

D9600 YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM



Bounder November 2007



D9600 *Queensland, Australia . Papua New Guinea . Solomon Islands*

Dear 2007 OutBounders (soon to be 2008 ReBounders)

It is my pleasure to be greeting you again with the hope and expectation that your Exchange Year has been and will continue to be everything you hoped – and we together worked - for.

We are still very short of water in Brisbane and the weather seems decidedly cooler than that to which we have become accustomed.

With help from Eddie Jones South Africa has won the 2007 Rugby World Cup thus joining the Wallabies (who had a very disappointing 2007 Tournament) as one of the very few Teams to have won the Cup twice.

The time has arrived to prepare to return home and in a few short months' time, to take leave of your new friends and families. This can be a very emotional time and you may find yourself torn between your Host Country, family and friends and the reality of being back in your real home in Australia.

You should realistically expect to have to make significant readjustments – after all, it is likely that the last year has been a year of massive growth in maturity for you whereas your Australian school- and other friends may have been on a more usual growth path, with the result that you may find yourself wanting to establish a new circle of friends in Australia.

Whatever you feel and encounter please know that this is entirely normal, and that significant readjustment is not abnormal. For example, it may be difficult to become “just one of the group of friends” after being the centre of attention for a year.

As I said in my June 2007 letter, please remember to continue to conduct yourselves sensibly and safely, so that while you continue to get maximum enjoyment and benefit from the remainder of a fabulous Year, you do not do anything rash or foolish and thereby put yourselves at risk. A moment's carelessness may cause a lifetime's heartache so do take care.

We are looking forward to welcoming you home in January 2008 – we have received your travel Schedule thanks to “Terra Australis” – and in the same month we shall bid farewell to our January 2007 InBounders from Brazil and Lichtenstein, welcome five InBounders from Brazil and Switzerland, and farewell our 15 x 2008 OutBounders.

A very successful December Orientation Weekend was held (for the last time) at Shaftesbury Community Centre, Burpengary. This great place is being which is being turned into a School and will no longer be available to us for our Orientation and Training needs. The hunt is on for a new venue!

Our Students left on the 2007 Sunshine Safari earlier today – hope this thought brings back many happy memories for each one of you!

In the light of recent experience and Rotary International requirements, we held earlier today, for the first time (I think), a Training Session for Host Club Counsellors. This was very worthwhile and generated a great deal of discussion, so that it is likely that it will be repeated in February 2008 at the time of the February orientation. The “Confidential Monthly Report to Chairman” which is such an important link with you individually, continues to be received from only a few, which is a real disappointment.

It's almost time to think of and map out your future – so that you may enjoy a successful future, whatever that may mean to you, and in so doing contribute to ensuring a better future for Australia.

Please always remember - we love you and we want the very best for you, no matter what.

Kind regards

Yours in Rotary service

John D Cook
CHAIRMAN D 9600 YOUTH EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Austria - Mia Schaumberg

Last time I was sitting at my computer I had a really interesting way to start, however today, considering it is the day after Halloween, and All Saints Day (meaning that I should really be thinking about my dead relatives and nothing else), the atmosphere is not entirely motivating. However, I shall not let that stop me, as the last three months of my exchange year have been the most amazing and eventful of the whole year, and definitely have to do it justice none-the-less!



Leigh and I in Vienna trying to keep warm and dry!

In August when I last wrote, I was in England, preparing myself for the event of a life time -The 21st World Scout Jamboree and the 100 Year Celebrations of the Scouting Movement. Omg I was sooo excited and those 19days that followed I will never be able to describe, it was something u had to be there for to understand. I was working as part of the Off-site Service team on the Adventure Activities site at Gilwell Park, the home of scouting. I work as part of Team Happy, meaning that I was a site guide, motivator, congo-line leader, knew where every water tap, toilet, shortcut and important person was and I spent nearly 12 hours everyday running around and making sure everything worked to plan. It was hard work, but there is nothing more satisfying than seeing 40,000 kids from nearly every country in the world have the time of their life and work towards making the world a better place. I met new friends from all over the world, we worked all day, partied all night, and made the Jamboree a life highlight for scouts not only there it Chelmsford, England, but all over the world.



Congoline leader at Lunch

Then it was back to Austria, which I had truly missed over the month I was away, and it was straight back into 'life' here. With the summer holiday, I had bought a 20 Euro Railway ticket for entire Austria over summer, and with some other exchange friends, we set off to discover Austria. We traveled for a week by train, staying with Exchange students throughout the country and living out of a backpack! We saw every State Capital in Austria, as well as Bratislava and Budapest, amazing countryside, and many new people! The freedom and knowledge that I can travel without relying on other people to places that I have never been, completely independently, is an amazing feeling, and

that sense of self-confidence is one of the most important results of my exchange year for me so far.

