened last year to not return in the new year so the whole day of New Years Eve they are randomly going off then at midnight for nearly 2 Hours the whole sky as far as you can see is a mass of colour which continues randomly all night and New Years Day. It was amazing.

Well then I returned to Pont L'Abbe D'Arnoult and started all my goodbyes it's really sad. I have met so many amazing people and I really don't want to leave.

*Esther*

### Jordan – American Culture into Australia!



**Jordan LaPoint** reporting for **Manistee-Sunrise Rotary Club, USA**

*Dateline:* - December, 2007

*Location:* - Ballina Rotary Club, Australia

On the 26th of November I introduced a little bit of American Culture into Australia. On Sunday the 26th, with the help of my host mom, I made Thanksgiving Dinner for my second host mom and dad, first host mom and dad, my 3 host brothers and their partners and for my second host aunt and uncle. It was a great bonding experience for my host mom and I. We started to make dinner at 10 am on Sunday and didn't stop until 6pm. I made a 5.5 Kilo turkey, stuffing from scratch, (*I've always looked for that on the supermarket shelves, but have never found any of that particular stuffing! Ed.*) Cheesy Potatoes, Green Bean Casserole, Candied Yams, Corn, Jell-O salad and 2 different kinds of Pumpkin Pie. It was a great day and evening. Everybody loved it. My favourite part of Thanksgiving dinner is the leftovers for the next week. Unfortunately for me, there were NO LEFTOVERS! I guess that is a good thing though, that means everybody liked it. I would also like to add that I am having the time of my life being an exchange student and I can't believe that I have been in Australia for just over 5 months now. It is going by so fast.

*Jordan*



**Josephine – another month is over!**

**Josephine Hohrein**  
reporting for **Mainz 50 Nord**  
**Rotary Club, Germany**

*Dateline:* - December,  
2007

*Location:* - Grafton  
Midday Rotary Club,  
Australia

And another month is over... I get the feeling the time goes by faster now... it is already the middle of the Australian summer!

This month started with the Rotary Christmas Camp at Murwillumbah and this time there were not only the Inbounds, but also the new Outbound, who leave in January, and even a few Rebound were there. We had a question time when the Outbound could ask us all the things they wanted to know about their exchange country... that was really exciting for me because not long ago I was in the same situation and ask the Inbounds in Germany all my questions! And now I am one of the Inbounds... only a few months later!!

We also heard a lot about how it is to come back after the year... in Germany that was not interesting for me because it was just ages away but now I am actually on exchange and that makes it much more real that you change during the year and that it might cause problems to fit back into the old life... but I hope it won't be too hard for me!

The next big thing this month was the School excursion to Heron Island at the Great Barrier Reef! It was just amazing! All the colourful fish and the coral!! We went snorkelling every day and I even saw a few turtles. But the scariest experience was the swim with the sharks underneath me!! They were only small sharks but still sharks!!! A few students got bored after a few snorkels but I loved it and went every single time! And then there was Christmas of course... my first Christmas in summer!! My host family and I went with many other families to the beach for the day and had a lamb on the spit! It was a great day and I must say a hot Christmas can be really nice, too. (*What a really great way to eat lamb! Ed.*)

For New Year to the farm of friends of my host family and had a really nice party there.

I can't say I wasn't home sick at all. Of course I missed my family during the Christmas time and especially because I missed three big Family celebrations in Germany this month... my dad's 50th birthday, my grandpa's 85th birthday and because this is not enough I also missed my grandparents 50th wedding anniversary as well...

Well I am having a great time here so I guess it is just fair that they have a good time, too! This was a great and very fast month!

*Josephine*

**Louis – went to the beach!**

**Louis Pinet** reporting for **La Rochelle** Rotary Club,  
France

*Dateline:* - December,  
2007

*Location:* - Tamborine  
Mountain Rotary Club,  
Australia

Beach during the holiday. (*Louis, I'm pleased that you're out there having fun, and not ruining it by sitting inside and writing a big report! Ed.*)

*Louis*

**Sofie – a great five months!**

**Sofie Bertholdson**  
reporting for **Örebro Västra**  
Rotary Club, Sweden

*Dateline:* - December,  
2007

*Location:* - Alstonville  
Rotary Club, Australia

I've had a great five months in Australia. Even though I live in a relatively small place, I've been up to a lot of fun and the people here is unbelievable nice and caring.

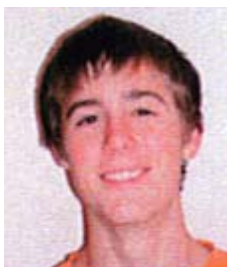
I've been down to Grafton a fair few times, in Byron Bay I'm always having a good time but taking a drive to the Gold Coast is my favourite.

My tries on the surfboard haven't been that successful but extremely fun. I've also been waterskiing and windsurfing. Once a week I'm playing touch footy which is something I've never done before but enjoy doing. Though I miss playing European handball which not many even seems to have heard of, but instead I've learnt new sports I've never heard of before. *(That sort of evens things out somewhat, doesn't it? Ed.)*

Christmas is getting closer and I'm excited. I can't imagine a Christmas without snow, even less one with around 35deg. *(And that's above zero, not below! Ed.)* And even though I miss my friends and family a bit I definitely don't miss the cold and I'm having a great time in Australia.

*xxxxx Sofie*

### Tobias – my last concert!



**Tobias Niederberger** reporting for ?? Rotary Club, Switzerland

*Dateline:* - December, 2007

*Location:* - Nerang Rotary Club, Australia

The month started with the YEP camp in Tyalgum. It was good to meet all the other Inbounders again and meet all the Outbounders leaving in January. Then on the following Monday I moved to Ken and Denise Payne's place where also Tamy from Brazil stays at the moment.

On the 15th December, I had my last concert here in Australia with the Gold Coast Philharmonic Orchestra. It was a very nice event and to my special pleasure, Grahame Ward a Rotarian from my host club attended it.

From the 20th to the 23rd of December Mads, Bastien and Ben all other Inbounders visited Tamy and me. We had a great time together with shopping, going to the beach and just relaxing.

On Christmas day we first opened all our presents and then had 20 people for lunch. It was a great day. *(Tobias, don't you think that eating twenty people for lunch is a bit excessive? Ed.)*

On the 27th of December, Bastien moved in as well. Now we are three exchange students staying at Ken and Denise's place. We are having a great time together.

But it wasn't long until we had visitors again. On the 31st of December Ati and Katrine visited and stayed for New Year.

*Tobias*

### Aidan – experiencing a different culture!



**Aidan May** reporting for Mudgeeraba Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Riom Rotary Club, France

It is hard at first making friends and finding your way but as time goes on it gets easier, and I suspect it will only get easier to make friends and socialize as I learn the language. It is a great thing experiencing a different culture, and weather! I am having a great time so far. *(Aiden, that's one of the special things about being on exchange, it's exciting and different! Ed.)*

*Aidan*

### Anita – this place is foreign!



**Anita Knight** reporting for Coomera Valley Rotary Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Alphaville-Santana de Parnaiba Rotary Club, Brazil

After being here for only a couple of days you do often and every now and then get a good dosage of home sickness, however I believe that is only because this place is foreign and for the time being you are in the most awkward and

uncomfortable stage but along with time things start to become familiar and routine will start to happen. (*Yup, that sounds like the start of a typical exchange! Ed.*) It definitely helps to keep things in perspective of how fast a year will travel and always keeping in the back of your mind that once you are home you are home! No going back – at least until you can afford to. I am excited about the future of being in this country and all the people I have met and will get to meet along with the relationships I will form. Soon enough this place will be just like home.

*Anita*

### Aysha – wit in a foreign language!



**Aysha Woods** reporting for **Ballina Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - La Rochelle Rotary Club, France

For the last few weeks I have been trying to master the art of wit in a foreign language, I still have a lot to learn but I've got the basics down pat I think. I have made heaps of friends at my new school, and surprisingly easily too, for the moment I am exotic and different and interesting... that and everyone keeps thinking that I'm German for some reason, apparently I speak French with a Deutch accent, go figure. (*Hey, whatever works! Ed.*) I'm enjoying this temporary celebrity, and trying to meet as many new people while it lasts, but the group that I seem to have migrated to is full of kooky 'art kids' with crayons through their earlobes and cut up socks for mittens, so it seems that I am universally evicted from 'the cool group' and I don't think I've ever had so much fun.

It feels very strange for me to be back at school, I thought I was free forever, but alas I've been brought back. And as it is still kind of difficult for me to talk, I am forced to shut-up for once and watch and listen. French teenagers appear to be exactly the same as Australian ones, except they're all heaps skinnier. They have inside jokes

and the same intonations, they play with their food at lunch time and they jump on each other for fun. It's Aus, but colder. I went to a friend's 18th last week, and if I zoned out and ignored their accents, it was just like being at home again.

I have been busy telling them all about how down under we ride kangaroos to school, and because it is summer all the time, everyone walks around in their swimmers all day (we Googled 'Byron Bay' to confirm this) and that every native animal will probably try to kill you if you go near it - especially drop bears, they're the worst. Basically just confirming all their suspicions about this strange land, with every intention of correcting these lies sometime in the near future. (*Egads, France may never be the same after you leave! Ed.*)

All up I am enjoying the new freedoms and responsibilities of being in a foreign country, I'm trying to conform and blend in, adapting, and so far I've only had 2 times when a mistranslation has got me into trouble (both with a cocky waiter who I'll probably never see again.) (*I've always found that a plate of spaghetti tipped over the waiter's head gets their attention – but don't try this at home! Ed.*)

France is amazing. No intention of coming home for a loooong time.

*Aysha*

### Bastien – so many leeches!



**Bastien Chevaucher** reporting for **Fliers Rotary Club, France**

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Southport North/Kirra Currumbin Rotary Club, Australia

We went to a camp, who was very good. I think the best thing during this camp was to across the river. A few people fell and also me. It was very funny.

We did also with Mass and Martin, a few rapids, and was very funny and hurting at the



end, but it was good, but the worth was when we got out of the river, so many leeches!

*Bastien*

### Björgvin – had a great time!



**Björgvin Gunnarsson**  
reporting for **Olafsforour**  
Rotary Club, Iceland

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Kirra  
Currumbin Rotary Club,  
Australia

6 months have flown by. It is going so fast that no one that has ever been on an exchange, can imagine how fast the time goes. So far of this year I've done a lot of things and I have changed a lot.

In February I met up with all the exchange students again. It was such a great feeling to meet all these kids again. I couldn't imagine how long it was since I'd met them and how much I missed them. Those 5 days were great. Highlights of the trip was definitely the bushwalk that took two days. Everything we wanted with us, we had to carry. It was not a long walk, shorter than we intended since one of the students dislocated her knee. Really sad, but these things happen on bushwalks. Someone is meant to get hurt. We found ourselves a camping spot and we camped there overnight. It was great being out in the wild. No electricity, no toilets and no showers. Only hygiene we had was the filthy water in the river. I have to say, the color of the river was filthy brown, but it was our only drinking water so we just had to suck it up and drink it. Our stove was the campfire that we made flame-grilled sausages was our dinner along with brown water. *(The brown water sounds like some gravies that I'd eaten! Sound like it was alright though! Ed.)*

It didn't really matter what happened, or what we did. We had a great time. I think every student enjoyed this camp. It wasn't easy, but it was fun.

*Björgvin*

### Courtney – caught a train!



**Courtney Place** reporting  
for **Burleigh** Rotary Club,  
Australia

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Erfurt Rotary  
Club, Germany

Caught train to Fulda for camp, got to meet 20 other exchange students. *(Wow*

*Courtney, I don't know if I can keep up with the excitement! Ed.)*

*Courtney*

### Daniel – Japan is going off!



**Daniel Varela** reporting for  
**Runaway Bay** Rotary Club,  
Australia

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Gifu North  
Rotary Club, Japan

Japan is going off. Coming here was one of the best decisions I've made. In the beginning I was a little hesitant but now I'm loving it. My host parents have allowed me more freedom and I am now able to use the public transport system to go anywhere. Japanese kids are very friendly once you get to know them properly and show that you are trying to communicate in Japanese. I have been hanging out with Japanese kids every weekend and I'm loving it. Every single kid says "hi" to me all the time, no matter what grade or if ever even seen them before. Karaoke here in Japan is the biggest attraction for high schoolers. There's a karaoke place on every corner and a lot more fun than they sound. *(Does this meant that when you get back, you'll try out for 'Australia has Talent!' Ed.)*

*Daniel*



**Ella – my adventure in Sweden!**

**Ella Horton** reporting for  
**Kirra Currumbin/Burleigh**  
**Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Ljungskile  
Rotary Club, Sweden

Two weeks have now passed since I left my home on the sunny Gold Coast to embark on an adventure in my host country of Sweden. During this time, I have had to adjust to not only the freezing climate, foreign language and 9-hour time difference, but have had to get used to a completely new way of life. It has truly been an emotional experience. I have laughed for hours, yet I have cried bucket loads of tears. In such a short space of time, I have seen things I only ever dreamt of and met so many amazing people truly interested in me and the great country I have left behind. Sweden has given me so many wonderful opportunities and challenged me in a variety of situations. Each day has been unique and I am slowly learning to live for the moment! I am so excited to be here and look forward to experiencing what will no doubt be the best year of my life! (*Sounds like a good start to the exchange year to me! Ed.*)

Below is a summary of what I have done over the past few weeks:

20th January 2008 – Today I left Australia from Brisbane airport at 11:55pm along with approximately 15 other exchange students and our two flight leaders, Ron and Marjorie Goward. Goodbyes were thankfully kept short and it wasn't long until we were on our way to Sweden.

21st January 2008 - It took the group close to 30 hours before we arrived at our final destination, Göteborg airport. Here I was met by my host dad, Mårten, and my counsellor, Jan. By this time I was completely and utterly exhausted but managed to be bright and chirpy during the 1-hour drive to Ljungskile. When we arrived at my host family's house it was around 8:30pm and I was so excited to meet everybody. My host mum Ann, host brother Kristoffer and host sister Stina were inside waiting for me and I was greeted with big warm hugs from all. We

then had dinner and I was shown to my room. I went to bed feeling safe and relieved. I had finally made it to Sweden!!!

22nd January 2008 – The time difference between Australia and Sweden meant I woke up bright and early to the sounds of everyone getting ready for work and school. I spent the morning putting away my things and then made myself breakfast (vegemite on toast!!). Mårten had the day off work and offered to drive me around Ljungskile and then to the nearby city of Uddevalla, which I accepted enthusiastically. I was tired but anxious to discover where I would be living for the next 12 months. Ljungskile turned out to be the most beautiful village and I fell in love with it straight away. In Uddevalla Mårten took me to a restaurant for lunch and then let me wander around the city while he was at work.

23rd January 2008 – Today my counsellor Jan took me to meet with the principal of the high school I will attend in Uddevalla. I had to catch the train into Uddevalla by myself, which was more scary than exciting, but managed to arrive on time and in one piece. Speaking to the principal was really good as we decided on what subjects I would take and when I would start. I was put into the science program, which basically means I take Chemistry, Physics, Maths, English and special Swedish lessons with the other exchange students. We also decided that it would be best if I waited until I returned from language camp to begin classes.

24th January 2008 – Allie, a Rotary Exchange Student from Canada, had come over to visit my host family (who were her previous host family) the night before and invited me to attend one of their language classes before I officially started school. I agreed to meet her at the train station in Uddevalla at 1.00pm so she could show me the way to the class. Unfortunately, I got on a train going in the opposite direction and ended up in Svenshågen. I had to wait for over an hour and a half for a train to Uddevalla and ended up missing the lesson altogether. When I got home after my busy day travelling, my host brother Kristoffer took me to a shopping centre to buy a mobile phone. (*Excellent, retail therapy works every time! Ed.*)

25th January, 2008 – Today I had to leave early to get a bus to Göteborg where I met with two other Australian exchange students on their way to language camp as well. From there we had to get on a train to Baryosa and then catch another train to our final destination, Ronneby. Unfortunately, the weather was really stormy and a tree had fallen on the train tracks, meaning we had to get on a bus to get past it. This caused us to miss our train from Baryosa and I found myself waiting for nearly two hours in the freezing cold. When we finally arrived in Ronneby, we were taken to the hostel we were staying in and introduced to the other exchange students (3 from Australia, 2 from New Zealand and 2 from Brazil). I was then given my first pizza in Sweden and ate the whole thing!

26th – 31st January, 2008 – I had the best time at language camp! While we were there we attended Swedish classes and learnt some basic phrases, how to count and tell the time and worked on our pronunciation. We also went to the local high school in Ronneby where we met with various English classes and spoke to them about our respective countries. My favourite parts of the trip were attending my first Rotary meeting in Sweden where we all presented a short speech about ourselves in Swedish, visiting a church dating back to the 12th century and eating out at some really nice Swedish restaurants. I also achieved a personal goal when I drank my first ever coffee. It was loaded with sugar and milk, but I still drank it!! I left Ronneby late in the afternoon on the 31st January and arrived in Ljungskile at around 10:00pm. I was glad to be back and was already looking forward to starting school the following Monday.

1st February 2008 – Today I caught up on some sleep, did a few loads of washing, checked my emails, wrote some postcards and went into town to open a bank account. When my host family arrived home from work and school we had dinner together and watched some television. It was a nice, slow, relaxing day and I went to bed feeling really happy.

2nd February 2008 – I will always remember the 2nd of February 2008 as the day that I saw snow for the first time in my life! I was so excited and could not stop looking out my bedroom

window. I had to wake up early to meet up with Allie (the Rotary Exchange Student from Canada) to catch a bus to Göteborg. Here we met with the other exchange students living in and around Göteborg for lunch. They were all really lovely and invited me into the group with open arms. I bought a warm jacket (finally!) and a 3-month pass for the buses and trains between Ljungskile and Göteborg. I didn't arrive home until around 5:00pm but was in time to have dinner with my host family. My host brother then invited me to meet his friends in Göteborg. I went along and had the best time! It was the first late night I had had since I arrived but really enjoyed meeting some new people my age.

3rd February 2008 – Today I enjoyed a very lazy Sunday morning. I woke up at around 10:00am and spent the next few hours finishing off some postcards and watching television with my host brother. At 2:30pm I went with my host mum and host sister to watch a local theatre group perform their annual show. Even though most of it was performed in Swedish, I really enjoyed it and loved seeing the community of Ljungskile giving it a go! After the show, we went and got some groceries and walked home. I got a few things ready for the next day and had an early night.

4th February 2008 – Today was my first day of school! After trying on a few different outfits, I managed to leave the house ready to face the day. My host brother Kristoffer caught the bus with me at 7:40am and showed me where to get off. My first classes were Physics and Chemistry, which I managed to find after doing approximately 5 laps of the entire school grounds! I met some really nice students who had lunch with me and helped me find my way. Unfortunately, I had a rather horrible introduction to the school lunches in Sweden. Black pudding, a Swedish food made from pig's blood, was on the menu and it was awful! (*Hey, they like their Black Pudding, you like your Vegemite! What's so different? Ed.*) I really did try to eat it as I was quite hungry, but I just couldn't stomach it. At 12.30pm I met Allie at the train station and we walked together to our Swedish lesson (which is in another building).

My Swedish teacher Anna was really lovely and helped me settle in. After class I caught the train home and got ready to attend my first meeting at my sponsor Rotary Club (Ljungskile). The meeting was a lot of fun and I really enjoyed meeting all of the members. To introduce myself to the club officially, I presented a small speech in Swedish and gave the club a banner from my host club of Kirra-Currumbin. It was quite scary presenting the speech but I am really glad I did it. At the meeting I also received my monthly allowance of 600 SEK (approximately AUS \$80).

It is now my bedtime. I hope you have enjoyed reading about what I have done so far in Sweden. I have had such a great time and look forward to sharing my adventures with you again next month.

Hej då!!

*Ella*

### Emmah – I haven't been there yet!



**Emmah Baque** reporting for **Warwick Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline: - January, 2008*

*Location: - Dyrehaven Rotary Club, Denmark*

Frederiksberg Castle- was very beautiful. And Hamlet's castle. Also site seeing around Copenhagen - seeing the Palace and so forth. Ohh and I haven't been there yet - but I'm going to Rome with my class in spring! Yay! (Yay! *Indeed! Ed.*)

*Emmah*



### Josephine – January is over!



**Josephine Hohrein** reporting for **Mainz 50 Nord Rotary Club, Germany**

*Dateline: - January, 2008*

*Location: - Grafton Midday Rotary Club, Australia*

January is over and that means I am already here for six month! Half of my time here is gone!!

And when I look on my calendar for the next few month... there are many thing to come up especially the safari in April. I am looking forward to the other half of the year!

This month started really, really exciting with a ten day holiday in Perth and surroundings!!! That is on the other side of Australia five hours in the plane away! I never thought I would see that much of Australia while I am here but the luck seems to be on my side because my host family took me with them to Perth! (*Just wait till you get to see Australia by bus on Safari! Ed.*) And we saw a lot around there. We rented a car and slept pretty much every night some where else. We went up to the Pinnacles in the North and then back to York, through the wheat belt (hours for hour driving through Wheat fields... that is amazing!), to Wave Rock, down to the white beaches of Esperance, back along the coast through Albany, the valley of the giants (huge trees), Cape Leeuwin (the point where the Pacific and the Indian Ocean meet and also the most south western point of the Australian mainland!), to Margaret River with all its lime stone caves and in the end back to Perth from where we caught the plane back to Brisbane. It was an amazing journey and I am soo glad that I had this possibility!! After a quiet week at home did I go camping with my first host family at Evans Head. We had a few very nice days on the beach even When the weather was a bit wet... we also celebrated Australia Day together! We had a biscuit decorating contest... that means we all decorated biscuits with icing, sprinkles, and many different sweets. The only rule was that it had to be something Australian.

There were biscuits with kangaroos, maps, cricket, snakes and many more Aussie things but the winner was a 3D barbeque with bacon and egg and even a gummy bear T bone steak!! I also heard a few very Australian songs like "Home among the gumtree", "the Redback on the Toilet seat" and "Waltzing Matilda"... It was a really funny day with all sorts of Aussie things and activities!

At the end of the month was the end of the holiday I went back to school.

Now that all the new year 7 students are new at school it is not me anymore who gets lost because now they get lost and I can show them the way to their room!! That is a good feeling. (Cool! Ed.)

*Josephine*

### **Katrine – busy, busy, busy!**



**Katrine Bach** reporting for **Brande Rotary Club, Denmark**

Dateline: - January, 2008  
Location: - Murwillumbah Central Rotary Club, Australia

I play soccer once a week. (I get really tired just thinking about that! Ed.)

*Katrine*

### **Nicole – Wow, what a trip!**



**Nicole Heffernan** reporting for **Murwillumbah Central Rotary Club, Australia**

Dateline: - January, 2008  
Location: - Chimay-Couvin Rotary Club, Belgium

Wow, what a trip here! Full of ups and downs... but totally worth it. I didn't want to be here at all for the first four days or so, but now I am loving every minute of it. The culture is hardly different to that of home. But the language is very difficult, as I can't speak any

French. (Neither can I, so what's the problem? Ed.) I am gradually learning to understand what people are saying. People here eat chocolate for breakfast lunch and dinner! I can't believe it. (And you're complaining; now I can't understand that either! Ed.) I successfully survived taking the bus to school, without any help, that and going to school and knowing nobody! Must go more food to eat. Nicole.