Then Robyn, Julian and I here in Bregenz did a two day bike trip around the Bodensee, the lake bordered by Bregenz in Austria, and also Switzerland and Germany on the other sides. It was a long way and OMG did our legs hurt afterwards, but it was such a feat, and we had really seen a lot of our area! Also in the Holiday I visited Beccy's family in Liechtenstein to celebrate the national holiday with her family and the rest of Liechtensten. I met the Prince and Princess (and got photos!) , the Prime Minister and First Lady, but the most important part was the time I spent with her family, we had a great time, and I felt again like a part of the family.

This brought us once more into September, the coming and going of many people, our newbie exchange students from Argentina, America and Canada, Michael fellow outbounder came to visit, and Judith my first host sister moved back to England. Then it was the start of school once more. I am in the Maturaklasse this year, the last year of school and with that we have many crazy traditions that definitely upstage senior in Australia! More on that later!



Red Team Happy just never stopped smiling!

We had a Rotary Weekend in Tauplitz, in central Austria, hiking in the mountains. During the still official summer we had 1 meter of snow and because of this were not able to conquer the peak we were aiming for!

The next week (21st-30th) I headed of to Croatia with 2 Rotarians and 7 other exchange students from all around the world for the Rotary Youth Sailing Week. We aimed through that week to learn how to sail a 46 foot boat well enough to take part in a Regatta. Our crew consisted of 7 nationalities and we spent the week cruising around the most amazing rugged coastline through sparkling blue water, swimming, sunbathing, and occasionally working (hehe).

The whole week was not this dreamy however, with rough weather, seasickness, border and visa difficulties, but it was all a great experience, and we took part for a day in the Austrian Offshore Sailing Championships!



Exchange students in Bratislava...an interesting day!



Tauplitz... snow in Summer and over 2000m

This brought me straight into October, and from Sunny Croatia to Snowy Austria, there couldn't have been more difference! This month at school has been very eventful, with our maturakaps (like the senior jersey they are just hats) and our Kapplefäscht which must be one of the craziest traditions the Austrian School System has! We basically partied for an entire night, and came to school the next morning (with our teachers) and aimed at stopping school from beginning on time! It was completely crazy, but so much fun, and something else that you really just have to experience to understand! Unfortunately I don't have the photos on my family's computer.

We have also been practicing for our maturaball (senior formal) which I am involved in some of the entertainment, and everyone is very excited (and nervous now) as it is on Saturday 3rd!

The 19th brought about our next rotary exchange meeting in Vienna, an action-packed, extremely cold weekend involving the Rugby world cup final, the Magic Flute Opera, sightseeing, city tours, and 14 hours travel on the train!

Laura a fellow Outbounder from Maleny came to visit the next day, and leaves tomorrow back to Belgium, and we have had an action packed 10 days here too! Finishing the school term, practicing for maturaball, sightseeing around bregenz and Vorarlberg, Liechtenstein and also in Munich for 3 days with my host family!

It is unfortunate that I don't have all of my photos on this computer, but they will definitely come at some point, and I hope that you have enjoyed reading about my adventures over the last few months. There is no way that I can



Our sailing crew waiting to get across the Croatian border

really describe the experiences through two typed pages and a couple of pictures, but I hope this taste is enough until I return to Oz in January next year!
Until next time, Mia in Österreich!!!

Belgium - Laura Beddow

Hello all, well here I am writing a report for another three months that has passed during my exchange year...and it feels strange knowing that this life that I have become accustomed to – will come to an end in less than two months! I am sure all of the out-borders know exactly what I mean – and are having as much difficulty coming to terms with that fact. Nevertheless – I am obliged to tell you about some of the things I have been up to in the last three months – and believe me there is no shortage of stories to tell! Where to start...well the last boulder report covered a lot of my activities during the holidays...but I think that I left it at the point where I went on a one month vacation with my host family in the south of France. We went to the small village of 'Blauzac' – which is about an hour and half from the Mediterranean and relatively close to the city of Nimes – well known for its history as an ancient town built by the Romans. So I spent my days visiting the local area, including the famous Haribo – 'bon bon' factory and the historically significant 'Pont du Gard' – the enormous bridge carrying water through Aqueducts to the city of Nimes. One day my family took me to Port Carmargue – where we had a lovely swim in the Mediterranean!!