*Nicole*

### **Richard – everything is going great!**



**Richard Boles** reporting for **Southport Rotary Club, Australia**

Dateline: - January, 2008  
Location: - Kremsmünster Rotary Club, Austria

It has been four weeks into this exchange, and everything has been going great. The first major success would of course be the fact that I have arrived. The flights were a killer. After 6 lengthy flights from Brisbane, I finally arrived in the city close to where I will be living a mere 42 hours later. A week of settling in, going to school, creating a whole new life for the year, it all went by so very quickly. Soon enough, I was surrounded by many other exchange students, majority from Australia, but a mix of others from Brazil, New Zealand and Argentina. This interaction, took place of course at the official German Language course.

Two whole weeks of pain and anguish, as each student battled to learn this new language. The classes were 6 hours per day, with free time in the afternoons. Too keep us for total boredom of studying, the exchange students made the fun in the afternoons after class, and on the weekends, where we would tour the local townships, playing games, and hit the town at night. Many friendships have been built for the rest of the year, and when it was over, everyone is looking forward to ski trip which is in a few weeks. After the course, it was back to school, where school friends were all eager to see me again. A slow process takes place at school, as I

have no idea what the teachers are saying. Most of the time, students try to translate for me, but I just teach myself the basics of the language. It has been a great start to this exchange. I have seen and done quite a lot within the first four weeks.

Looking forward to the rest of the year..!

*Richard*

### Ryan – an incredible year!



**Ryan Burton-Ree** reporting for **Stanthorpe Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Braine-le-compte Rotary Club, Belgium

Happy New Year to all!

Well my exchange is nearly coming to an end, it has been the most incredible year of my life. I have had my family here visiting from Australia for the Christmas holidays. We had visited many places throughout Belgium and even going to Paris for four days. I really enjoyed showing them around the place that I have called home for a year, meeting my families and friends. It's going to be difficult to say good bye to my friends and families here, I have made many lifelong friends. I have 3 more days of school left and one more Rotary meeting next week.

I hope that you had a safe and wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year

*Ryan*

### Sophie – is extremely lucky!



**Sophie Hart** reporting for **Glen Innes Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Andenne Rotary Club, Belgium

I am extremely lucky to be staying with my host family, the Bodarts, as they are warm,

friendly and happy people. So far, I have seen more in two weeks than I have in the past year. For the first week of school, I completed work experience at the “Sustainable Energy Conference”, held by the European Commission in Brussels. This was fun and extremely challenging! Though, no doubt a useful experience.

I have travelled with my host family a little through the surrounding district, which is magnificent. After arriving back from Brussels, we jumped in the car and drove to Tignes to go skiing in France. I couldn't have asked for more wonderful first glimpse of snow, I was blown away.

So today was the first ski lesson, a little stopping and turning and general information. After this, it was straight up to 1400 metres with my host family. I have never been so afraid, but it was awesome fun and I lived! The view was so perfect, just like the Paramount advertisement before a movie. Now I just have to rest my bruises, I fell over A LOT! (*Anyone that takes on the sport of a (sometimes) controlled fall down a hillside on two pieces of wood has to expect some sort of souvenirs of the occasion! Ed.*)

Making friends here in Belgium hasn't been so difficult as they are such welcoming people. Their sense of humour is a little like Australian's. I feel that it is very important to make friends here in Belgium, so you get a real feel of the culture and also it would be very lonely here without them!

The first 15 days here have been action packed and I think there is much to look forward to for my year here in Belgium; you will be hearing all about it!

*Sophie*



**Valerie – my whirlwind tour!**

**Valerie Boeraeve** reporting for **Liege-Chaufontaine Rotary Club, Belgium**

*Dateline:* - January, 2008

*Location:* - Glen Innes Rotary Club, Australia

I have been travelling quite a lot during the Holidays. I have been to Brisbane, Caloundra, Coffs Harbour, Lennox Head and Yamba. It was fantastic!

*Valerie*

**Aidan - This is getting better!**

**Aidan May** reporting for **Mudgeeraba Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Riom Rotary Club, France

The only difficulty is the language barrier, which is making it difficult to find friends at school. This is getting better and better each day.

*Aidan*

**Alice - no sleep for 48 hours!**

**Alice Batcheldor** reporting for **Yamba Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Culican Oriente Rotary Club, Mexico

So it's been two weeks since I finally got to Mexico after the longest most gruelling flight I've ever had. My journey involved getting no sleep for 48 hours, getting lost at LAX airport and finally getting on a tiny plane that I was almost sure was going to fall out of the sky, but I still managed to have fun! Mexico is excellent it's so fun and happy with many Fiestas!! The

people are wonderful here especially my host family, they are really nice and welcoming. The language barrier is a little difficult and it is very annoying when you hear your own name but you can't understand what their saying and ten seconds later they start laughing! Though I do have my own personal translator and she tells me what's going on. Many of the students like to teach me Spanish and are very helpful, I'm really grateful for that. (*Excellent, that makes things very easy. Ed.*)

I've been at my school for about 7 days now and I'm finding it a little different from back home. Getting up at 5:45 in the morning is harsh, School starts at 7 and goes till 1 so the afternoon is free. It's very cold in the mornings but unfortunately you can dress very warmly because you know it's going to get hot in the middle of the day. It's supposed to be winter but I'm sweating, it doesn't make sense! The locals have warned me that it gets up to 50 degrees in summer... I can't wait. (*You'll just have to dress in layers! You'll work that out! Ed.*)

In Mexico it's always parties and siestas in the middle of the day, just yesterday I went out to a formal party didn't get to sleep until 3 woke up at 12 and then went back to sleep at 5.

My host family has a last name that I can hardly pronounce (Aguerreberere) and the father and the two sons are all called Hector it gets quite confusing! They are all really nice and they invite me out and I've been to many different things with them. My host mother has also found me some dance, I'm doing hip hop two days a week and she is kind enough to drive me there and pick me up because the public transport over here is quite scary. (*It can't be as bad as Mexico City! Ed.*)

I've been trying new foods over here and I have to say that I am officially in love with fish tacos! (*Wet Burritos! Everything! Yum! Ed.*) And everything is so cheap here (note to self I must buy many shoes!) To say the least I'm loving it here and can't wait to learn the language better!



Hope everyone else is having a great time. Love you all Heaps

Te Amo,

*Alice*

### Anita - it will be glorious!



**Anita Knight** reporting for **Coomera Valley Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Alphaville-Santana de Parnaiba Rotary Club, Brazil

I think the best thing about being on the exchange is learning the language and the satisfaction you receive every time you can understand that little bit more. Sometimes it is frustrating and can get a little boring at times e.g.: the classroom ha-ha but when you can finally make even a little bit of conversation with someone that doesn't speak any of your language it truly is rewarding to be able to communicate to them.

Another thing is the all the different people that you get to meet and how being introduced to one person leads to meeting another and therefore you are always seeing a new face at least every day. I cannot wait until I can speak fluent it will be glorious. (*Atta girl Anita, you'll do well! Ed.*)

*Anita*

### Benoit – I live in Yamba!



**Benoit Malmontet** reporting for **Riom - Chatel-Guyon Rotary Club, France**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Grafton Rotary Club, Australia

I know live in Yamba for 6 weeks and enjoy every single day of it particularly for the beach which is now so close from home!



*Benoit*

### Chantal – Thursday was Fasnacht!



**Chantal Doherty** reporting for **Warwick Sunrise Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Zug-Kolin Rotary Club, Switzerland

I have only been in Switzerland for 2 weeks, but so many challenges have already appeared. I have just completed my first half of the German language course. It was really difficult because there is so much to learn. But I'm really thankful for it because I can understand a lot of what people are saying, like when the train conductor comes up to you and starts yelling at you in German because you have accidentally sat in the 1st class carriage (oops!). (*You could be accused of being a slow learner if that happened more than ten times, He, he, He. Ed.*)

Last Sunday, my host mum, host sister, another exchange student and his host sister took me skiing. I had to join a beginner's class, which consisted of 6 & 5yr old children. It was a little embarrassing because all the mothers were taking photos of their little children in their first skiing lesson; and so was my host mum. But it was fun... Last Thursday was Fasnacht. A huge carnival in Switzerland where everyone dresses up. It is CRAZY!! And it starts at 4am in Luzern. So a friend of mine called Eliza and I dresses up in Australian flags, tattoos, shirts and green and gold leg warmers, and hopped on the train at 3:30am and headed off to Luzern. Fasnacht was so much fun! (*Chantal, should I delete the reference to the Tattoo? I'd hate for YEP Committee to read about that! Ed.*)

*Chantal*



**Courtney – What a busy month!**

**Courtney Place** reporting for **Burleigh Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Erfurt Rotary Club, Germany

Went to the Zoo with host sister. (*Well, at least it's succinct! Ed.*)

*Courtney*

**Daniel – Went to Nagoya!**

**Daniel Varela** reporting for **Runaway Bay Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Gifu North Rotary Club, Japan

Went to Nagoya city and had an excellent time there. It is a very beautiful city. A highlight was going to the photo booth in the city, where I saw a lot of interestingly dressed people and had a good time.

*Daniel*

**Ella – I have adjusted!**

**Ella Horton** reporting for **Kirra Currumbin/Burleigh Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Ljungskile Rotary Club, Sweden

I have been in Sweden for over a month now and can't believe how fast the time has gone. I am having a wonderful time here, now that I have adjusted to my new life! I am feeling really settled and comfortable as a member of my new family and am really keen to get to know them

even better as time goes on. (*Egads Ella, do you mean you actually paid attention during the briefing camps back here in Aus. Good Girl! Ed.*) I am also starting to make friends at school, which has been one of the biggest challenges for me so far. You will probably notice in my report that I have been spending a lot of time with my friend Allie, an exchange student from Canada. One of the negative aspects of living in a foreign country is how lonely it is, and spending time with Allie, who has already lived here for 7 months, allows me to talk about my feelings with someone who truly understands what I am going through. I really do hope that I will spend time with Swedish teenagers eventually (*That will really help with learning the language! Ed.*), but in the early stages of my exchange I am content with the friendship I have found in Allie. Another thing that I have found especially challenging here is learning Swedish. I often feel that there is an expectation that I will learn to speak Swedish fluently, and it sometimes seems like such a daunting task. I have to keep reminding myself that it has only been just over a month and I shouldn't put such a great deal of pressure on myself! My Swedish is coming along really well though and I am slowly beginning to understand and speak basic sentences. I knew before I came to Sweden that being an exchange student would be challenging, but they are good challenges and I feel that I have grown so much in this short time because of them.

Below is a summary of what I have done over the past month:

5th February – Today was my second day of school and it was just as scary as the first. I am currently in two classes and today I met my 2nd grade class whom I attend majority of my lessons with. They were really friendly and welcomed me with open arms! It was a really long day and I didn't finish until 4pm that afternoon. I was really glad when I got home, but soon found myself anticipating the next day at school!

6th February – School again! It is so strange to be back in the pattern of waking up at a set time and attending classes, but I am sure I will get used to it. Today was another very long day and I didn't finish until 4.00pm. I then walked

to my host mum's dental clinic, which is about a five-minute walk from school, where I waited for her to finish for the day. She then drove me home and on the way we picked up ingredients for dinner, which I was to cook!!! I had decided a few days earlier that I would make a nice meal for the family, to show my appreciation for everything they were doing for me. I had looked through countless recipes and finally decided on Spaghetti Carbonara, Garlic Bread and Pavlova for dessert. It didn't turn out very well, but I still made the effort and most of it got eaten!!

7th February – Thankfully school finished a bit earlier today, at 3:00pm. After school I walked to Allie's house (my friend from Canada) who is currently living with my next host family. I had not met them yet and was going to their house to eat dinner. Allie and I decided to cook dinner for them, this time Spaghetti Carbonara and Garlic Bread again! It was really nice to meet my next family, considering I will be living with them for 3 months. After dinner, Allie, Allie's host sister Elsa, and I went to the movies where we watched a French movie with Swedish subtitles. What an experience that was! I didn't understand much and trying to read one foreign language while listening to another proved way too difficult. Eventually I settled on just watching the pictures on the screen!

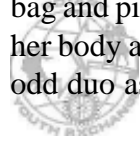
8th February – Today I finished school at 2:00pm and felt really happy as I had successfully attended classes at a Swedish high school for one whole week. After school I caught the train straight home with Allie as we had to get ready for a birthday party for one of the other exchange students in Göteborg. The theme for the party was the Sixties and Seventies and after much deliberation, we decided we would go as a homeless man and his trash (from the Sixties of course). I know this sounds like a strange thing to dress up as, but we had limited costumes to choose from and really wanted to be 'original'!! As the homeless man, I wore ripped clothes, a beanie and drew thick black hair all over my face. I actually ended up looking quite authentic! As my trash, Allie wore a rubbish bag and pinned various items of rubbish all over her body and in her hair. We sure looked like an odd duo as we travelled to Göteborg but it was

fun to do something so spontaneous! The birthday party was a lot of fun and it was really nice to get the opportunity to get to know the other exchange students better. Kirsten, the birthday girl, had also invited some of her Swedish friends from school and I really enjoyed meeting them as well. I had such a good night and the only bad thing was trying to wash off my beard before I went to sleep!! (*Hey, at least you didn't have to shave it off! Ed.*)

9th February – After a late night, we all woke up at around 10:00am and made breakfast. We left the house at around 1:00pm and had a fikka (coffee break) in Göteborg central and visited Göteborg library. I took the train home with Allie late in the afternoon and that night, had dinner with my host mum Anne's cousin and his wife.

10th February – Today I had a really quiet day and started preparing for my second week at school. Now that I am living as an exchange student, it is my responsibility to take care of myself and ensure everything is organised. It is a weird feeling to have such great independence, however, I do miss my mum doing my laundry for me!! (*Ella, do you think if I cut out the bit about you doing your own laundry, then your mum will never find out? Let me know! Ed.*)

11th -15th February – My second week at school was not as scary as the first, but I still found it to be quite a challenge. You see, during the first week of school, everyone is really interested in who you are and where you are from and talking to people is easy because they all have so many questions. In the second week, however, it becomes your responsibility to talk to them as the novelty of you being there has started to wear off. It was hard to engage in conversations with the students at first but as the week continued I definitely started to find it easier. The highlight of my week at school was playing European Handball in physical education, subsequently being introduced to the communal showers, and eating meatloaf and potatoes TWICE (for lunch at school and then for dinner at home) in the one day. Apart from school, I attended a Rotary meeting on Monday, started going to the gym in Uddevalla with Allie and met up with two exchange students for dinner in Göteborg to celebrate Valentine's Day.



16th – 23rd February – This week I went with my host family to Norway!! We left early on Saturday morning and didn't arrive until 6:30pm that night. In Norway we stayed in a holiday home belonging to one of my host family's friends in the small town of Bjorli, which is about a five-hour drive from the country's capital, Oslo. While we were in Norway, we skied at the nearby ski fields, which I found both challenging and enjoyable. It was my first time skiing and I was very nervous at first. The first day we went skiing, I tried downhill skiing and endured a few painful tumbles. After that experience, I decided that for the next two days I would go cross-country skiing instead. I really loved cross-country skiing as it gave me the opportunity to see some of the Norwegian environment, but I did find it really tiring. I was quite proud of myself as I managed to complete the 10km cross-country track twice; once with my host Mum and once with my host Dad. On the fourth day of skiing I decided to brave downhill skiing once more. This time, however, I took the big ski-lift up to the very top of the main slope where the view was absolutely magnificent. While at the top we ate a picnic lunch, which was such an experience! Of course, what goes up must come down, and the time for me to ski to the bottom eventually arrived. To say I was petrified would be a gross understatement, but I couldn't get out of it and had to do it. I started off slow and once I felt confident enough, allowed myself to speed up. I fell over more times than I can remember, but to reach the bottom in one piece was a personal accomplishment and I felt great! The next day I went back to cross-country skiing, but this time did a different track. Although this was a shorter distance (8km), it had many hills and left me feeling completely and utterly exhausted. On our last day skiing in Norway, I was feeling quite battered and bruised so decided to do the 10km cross-country track again. It was snowing really heavily that day and the track wasn't very smooth, but I still enjoyed myself. I had so much fun in Norway and really felt that I bonded with my host sister, Stina. At the house we stayed in, there was no television, so at night time we would often play cards, go in the sauna together or just sit and chat. When the time came for us to leave Norway, the road was far too

slippery and thus too dangerous to drive down. I found this situation to be rather exciting as something like this would never happen in Australia! We ended up leaving the following morning and on the way home visited Lillehammer, the Norwegian city where the 1994 Winter Olympics were held. Norway was an incredible experience but I was so relieved to be home!

24th February – Recovery time began today! I was feeling quite sore and extremely tired from my six days of skiing, so I basically spent the entire day doing absolutely nothing! I did manage, however, to get myself up to go to the gym with my host brother Kristoffer and his friend Gustav. I can't say I did the best workout as I quickly retreated to the gym's sauna!!

25th – 29th February – This week was test week at my usual school, so to keep me busy I attended a different school in Uddevalla where the SPINT program (all classes are taught in English) is based. It was nice to meet some new people and even nicer to actually understand the lessons! I spent most of my time in a 1st grade class (year 10) but visited a 2nd grade class (year 11) a few times during the week. Highlights of my week were presenting a small speech on myself and Australia to the 1st Grade class and going out for lunch with some of my new friends and trying the infamous Kebab Pizza (a very popular pizza in Sweden that sounds strange but is actually really delicious). Although I had another wonderful week, I did have my first official 'bad day'. It was on Tuesday and it started when I slipped over in the mud on my way to school. Luckily I had my gym clothes in my bag which I changed into on the train! In Sweden, especially at high school, what you wear is quite important and turning up in my track pants and an old t-shirt was not quite the impression I wanted to make. The day went on as per usual, until I got on the wrong bus home which went all the way to Göteborg, express!! Luckily, my host parents were there and I got a lift home with them. I am now extra careful when I get on buses so as to not repeat my little adventure!! Luckily the rest of the week went really well and on Friday night I went out



dancing in Göteborg with Allie and her Swedish school friends.

1st March – Today I went shopping in Göteborg with my host sister Stina and Allie. This took most of the afternoon... we are women!! (*And retail therapy always works! Ed.*) That night I went to a birthday dinner with my host family for one of their good friends and afterwards went to a party with Kristoffer. I am really beginning to feel like a part of the family and it means so much to me that they invite to come out with them. It will be so hard to say goodbye when I leave!

2nd March – I have been told that all exchange students put on weight, but I am determined to not be one of them! Even though it is cold outside, I am trying to keep myself active and thought it would be a good idea to do ‘Strandpromenaden’ (the beach walk) which is in Uddevalla. It was a really nice walk with a beautiful view and it was so nice to be out in the fresh air.

3rd March – I went back to school at Östrabo today and was delighted to see that my classmates remembered me after not seeing them for two weeks! Unfortunately they had a Physics test, so I spent the morning replying to emails and going over some Swedish homework. In the afternoon I braved the gym (my legs were still aching after my long walk the previous day) and then had a Rotary meeting in the evening. I find it very difficult to remember everyone’s names at the Ljungskile Rotary club, but it is getting easier every week!

*Ella*



## Emmah – three jars of Nutella!



**Emmah Baque** reporting for **Warwick Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Dyrehaven Rotary Club, Denmark

6 weeks down, three jars of Nutella and everything is great! (*What – no Vegemite! Ed.*)

*Emmah*

## Jordan – having a great time!



**Jordan LaPoint** reporting for **Manistee-Sunrise Rotary Club, USA**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Ballina Rotary Club, Australia

I have been having a great time. I have decided that I want to leave a positive mark on Australia. So I have taken on this thing called the World’s Greatest Shave. It is to raise money for Leukaemia, Lymphoma, and myeloma! I have raised \$100 dollars and it is my first day doing it. It feels great to be doing it. If I raise \$500 dollars I will shave my legs and arms too. I will definitely let you know how it turns out and I will send before and after pictures. (*Promises, promises, where are the photos! Ed.*) If you would like to read more about the World’s Greatest Shave

Go to [www.worldsgreatestshave.com](http://www.worldsgreatestshave.com) !

*Jordan*



**Keeghan – I attended a dinner!**

**Keeghan Silcock** reporting for **Alstonville Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - St Pölten Rotary Club, Austria

During the language course that I am attending, we visited a mountain that was 2,000m tall although the name of it has completely left me. Tomorrow (12th of Feb) I'm going to visit Krems with my host family and then on Wednesday (13th of Feb) I am visiting Vienna, also with my host family.

In January I attended a dinner for me hosted by the St Pölten Rotary club. I had my first Vienna schnitzel! I also attended a German course sponsored by Rotary.

In about 3-4 weeks I will be giving a presentation to my host Rotary club. The exact date hasn't been settled yet.

*Keeghan*

**Martin – I took trips!**

**Martin Aubry** reporting for **Charleroi-Quest Rotary Club, Belgium**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Beaudesert Rotary Club, Australia

*(Martin Aubry didn't have anything to say in his report for the Hopping Mag section (as quite a few other YEP students have done!); this was the only thing worth mentioning out of the rest of his report! Next time, I won't bother looking for something to add to the Hopping Mag! Ed.)*

I took trips to Gold Coast, Brisbane. I visited the Andy Warhol exposition in Brisbane.

*Martin*

**Maya – time passes quickly!**

**Maya Nakamura** reporting for **Yokkaichi Rotary Club, Japan**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Yamba Rotary Club, Australia

I can't believe the time passes quickly as such. It's already 4 months to go!

Last year December, I moved to my 2nd host family. Now I live in the middle of cane farm area, which is very different to last house.

All of the three sons in this family live apart from here (the youngest son Isaac lived in this house for a few weeks after his Exchange trip to Switzerland but now he went off to his uni. I miss him very much). The house is a bit far from the town - means by no public transport - , also pretty far from the beach. Ah well, I'll survive! My host parents are nice people and the place is beautiful.

School is going pretty good. The work is a bit easier than my country's. I once topped my math class and English class. *(Maya, that is excellent! Ed.)* My friends at school became one of the most precious thing. One of them is going to visit me around Christmas which is after I go back to Japan!

In the middle of this month, we had a 6-day camp at Stanthorpe and I had the best time at there so far. It's not just because we shared great time such as visiting sheep shearing place and winery and did camping for Duke of Edinborough Award. It's always nice to welcome new people and talk to them, and I was really happy that now I'm not the only Asian among the Exchange student in this district!! Before this camp, actually I was feeling a bit of awkwardness among the exchange students. It's maybe because I arrived later than those who came in July but after all I was being too shy. And I finally (yes, 'finally') started to open my mind and jump into the circle. *(Excellent! Ed.)* I learned from her smile...

By the way, I used to write heaps of poems and a bit of short stories. I have tried to write



those in English, too, but it's hard when I cannot come up with words. I guess I need more vocabulary to do this.

Now I'm really excited about the Safari in next month... I cannot wait!!

Love you all

*Maya*

### Mindi – I missed my ride!



**Mindi Devine** reporting for **Grafton Midday Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Windsor Rotary Club, USA

I was supposed to attend my first Rotary meeting last week but times got messed up and I missed my ride to the meeting, so tomorrow I will attend my first meeting.

I haven't been on any trips yet. (*That'll change! Ed.*)

*Mindi*

### Nicole - full of ups and downs!



**Nicole Heffernan** reporting for **Murwillumbah Central Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Chimay-Couvin Rotary Club, Belgium

Exchange students rock this world! This month was full of ups and downs, getting sick and homesick, hearing from my parents, they called but I had no idea they were going to. I went to Binche, a famous festival and they throw oranges, apparently it gives you good luck for a year if you catch one. (*And I suppose it's bad luck to get hit by one! Ed.*) I also did a bit of tripping around Brussels, the Market Place was absolutely beautiful. School is boring because I don't understand anything, so I just either try to

interpret what they are saying, or I read a book. French is coming along nicely, but it doesn't help when everyone speaks to you in English! Meeting up with other exchange students is great too, they know and are experiencing similar things to what you are. I can't believe I've been here for 1.5 months already!

*Nicole*

### Richard - some stories to tell!



**Richard Boles** reporting for **Southport Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

*Location:* - Kremsmünster Rotary Club, Austria

After ski camp I will have some stories to tell...

*Richard*

### Severin - the best sport!



**Severin Weber** reporting for **Kyburg Rotary Club, Switzerland**

*Dateline:* - February, 2008

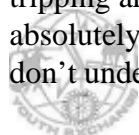
*Location:* - Ashmore Rotary Club, Australia

Rugby, I think that it's one thing what missed my life... but now I can play it every second day. It's probably the best sport that I ever played. The first 2 games were really good, and it's so much fun with my Team friends.

Rotary camp in Stanford, I had so much fun, all the other Exchangees are very nice persons. Special the trips in the bush, which are my favourites ones. My Nickname after this trips was Nature Boy.

School is at the moment really easy, and I fixed time for the library in which I can do my work from Switzerland.

*Severin*



**Sophie - a few challenges!**

**Sophie Hart** reporting for  
**Glen Innes Rotary Club,**  
Australia

*Dateline:* - February,  
2008

*Location:* - Andenne  
Rotary Club, Belgium

This month there have been a few challenges. Most of them involve adaption. Firstly I had to adapt to be able to ski with my host family. At first this was the most frightening thing I have ever done, though soon turned out to be one of my favourites. By the end of the holiday, I skied down some black pistes, down a glacier and even started doing some jumps.

The second challenge was meeting my Rotary club where I was asked to make a speech in French. As I have only been studying French for six weeks this seemed pretty intense for me. But with help from my host family and class I managed to give a presentation that my host club was very appreciative of. The night of the meeting was most enjoyable and I really like my host club.

Overall, this month has been very fun, with a few gatherings of the Rotary students, always an awesome time, school, and then Carnival in my town of Andenne. Not speaking French very well just yet, I seem to find myself sometimes unsure of where I am and what I am doing there. For instance, my host family are very actively involved in the community. The last weekend, was Carnival which I was expecting to observe for the first time ever. On the morning of Carnival I found myself in a costume with a big group of enthusiastic Belgians. Shortly after I found myself in a roofless, bright yellow car, driving down a main street filled with hundreds of people and covered in confetti. So the Carnival I was preparing to observe, I actually found myself "in". And so is the life of an exchange student. (*Expect the unexpected, and have a wonderful time! Ed.*)

All is going extremely well and I am constantly surprised and impressed with the hospitality and kindness shown by the Belgian people. They

are very welcoming people and love to have a good time!

*Sophie*

**Anita - happy Easter!**

**Anita Knight** reporting for  
**Coomera Valley Rotary**  
Club, Australia

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - Alphaville-  
Santana de Parnaiba  
Rotary Club, Brazil

Oi everyone,

It's been a few weeks so here is another update hey... well happy Easter to everyone for a few weeks ago... hope it was enjoyable and fattening!! For my Easter I went with my host family to Minas Gerias which is a neighbouring state to Sao Paulo and we stayed in their grandmother's house for four days and I also met other relatives that lived close by. School has been plodding along doing labs and classes... but now if I really try hard to listen I can sometimes get a few more words or sentences understood. If not I just read my new book which is called the big book of words -mostly for 5 yr olds and under but it has pictures and the word in Spanish English and Portuguese plus an example sentence :) one weekend my neighbours invited me to go with them to a star wars convention in the city. Their they had all the real costumes, sketches and models and was interesting but we all thought it was kinda small for an exposition especially for star wars! At the end my neighbours bought me a shirt saying star wars expo - Brasil as a gift. Very nice! Then for dinner we went to outback that Australian restaurant where I ate deep fried American food - mmm. (*Anita, it gets even funnier, the Outback Restaurant chain was started by, and still owned by a couple of Poms! Go figure! I do like their 'Blooming Onion' though! Ed.*) The past weekend I stayed at my friends house Mitch the other exchange student who lives right in the city. also a television programme was wanting to interview exchange students so they asked rotary who asked a girl and boy to do the interview but had been here longer so it was going to be a

Columbian boy and Slovakian girl however in the last minute they both had to pull out so they asked me and Mitch to fill in ha-ha. They didn't however tell us until we arrived that the interview was all in Portuguese - a very funny experience so to do the interview as easy as possible they would say the question in English we would figure out our answer in Portuguese then they would start filming ask the question again Portuguese and then try and remember our answer in Portuguese... it was embarrassing because it was at the airport so people were watching but good fun and another experience no doubt. Anyways I got lunch ... keep you updated xoxoxox Benito.

*Amita*

### Aysha - a huge Rotary weekend!



**Aysha Woods** reporting for **Ballina Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - La Rochelle Rotary Club, France

On the 27th of March we had a huge Rotary Weekend in a small town north of Nantes. On our application to the camp, we had had to write what we were personally going to do for peace. I had thought this a bit of an odd question, but answered as accurately as I could, 'embrasser tout le monde!' - 'Hug everybody!' (*Hey, what a great message! Embracing Peace! Ed.*) On the way there the bus stopped and we met up with other students from our district, however everyone was a little confused as we realised we were not in the town we were meant to be staying at. The group of us were then led into a building not far away, and brought into an enormous conference room (UN style, with raked seating and televisions and microphones and EVERYTHING) where a debate on 'Steps to Peace' was taking place with hundreds of students from all over France. After about 3 hours of pretending to understand and look interested (and watching more groups of kids

being brought in looking as confused as we were) they started to read out student's names and one by one, a student would get up and explain something - though none of the Australians knew what. Then they called out my name - petrified with horror I managed to flick the little red switch that turned on my microphone and smiled as though I knew what I was doing while tiny pixilated images of my face started popping up all over the room on people's screens. They then held up a small piece of paper - my application form - and asked me why I wrote what I wrote. In mangled franglish I managed to say something about 'how the simplest of gestures can have the greatest effect on people' and so on, surprisingly they seemed to understand what I was getting at and finished most of my sentences for me, and even more amazingly was they seemed to agree, quoting 'a journey of a thousand miles starts with one step' and thanking me for taking the initiative to make this world more peaceful. I thought this was a pretty nifty response to my idea, in all honesty I was just hoping that the French would take a hint and cuddle more often, but world peace works for me too. (*Aysha, Google 'Free Hugs' and see what you get! Did you know that some people have been arrested for trying to give 'free hugs', what a strange world? Hopefully, you'll be a part of the change that needs to happen! Keep it going! Ed.*)

*Aysha*

### Chantal - the best part!

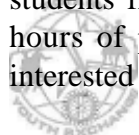


**Chantal Doherty** reporting for **Warwick Sunrise Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - Zug-Kolin Rotary Club, Switzerland

Today I finished my second day at Swiss High School, and it was... strange. I walked into each new class not having the slightest idea what I will be studying; I can't remember any of the teacher's names (let alone those of my new friends); and at lunch time I didn't ask what I was being given... I just closed my eyes and ate



it; plus I was continuously getting lost because my school is HUGE!! Then when it came to Maths, the teacher told me to leave the class because they had an exam. I was left to find something to do for an hour and a half while everyone else in the school was in class!! It was so boring!! Oh, and I didn't mention the best part; I have to get on the bus for school at 6:39am. I can barely stay awake in class. Welcome to the exchange student's life... *(Believe it or not Chantal, it does get better! Ed.)*

*Chantal*

### Courtney - everyone, I'm Courtney!



**Courtney Place** reporting for **Burleigh Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - Erfurt Rotary Club, Germany

Ok hey everyone, I'm Courtney and I'm currently staying in amazing Germany!! I have been here for almost 3 months and it has been an amazing thing every step of the way. When I first got here I was a bit unsure of what I had actually gotten myself into. I never would have thought that the words I got from my counsellors in Australia would end up being my motto here in Germany. The saying 'Try everything offered to you, and talk to as many people as possible.' Was told to me by a number of people, but mainly John, Mal and Keiran. So I have done just that. And because of it my exchange is a lot better then it could have been. *(Egads, another YEP student who actually listened to what was said at the briefing camps! Excellent! Ed.)* For instance my first day at school was very hard, I was a bit nervous and wasn't sure what to do. I was quite and didn't know who to talk to. At the end of the day I was unsure if I wanted to go back. But thinking what my counsellors said I kept going and talked to as many people as I could, and made a lot of good friends, and I know get invited to lots of places with them that I probably wouldn't have seen otherwise! I think it is hard being from a completely different

culture and then all of a sudden being thrown into a new one! Especially with the customs to get used to, and it is usually the smallest things that are different that put you off. Like eating meals differently to what you were used to, or the times you go to school. But I guess it's these different things that make it so great! But the biggest challenge is always the language, until you get the basics you always feel a little bit awkward even with friends as they are always having to explain or repeat what they are saying. And at times you can feel utterly hopeless like you will never understand. But slowly without you realising it you start to understand what is beings said after the second time it's said, or you don't realise that you have had a whole conversation with your host family at breakfast in their language and understood almost everything they were saying and they understood you. It is the most amazing thing when that happens and afterwards it gets point out and it's just like, Wow I really did! *(When you start dreaming in German, you'll know that you're really there! Ed.)*

It was just Easter as you all know and here in Germany it was amazing. I woke up Easter morning to a fresh blanket of snow. I had seen snow in Germany before but I had never woken up looked out my window and all of a sudden seen a blanket of white! And so we had a white Easter rather than Christmas!! We went for a trip Easter Monday and looked at the castles and Cathedrals, it is truly the most amazing thing to see a white hill with a snow covered castle on it. It just blows your mind, and really makes you realise that you aren't in Australia anymore!

Well, talk to you soon!

*Courtney*



**Ella - overcame many challenges!**

**Ella Horton** reporting for  
**Kirra Currumbin/Burleigh**  
**Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline: - March, 2008*

*Location: - Ljungskile*  
*Rotary Club, Sweden*

In the last month I have managed to overcome many challenges that I was faced with when I first arrived. Things like adjusting to waking up in a strange bedroom and attending school have now become normal parts of my everyday life. New challenges, however, continue to present themselves and I find myself continually dealing with situations and feelings I have never faced before. It takes a lot of strength, but it is worth it! I have already experienced so much personal growth and feel better equipped, both emotionally and mentally, to deal with whatever life throws at me.

Something I am finding quite challenging now is adjusting to a more idle existence than I am otherwise used to. In Australia, I was extremely busy and thrived off always having something to do and somewhere to be. In Sweden I am yet to create a 'life' for myself, if that makes sense. I feel like I need to challenge myself in more ways and become more involved in my community. 'Initiative' being the key word, I have contacted a local volunteering organisation currently seeking people to help young children with their homework and give company to elderly residents at a retirement village. I am hoping that, despite the language barrier, they will let me come along and help out. It might even help me improve my Swedish! *(It certainly will! Ed.)*

Another challenge is of course learning Swedish. I have improved a lot over the last month and am feeling more and more confident when speaking it to my host family and my friends at school. I have stopped putting so much pressure on myself to learn it and it is now a pleasurable experience, rather than a stressful one. I have also been lucky enough to get some extra lessons at school with a visiting teacher. These lessons are one-on-one and allow me to

get help with anything I am having difficulty with.

Finally, there is the challenge of homesickness. Something I always said I wouldn't feel. After all, I was leaving on this wonderful adventure... why on earth would I feel homesick? But alas, I am not as emotionally sturdy as I thought. I was told that on exchange, you normally experience a 'dip' after around 2 or 3 months. I am pleased to say that I have not experienced this; however, I do have my 'moments' when I feel overwhelmingly homesick. These usually occur once a week and last for around 10 minutes. But it is these exact moments that inspire me, motivate me and challenge me to keep going and keep smiling! *(Atta Girl! Ed.)*

I have had a wonderful month. As you can see I got a little carried away with the length, but I truly hope you enjoy reading it. These are my experiences and I would love nothing more than to share them with you. Enjoy!! *(Ella, one of the magical things about actually having something to say in the Hopping Mag, apart from being very helpful to other students on exchange, is that it will give you a written record of your experiences, and that's worth more than money can buy! Ed.)*

4th - 7th March - School, school and more school!! I have definitely settled back into the rhythm of attending classes and am actually beginning to enjoy being back in a school environment. I have been told by various people (all older and wiser than me, of course), that when you leave school and enter university or the work force, you just want to go back to school! When I was told this I thought "NO WAY!!", however, now that I have officially completed my 12 years of schooling, I can truly understand why people say this. At school this week I played a very energetic game of dodge ball with my class, was treated to warm lunches every day and got to interact with all of my new friends. Of course, being back at school does have its down-sides. This week I had to sit through a 2-hour maths lesson (in Swedish), but if that is the worst it gets then I count myself pretty lucky!! Apart from school, I was invited to join a volleyball club with one of my new friends from school. I accepted the invitation

and had my first training session on Thursday night. Although I went home with rather red looking arms, I had a lot of fun and met some really nice people. I even met one of my host sister's friends who had also just joined the club. Pretty soon I will be a real local in Uddevalla!!

8th March – After a long week at school, I decided I would spend the morning getting ready for the upcoming week. This involved doing all the unpleasant but very necessary tasks such as cleaning my room and doing my laundry. I also had the task of coming up with a 'jungle' themed costume to wear to a birthday party that night. It was being held at Allie's home in Uddevalla to celebrate Vera's 17th birthday. Vera is an exchange student from Switzerland who is living in my district. I eventually decided I would go as a panther! To do justice to this truly remarkable creature, I wore black clothes, made ears out of an old cardboard wine cask and my host Mum Ann kindly painted my face. The outcome wasn't spectacular. The outfit was homemade – and unfortunately looked homemade as well!! But I didn't let that stop me from catching the train to Allie's house to proudly show off my costume. Luckily, most of the outfits at the party looked like mine - so I fit in quite nicely!! It turned out to be a really fun night and gave me another chance to get to know the other exchange students that little bit better. We played lots of very childish party games, ate way too much cake and turned the living room into a kind of disco! Let's just say I was sufficiently exhausted when I got home late that night!

9th March – Today I enjoyed a nice sleep in and then watched a movie with Paola, an exchange student from Brazil, who had stayed over after the birthday party. We had a really nice morning together and talked a lot about living in our respective countries. It turns out that there is more to Brazil than just soccer and partying!! After I walked Paola to the bus stop, I walked along the sea to Lyckorna to try and work off some of the cake I had eaten the night before! When I got home, I baked a huge batch of lamingtons to take to my Rotary club meeting on Monday night. They turned out really well and I felt extremely proud of myself! My last

attempt at an Australian dessert (Pavlova) had not turned out so well, so I was very happy indeed. That night I went to the gym with my host brother and had an early night.

10th March - I was woken up bright and early by my alarm, signalling the end of the weekend and the start of yet another week at school. I had a really good day though and even got a phone call from my best friend from Australia. It was the first time I had spoken with any of my friends from home since I arrived and it really made me feel so positive and happy. After school that day I went along to my Rotary club's meeting with my host dad and showed off my lamingtons. They were so appreciative and said they were really yummy. I am so grateful that I have the support of such a wonderful Rotary club here in Sweden and I hoped that the simple gesture of baking something to bring along would show them how truly appreciative I am. They have even asked me to bake lamingtons for them to sell with coffee at their upcoming market! (*Excellent! Ed.*)

11th – 14th March – This week at school was really enjoyable and I felt that each day I was getting a warmer and more friendly response from my classmates. I am starting to feel like one of 'them' and not just a visitor. My name was even called on the roll!! This week I also attended volleyball training on Tuesday and Thursday night and have improved quite a bit since my first time. I even got to show off my new skills at school as we played volleyball in our physical education lesson! I also played 'Ultimate Frisbee' at school this week as I chose sport for my individual subject choice. Apart from going to school and playing sport, I met my host dad's brother and his wife who came over for dinner on Tuesday night. I also received a parcel my mum had sent to me from Australia! I was so excited as in the package was a very large jar of Vegemite, something I had been desperately craving (only an Australian would understand!!).

15th March – Today I woke up at Allie's house after staying with her the night before. We did 'Strandpromenaden' (the beach walk), which took us almost two and a half hours, and then made a really yummy breakfast. I stayed at her

house until the afternoon, and then caught the bus home. That night I went with my host family to have dinner at our neighbour's house. It was a beautiful meal and I had a great time meeting them all. It was especially good to meet them as their daughter had been a Rotary exchange student to Alaska many years ago. After dinner we watched 'Melodifestivalen', which decides who will represent Sweden in the Eurovision contest.

16th March – I had the most wonderful day today, despite waking up to the most awful weather. It was cold and really, really foggy. I still managed to walk to Lyckorna, even though I could barely see what was in front of me! On my walk, I met an old man who told me all about the history of Lyckorna. Apparently 100 years ago Lyckorna used to be full of bath houses that the wealthy people from Göteborg and Stockholm would travel to by boat to use. He was such a character and it made my walk so much more interesting. Later that afternoon, the weather had cleared up completely to reveal the most beautiful day I have seen the whole time I have been here in Sweden. My host mum decided that because the weather was so nice, she would take me to visit their property in the nearby town of Ulvesund. Here they own a block of land right on the coast and are planning on building a house there this year. It truly was picturesque and I look forward to one day visiting their new home! That night my host mum put some colour in mine and my host sister's hair and it turned out really nice! I am definitely part of the family.

17th March – Today it was snowing!!! I could not believe it!! The weather had gone from one extreme to another and I could not have been happier. My host mum drove my host brother and I into Uddevalla which was exciting. It is so much fun being in a car when it is snowing! When I got to school however, I was not greeted with the same degree of enthusiasm. It turns out that most Swedish people don't like the snow as it is rather inconvenient and cold!! Seeing snow is still such a novelty for me and I love it. That afternoon I battled the weather and walked to the gym. After a good workout I bought some coloured baskets which I plan to fill with rocky

road to give to my host family and counsellor for Easter. That night I went to Rotary for their weekly meeting and was given a great Swedish children's book as a gift from my counsellor. It is the cutest book and is filled with pages and pages of different objects and their names in both English and Swedish. I think it will really help as it is quite difficult to remember the names of nouns in Swedish.

18th March – I managed to get to school without slipping over on any of the snow! It gets so, so icy and you really have to be wary of where you walk otherwise you can end up flat on your back!! I had a good day today and found my classmates to be happy and in high spirits. I have a feeling this was because of the week long Easter holiday (Påsklov) that was coming up. In the afternoon I bought the ingredients to make rocky road and went to volleyball training. My coach on Tuesdays is actually a girl my age that also goes to school in Uddevalla. She suggested that I come out with her and her friends one night which I was very excited about! I am glad that I am making friends outside of my immediate class.

19th March – This morning was a little different from most Wednesday mornings as I was to meet my class at the local swimming pool. We have physical education first thing in the morning and this week we were swimming!! I haven't swum since I left home and it was really refreshing! Luckily it was an indoor pool though otherwise we would have been freezing. I managed to do quite a few laps and felt really alert by the end of class. When I got back to school I went to my other lessons and Isabelle, my friend who I do volleyball with, invited me to stay over at her house on Thursday night (as we had no school on Friday). I am really looking forward to getting to know her and am so happy that she has made the effort to get to know me as well! Later that night I made the rocky road with my host sister (which turned out really good) and found out from my host mum's friend Paula that I can come and stay with her in Oslo for a few days over the break. How exciting!!!

20th March – I have officially been in Sweden for 2 months and feel fantastic! It has honestly gone by so quickly and has reminded me that I



really must make the most of each and every moment here. I had a good day at school and after going to the gym in the afternoon, I met up with Isabelle at the supermarket to buy some food for dinner. Hillavi, one of Isabelle's friends from the grade above us at school, also stayed over. This was the first time I have been with any of my new friends outside of the school environment and it allowed me to really open up and be myself. We had a great time together and I went to sleep with a big smile on my face.

21st March – Today I woke up at Isabelle's house and felt a bit tired after staying up late watching movies and chatting with the girls. At 12.30pm, Isabelle and I caught a train to Göteborg together to do some shopping and have coffee. She was also flying to Germany to visit her mum that night so she had to take a bus from Göteborg to the airport. I had a nice time with her and managed to buy a nice pair of running shoes for me to wear at volleyball and the gym. I got home at around 5.00pm that night and had dinner with my host dad's Mother who was visiting over Easter. I had received a text message from my volleyball coach (Agnes) earlier that day inviting me out that night. Although I was tired, it was such a good opportunity to make some new friends. I met up with her in Uddevalla and met her two friends, one of whom had lived in Melbourne for a year as an exchange student. They took me to the most popular night club in Uddevalla, the 'GG' (pronounced gae-gae) and we danced the night away!

22nd March – After a few days of heavy snow I awoke to a beautiful and sunny day. To make the most of the weather, my host parents took me to 'Bred Fjället', a national park in Ljungskile, where we went cross-country skiing. I did the 2.5km track and only fell over twice! When I got home I had breakfast and then painted eggs with my host mum and host sister. After we had created our masterpieces, none other than the Easter Bunny paid us a visit!! My host brother, my host sister and I had to search the entire living room for our Easter eggs, which the Easter Bunny had hidden (just to be difficult!!). I eventually found my egg which was made of cardboard and filled with lollies! That afternoon

I walked to Lyckorna, had an afternoon nap and then got ready for Easter dinner. The neighbours came over and we shared a very nice and very Swedish meal. We had, among other things, meatballs, potatoes, sausages and I even tasted my first herring!

23rd March – The best day of the week, in my opinion, is Sunday! I had a very relaxing day and enjoyed just pottering around the house. I did however, still manage to take my walk to Lyckorna and I even packed myself lunch and took it to 'Strandpromenaden' in Uddevalla to eat by the water. That night I went to my friend Hillavi's house where we watched a couple of movies and basically just 'hung out'.

24th March – As Hillavi had to go to work at 11.00am, I caught an early train home and took my now daily walk to Lyckorna. At 12.00pm, my counsellor Jan picked me up and drove me to his house to meet his family and have lunch. His house was lovely and his family were really welcoming. It was so nice to finally meet them!! Jan also showed me how to use Skype and offered for me to use his account to contact my mum. Unfortunately, because of the time difference, it was too late for me to call my mum but I was glad to learn how to use the program. After I had lunch with Jan's family, he drove me home and I spent the rest of the afternoon watching a movie and writing some rather overdue emails. Oh, and it was snowing more today!!!

25th March – Now that I am in the habit of walking every morning, it is no longer such a chore to get myself up and moving. At 7.30 am this morning I walked to Lyckorna, however, my left foot was really sore and I found it quite hard to keep up with my normal pace. When I got home I showered and got ready to catch the train to Göteborg where I met up with Allie, Michelle, Sadie and Daniel. Allie had just arrived home from Spain and was meeting up with Daniel who had lived in her district in Canada as an exchange student last year. We spent the afternoon in central and had lunch together at a Thai restaurant. As I was to leave for Oslo early the following morning, we caught the bus home together at 6.30pm and I had an early night!

26th – 28th March – Oslo here I come!!! I had been looking forward to this trip all week and couldn't believe that I was actually going to Oslo! On Wednesday morning my host parents dropped me off at Torp (the local shopping mall) where my bus was to leave from. I had managed to buy a return ticket direct to Oslo for 290 Kronor (equivalent to just under \$60 AUS) and the trip would only take 3 hours. The trip was comfortable and when I arrived I could hardly contain my excitement. It took me a while to find a tourist information centre, but when I finally did they were very helpful. I purchased a 2-day Oslo pass which gave me entry into all the museums in the city and allowed me unlimited use of the public transport. They also told me which bus I should take to get to Paula's café, which was where I would meet Paula and leave my luggage. I was relieved to find that her café was just across the road from the bus stop which I got off at. I had something for lunch and then took my map of Oslo and set off on an adventure.

The first thing I managed to visit was the Akershus Fortress, a huge castle built in the 13th century to protect Oslo from invasion. It was spectacular, even though I was unable to see the inside of the castle. I spent almost an hour walking around the grounds of the castle and also visited the Norwegian Resistance Museum. After this I walked along the harbour to the Oslo City Hall and the Nobel Peace Centre. The Nobel Peace Centre was really interesting and I really enjoyed learning the history behind the prize. It was interesting to find out that the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded every year at the Oslo City Hall. By now I had reached the main part of Oslo city and it truly was magnificent!! I walked through Oslo University, saw the National Theatre building and eventually made my way to the National Gallery where I saw paintings by Picasso, Vincent Van Gogh and Monet. I even saw the infamous painting 'The Scream' by Edward Munch!! That night, after Paula had shown me her apartment (which was in the middle of Oslo and had a breathtaking view of the city), we went out for dinner with her partner Edgar.



The next day I got up early, ready to see more of the beautiful city of Oslo! Paula and I had breakfast together at her café and then she kindly drove me to 'Vigelandsparken' (Vigeland Sculpture Park) where I saw an amazing 212 bronze and granite sculptures by Gustav Vigeland. Here I also visited the Oslo City Museum where I learnt about the history of Oslo. When I had finished looking around I caught a bus to see the Kon Tiki Museum and the FRAM Museum. I then caught another bus to the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History where many traditional Norwegian homes have been set up to look like an old village. I really liked this as it taught me more about Norway and its history. By this time I was feeling rather exhausted so I caught a bus back to central where I met up with two of Paula's employees for coffee. They were really lovely. We then met Paula at the local Pizzeria, had dinner and then walked back to the apartment well and truly ready for bed.

The following day was my final day in Oslo, so I was eager to make the most of it! After making my way to central station, I then walked to the botanical gardens. The gardens were rather dull as it was too cold for anything to grow, but the National History Museum was really interesting. Within this one museum was a geology museum, a palaeontology museum and a zoology museum. I then walked to the Munch Museum, which was right next to the gardens. This was definitely one of the best museums I had been to in Oslo as it told the story of Edward Munch and exhibited his most famous paintings. I then made my way back to Paula's apartment where I spent forever trying to remember which number was hers! After trying my key in nearly every apartment I finally found the right one and was so relieved!! That night I caught the bus home from central at 5.45pm and was picked up from Torp by my host brother. I was exhausted but still full of adrenaline from my amazing three days in Oslo!!

29th March – Apart from walking to Lyckorna and going to the gym, I had a rather lazy day at home. In the afternoon, the nephew of my host mum came over with his two young children and had dinner with the family that night. At 8.00pm,

as part of an Australian initiative to conserve energy, we turned off all the lights and all the electrical appliances in the house (except the heating of course) for one hour! Even the King of Sweden turned off the palace lights in Stockholm to support the initiative! After doing some Swedish study by candlelight, I went to bed.

30th March – With only one day of the Easter holiday left, I was keen to do as little as possible!! After walking to Lyckorna, checking my emails and doing some Swedish study, I caught the bus to Allie's house so we could go to the gym together. After working out, we spent a while in the sauna and had a really good chat. That night I went with Stina to distribute fliers in the neighbourhood for the Rotary club's market and finally worked out that the clocks had gone forward one hour as part of daylight savings (it took me all day to realise this!!). We are now officially on summer time, but now all we need is for the sun to come out!

31st March – Back to school again and I had to try and get my body out of holiday mode! I had a good day at school and was really excited to tell my friends all about my trip to Oslo. At 5.00pm that night my host dad and I went to an extra special Rotary meeting. The entire club was off to watch a football match between Ljungskile and Hammarby (one of three teams from Stockholm). It was the first game of the season and the first time in 10 years that Ljungskile had played in 1st-division. As you can imagine, spirits were high and the support for both teams was very strong. The only problem for me was that both teams wore green and white so it was very hard to determine who was who. Eventually I worked it out though and had such a great time! We had really good seats and even though Ljungskile lost by one goal, it was still good to support my home team!

1st – 4th April – This week at school I feel that I made some really good progress with my friends. I feel like I am really getting to know them better and that they are embracing me more and more as not only an exchange student, but one of them. In English this week, we had the task of reading various newspaper articles and then presenting a summary to the class. One of

them was about etiquette in Australia and it was really interesting to see what had been written. According to the article it is customary to accompany your guests to their cars when they leave your home, you must always check your shoes (for poisonous animals) before you put them on and the wrapping of a gift is more important than what is actually inside. I found this very strange and assured my class that despite what was written, Australians are actually very normal!!

This week I went to volleyball training twice and am continuing to make good progress. I have also decided that I will cook dinner every Wednesday for my host family! I think it is a really good way for me to give back to the family and also improve my cooking skills at the same time! This week I made an Italian Tuna Pasta bake with a green salad and it actually turned out really good. I am getting better already! As part of my Rotary schedule this week, I visited the museum of interior design in Göteborg with all of the other exchange students in my district. We were given a guided tour by the museum's curator who is also a Rotarian, and I found it really interesting.

The most exciting part of my week however was meeting up with NINE of the girls in my class for dinner at a Thai restaurant in Uddevalla last night (Friday). I had invited all of the girls in my class to come and was so pleased that so many of them showed up. It was so nice to spend some time with them outside of school and I am just so, so happy that they made the effort to come along. I feel like this is such a big achievement as I have had quite a bit of difficulty getting them to meet with me outside of school. I really am happy!!!

*Ella*



**Keeghan - Rotary ski camp!**

**Keeghan Silcock** reporting for **Alstonville Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - St Pölten Rotary Club, Austria

I have attended school with my host mother who is an English teacher and given a presentation about Australia to four of her classes. I have also gone to a primary school with a friend of my host mother who is also an English teacher and given presentations to classes there.

In a month's time I will be attending my district conference and my euro tour starts at the end of May.

I attended a Rotary ski camp in early March at Schladming and got to go skiing for the first time with 60 other exchange students from all over Austria. It was fantastic. In the Easter holidays I met up in Salzburg with some of the exchange students and did the sound of music tour. I have also went to Vienna twice in the holidays; once to stay at a friend's house and see the sights and another time with my host family. My host family took me to the Vienna zoo which was great.

*Keeghan*

**Kirsten - I am soooo excited!**

**Kirsten Rheeder** reporting for **Tamborin Mountain Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - Bloomfield Rotary Club, USA

I LOVE being an exchange student. I have already met so many wonderful people and I know I will be sad when I have to leave. Tonight is the Junior Prom and I am soooo excited! I am

getting ready at my friend Brooke's house with some of my other friends from school. So far I haven't faced any major challenges. I am all settled at school now and I get along well with all my teachers and I'm enjoying all my subjects. Next weekend is the beginning of Spring Break and my Host family and I, along with some of their relatives and family are going down south to North Carolina for a whole week!!! On the way we are going to drive through Washington D.C. I can't wait to see more of this great country! The best thing about being an exchange student is the people you meet and the places you get to see. For example coming from the Gold Coast and the beach to living out in the country of Upstate New York is amazing. I love the change of scenery.

As much as I miss being able to work and earn my own money I have found other things that keep me busy. I have been asked to baby-sit my host mums niece and nephew a few times which has been really fun and the kids are easy to watch which makes things a lot easier.

All in all I am having the best time and I think it's going to be very hard for me to leave!! (*Gee, it's a real pity that you're not enjoying yourself! He, he, He. Ed.*)

*Kirsten*

**Lauren - I had so much fun!**

**Lauren Jewson** reporting for **Ballina on Richmond Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - Moersburg Rotary Club, Switzerland

Easter Saturday was when my host parents took me to Locarno [which is down extreme south of Switzerland on the Italian border and they all speak Italian]. It was warm though. Not like Australia warm but not like -2 Degrees so it was warm to us. It took us a couple of hours to get there but it was worth it. I had so much fun, we walked around town and I fed some birds with crumbs from our table until a lady from a

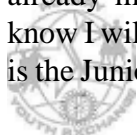


table over gave me some bread to feed them with. She was really nice and we didn't even know her. We walked around the lake, got some ice cream/gelati things and saw a gum tree. As in seriously saw a gum tree. I took photos of it; they are up on my Facebook now, under 'Trip to Locarno' I think. We also went up in a cable car to see a Madonna on the Rocks Church, the church was really pretty and the views were amazing. Took heaps of photos. We walked back down and headed to the train station and went home.

Next was Easter Sunday, where I got up at normal time [7ish] and helped my host mum make an Easter cake. After Fabian came down we did an Easter Egg hunt which was with real eggs plus extra things for each person with their name on it. My host dad's parents came as well and they got something for me which was so very nice of them. We had an Easter breakfast/lunch and then just hung around the house until we headed off to the circus. It was Switzerland's leading travelling circus called 'Knie'. It was really great. Started at 6pm and went until 8:30. Some of the acts were amazing. They had horses, ponies, camels and elephants. My favourite act was these two guy doing tricks, one would lie on his back with his feet in the air and the other would do tricks on the other guys feet, like jumping and stuff. They stuffed up on of their tricks but they tried it again and succeeded. I think that is why I liked them best. *(I guess it's a bit like being on exchange - occasionally we stuff things up - but we just get back up and try, try again! Ed.)*

*Lauren*

### **Martin - Storm King Dam Camp!**



**Martin Aubry** reporting for **Charleroi-Quest Rotary Club, Belgium**

*Dateline: - March, 2008*

*Location: - Beaudesert Rotary Club, Australia*

Storm King Dam Camp. *(And? Ed.)*

*Martin*

### **Mindi - the most amazing time!**



**Mindi Devine** reporting for **Grafton Midday Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline: - March, 2008*

*Location: - Windsor Rotary Club, USA*

I'm having the most amazing time of my life right now, I'm loving every minute I'm here and making the most of it too. I was recently lucky enough to be invited on Vacation to the Mayan Rivera in Mexico. *(See what happens when you're on exchange, wonderful things just happen! Ed.)* If you haven't been defiantly put it on your top ten places in the world to visit, it's incredible just being in one city and driving on the main highway you notice how different that country is compared to ours, it really opens your eyes. But for all the difference you notice you make up for it in beauty, there are some beaches that would give our Whitsundays a run for their money! I even picked up a few phrases of Spanish, hello, thank you, please, and goodbye. It was an amazing week, I'm just very lucky to have the great councillor that I do!

*Mindi*



**Nicole - found the sun!**

**Nicole Heffernan** reporting for **Murwillumbah Central Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - Chimay-Couvin Rotary Club, Belgium

Nicole has officially found the sun... (*Sorry, didn't know that you'd lost it! Ed.*) but it's all the way back in Greece! What a hectic 10 days I have just had, exploring many of the ancient ruins, seeing many statues of naked men and I can't forget checking out the local hotties! Greece was just how I imagined it, lots of scooters, kinda dirty, clear bluey-green sea... the olives were divine... like, you don't even understand how good they are...

We took a lot of guided tours around the place... seeing museums, and all these ancient rocks, which really sounds stupid, but I was beautiful, most of them not even restored...

My favourite place so far would have to be Venice, I had a great day there, seeing all the sights. It was absolutely beautiful.

I only have 9.5 months left here, it has gone so fast. I miss my family like crazy, but that is to be expected! This is such a great experience! Live it up.

*Nicole*

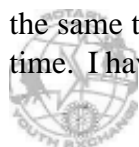
**Richard - it's been three months!**

**Richard Boles** reporting for **Southport Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - Kremsmünster Rotary Club, Austria

So now it has been three months into our Year on Exchange, time has gone so fast, but yet at the same time I have done so much to past that time. I have been so lucky to do so much so far,

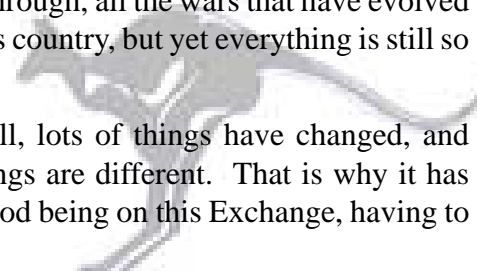


nearly every second weekend I am away, travelling and exploring the country with many other exchange students. In the past few months, we have all visited Vienna, Salzburg and Graz, some major cities in Austria. A few weeks ago, we had our Ski week, where all the exchange students in Austria went to a very large ski region called Schladming. A week of a lot of fun, where we all met the old exchange students from other countries. After 7 months the majority were speaking excellent German, which I have been finding it very hard to learn and speak it after 3 months. The skiing in Austria is amazing, that was my second trip in the country, the first being to Arlberg, one of the best regions in Europe.

Within these first three months, it has been difficult to settle in, especially into a place that speaks a completely different language. (*I could ask a really dumb question here! Did you really think it would be any different? Ed.*) But with the help of School friends, Host Family and even other exchange students, the slow process of learning the language has taken place. The exchange for me I feel has been great, a complete opposite from what I was use to at home in Australia. From living in the city, with everything so close, to living on a farm a 30 minute drive to school each day. To being able to turn on the TV and watch anything you like, to having trouble understanding the daily news. Everything changes, but everything has been great.

Another amazing aspect of the exchange to Austria has been the history. Everything has a very old and unique style, nothing like what is in Australia. I live in a house that is approximately 500 years older than our own Country. The house is still so strong and sturdy, and looks as new as ever. Walking down town, all the buildings are all different, and have been there hundreds of years, but are still in perfect condition. It is so amazing about what Austria has been through, all the wars that have evolved around this country, but yet everything is still so perfect.

All in All, lots of things have changed, and lots of things are different. That is why it has been so good being on this Exchange, having to



adapt to a lifestyle that I have not been use to at home in Australia...

*Richard*

### Sofie - all about school!



**Sofie Bertholdson**  
reporting for **Örebro Västra**  
Rotary Club, Sweden

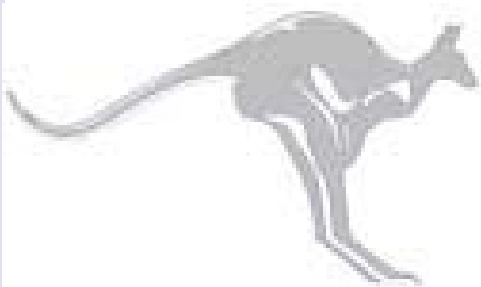
*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - Alstonville  
Rotary Club, Australia

This month has been all about school. Not a lot has happened except a camp in Stanthorpe with fellow Inbounders. Over a couple of days we got information how to prevent snakebites and other accidents that might occur out in the wild, how we're going to survive camping for three weeks and other necessities pre the safari. We also went camping in the bush. Only a few of us thought it'd be nice to sleep under the stars, or we might have been too lazy to drag on a tent, but it was a nice experience waking up with a million stars watching over you. (*I hope you didn't spend all night trying to count them all! Ed.*)

The week after me and Anna from Austria went up to Surfers where we had to run between buses to get to Pacific fair. We managed around an hour of shopping until we had to catch the next bus back. It was a quite eventful day, even though we didn't manage everything we set out to do because of lack of time we were still pretty proud we never missed a bus and got home safely.

*Sofie*



### Sophie - life is hard!



**Sophie Hart** reporting for  
**Glen Innes Rotary Club,**  
Australia

*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - Anderne  
Rotary Club, Belgium

After being here in Belgium for 11 weeks I really feel like I am settling in well and slowly creating my Belgian life. The exchange students here like to call it, creating your Belgian "Bubble". The last month was very interesting and I got to see some cool places like Brussels, Paris and many places in Italy.

Seeing Paris was excellent, I loved looking at the famous places and artwork and eating croissants for breakfast! The atmosphere there is really amazing; it really is how they describe it in the movies!

The Rotary Trip to Italy was fantastic! There were 70 exchange students from all around the world and I got to make some great friends. My favourite days were in Rome and Florence. In Rome we had a lovely lunch of pasta while chilling in the sun, listening to the accordion and soaking up the Italian atmosphere. In Florence a group of us roamed around having adventures in the city centre and discovering fabulous leather purchases! We ate the most beautiful gelato and some people got to swim in the Mediterranean Sea... it was a little too cold for me though! I was super pleased that when I returned from this trip, my French had actually improved! This was surprising, but I think the time away gave my brain a chance to rest and now words and conversations seem to flow more easily!

Back to school tomorrow, though not to worry, in two weeks I am going to London with my tourism class for four days! Life is hard. (*You're right, the life of an exchange student must REALLY be tough! Ed.*)



**Alice - México is excellent!**

**Alice Batcheldor** reporting for **Yamba Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - April, 2007

*Location:* - Culican Oriente Rotary Club, Mexico

Hallo everyone!

(There is a sign I'm entrenching myself in the culture, I can't remember how to spell simple words!) *(And that's a really good sign! Ed.)*

Quero decir un grande hola a toda! Espero ustedes tienen a se diviertan. *(I think that my Babel Fish needs feeding, it's telling me you just said 'Quero to say a great one hello to everything! I wait for you you have are amused' Hmmm, it's definitely my Babel Fish not being fed by brain waves! Ed.)*

México is excellent, it really free and I'm having a wonderful time... mostly. I am feeling a little frustrated with the language at the moment though but I guess so is everyone else! It was my birthday on the 6th of April and I had four cakes!! One Mexican tradition when you have your birthdays is to take bit out of the cake and usually while you are doing that someone stuffs your face in it, I was lucky to get away with only a little! It was also really nice because I was on a trip with other exchange students from both my city and another close to here. We had a great time in El Fuerte although we didn't know there was going to be so many mosquitos. El Fuerte is supposedly where Zorro was born and it had a lot of wonderful history surrounding it.

The Ruta Maya is coming up in two weeks and I'm very excited about that. For three weeks we travel through Mexico visiting all the different Mayan ruins and things, it is going to be great! Other than that not much to report. Hope you are all doing great back in Australia.

Adios.



*Alice*

**Anita - happy Easter!**

**Anita Knight** reporting for **Coomera Valley Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2007

*Location:* - Alphaville-Santana de Parnaiba Rotary Club, Brazil

Oi everyone,

It's been a few weeks so here is another update hey... well happy Easter to everyone for a few weeks ago... hope it was enjoyable and fattening!! For my Easter I went with my host family to Minas Gerias which is a neighbouring state to Sao Paulo and we stayed in their grandmother's house for four days and I also met other relatives that lived close by. School has been plodding along doing labs and classes... but now if I really try hard to listen I can sometimes get a few more words or sentences understood. If not I just read my new book which is called the big book of words -mostly for 5 yr olds and under but it has pictures and the word in Spanish English and Portuguese plus an example sentence :) one weekend my neighbours invited me to go with them to a star wars convention in the city. Their they had all the real costumes, sketches and models and was interesting but we all thought it was kinda small for an exposition especially for star wars! At the end my neighbours bought me a shirt saying star wars expo - Brasil as a gift. Very nice! Then for dinner we went to outback that Australian restaurant where I ate deep fried American food - mmm. *(Anita, it gets even funnier, the Outback Restaurant chain was started by, and still owned by a couple of Poms! Go figure! I do like their 'Blooming Onion' though! Ed.)* The past weekend I stayed at my friends house Mitch the other exchange student who lives right in the city. also a television programme was wanting to interview exchange students so they asked rotary who asked a girl and boy to do the interview but had been here longer so it was going to be a Columbian boy and Slovakian girl however in the last minute they both had to pull out so they asked me and Mitch to fill in ha-ha. They didn't however tell us until we arrived that the interview

was all in Portuguese - a very funny experience so to do the interview as easy as possible they would say the question in English we would figure out our answer in Portuguese then they would start filming ask the question again Portuguese and then try and remember our answer in Portuguese... it was embarrassing because it was at the airport so people were watching but good fun and another experience no doubt. Anyways I got lunch ... keep you updated xoxoxox Benito.

*Anita*

### Carlo Cesare - having a great time!



**Carlo Cesare de Meo Scotoni** reporting for **Limeira Rotary Club, Brazil**

*Dateline:* - April, 2007

*Location:* - Coomera Valley Rotary Club, Australia

I'm having a great time, having so much fun and learning so many things in this little time that I'm here. I really love my host family, my mom is the best! I like everyone in my host club too. My school is ok, they are kind of too strict with uniforms and hats, beards, necklaces, and things like that, but I already made lots of friends and I'm having a great time! My Safari was really awesome, I made friends from all over the world, met beautiful places, climbed the Uluru, snorkelled in the Great Barrier Reef, took hundreds of amazing pictures, I had certainly one of the best times of my life! (*Isn't life as an exchange student such a wonderful thing? Ed.*)

*Carlo Cesare*

### Keeghan - Rotary ski camp!



**Keeghan Silcock** reporting for **Alstonville Rotary Club, Australia**

*Dateline:* - March, 2008

*Location:* - St Pölten Rotary Club, Austria

I have attended school with my host mother who is an English teacher and given a presentation about Australia to four of her classes. I have also gone to a primary school with a friend of my host mother who is also an English teacher and given presentations to classes there.

In a month's time I will be attending my district conference and my euro tour starts at the end of May.

I attended a Rotary ski camp in early March at Schladming and got to go skiing for the first time with 60 other exchange students from all over Austria. It was fantastic. In the Easter holidays I met up in Salzburg with some of the exchange students and did the sound of music tour. I have also went to Vienna twice in the holidays; once to stay at a friend's house and see the sights and another time with my host family. My host family took me to the Vienna zoo which was great.

*Keeghan*