On our last night in France we went to medieval festival – where all the street performers dressed in period costumes and took part in scenes and parades throughout the streets. It was a really fun and interactive experience! The following day we faced the long journey back to Belgium, 8 hours of driving...how quickly you forget the feel of driving long distances! Back to Belgium to prepare for the return to school.

In Belgium's last week of holidays all of the exchange students, including the new arrivals from the Northern Hemisphere, went to Brussels to the senate, where we sat in country groups and were addressed by the Minister of International Affairs. A great day!! It was a great chance to meet all of the 'Newies' and also to hear a bit about the political life of Belgium.



And that just about brings me to the start of my 'Rhetto' year. The school year began unexpectedly well – as over the holidays my French had improved remarkably and everything made so much more sense during classes. The social side of school became very natural as well – and far more enjoyable as I was able to participate a lot more and was invited to a lot more social events. These included things like 'Scout parties' – as the scouting movement is very strong in Belgium – like the rest of Europe! So school was school for a little while...but when the 'All Saints' holiday came at the end of October – I didn't have any complaints. I headed off on another adventure...this time to visit another out boulder from our district – Mia Schaumberg who has spent her year in Austria. So I

left Brussels at 6am for Amsterdam where I caught a connecting flight to Zurich – and then I took the train from Zurich, all the way to Bregenz in Austria. Not too bad – 4 countries in a matter of hours...even impressed myself lol! It was wonderful to see a familiar face in Mia. The next week we spent visiting the local area – including Lindau in Germany – just a short train ride away...Lichtenstein to see the family of an exchange student that stayed with our families in Australia....And just visiting the town of Bregenz – which was my favourite part, as I was able to see parts of Mia's exchange life! Then we headed off to Munich for three days with her host family and boy was that an impressive European city...if not my favourite! Impeccably clean streets, tourist friendly attitude, a never-ending list of things to do...I am sure I could go on and on...Our final day in Munich, we visited the Dachau Concentration Camp – and it was truly an unforgettable experience. And so then that brings me to the end of my small holiday with Mia...and my return to La Belgique!! This also meant starting school again! But I wasn't at all dreading going back because it has literally become a tangible countdown!!

The first week of school, the students received their Bulletins or reports, from the previous terms exams...and although mine weren't quite as good as my Australian results – I was still rather proud haha! And then my school routine began again – which included going to rotary meetings every Monday night...although, Monday the 12th, my rotary meeting routine changed a lot. I was greeted as normal by all the Rotarians – and their wives (as it was a ladies' night), and then the proceedings changed from the norm – as my mum from Australia mysteriously appeared as a special guest!!! A surprise for my 18th Birthday!! It was an amazing but strange experience – as it been over 10months since we had seen each other's faces. And then I had some time off school to show my mum my Belgian life – including meeting all of the people that were special to me, sightseeing and most importantly going to Paris!! And that brings me right up to last Wednesday night (the 21st) where I sat here writing this boulder report, just hours before my 18th birthday.

So this will be the last time I will be writing from here in Belgium...very sad...but also happy, because I know that I have had a wonderful year – and have made the most of all the opportunities made available to me....

So for the last time...Au Revoir et A Bientot Australie!!

Brasil - Elizabeth Gavranich

Hey there all Outbounders, Inbounders, Rotarians, families, and friends...

Well here's to my last three months in Brasil, the three that will past the fastest and I am sure the three that I will never want to end. What's new with me?? Well the good news is that school is almost finishing (in just about a week as a matter of fact!) and now they are beginning to have all the school formals. Different to in Australia, the students don't take "dates" to their formal, they just receive a bunch of invitations or tickets and can give them to anybody they want- I'm hoping to be able to go to all three. The thing that I love most about these parties is that they start at 11pm and can go until 6 the following morning, and all they do is DANCE DANCE DANCE so that you sleep until the night after.

What else, what else..?

Well, about a week ago I moved to my final family, and found out that I'm pretty close to a lot of my friends which is pretty good. I am back to catching the bus in to town, and to and from school-- costing me a fortune here that I am seriously considering walking. Just kidding- way too lazy for that!

I am planning to travel in the next month or so. Hoping to head back in to São Paulo with another friend to see a little more of SP more intimately than I could alone. Apparently there are a whole pile of great museums, theatres, Cathedrals, and THEME parks that are supposed to be worth the while. Have a family trip to the beach after the New Year, which will be cut short by the fact that I leave on the 13th of January. Still have no idea what I'm going to do about a going away party, or who is still going to be here in town, and how much it is going to cost. Let's hope that fate favors me this time.

All in all I don't have much more exciting news, at least nothing that anybody apart from me and other exchangers will understand. I guess the experiences in the end are all a little personal and you had to have been there to really get what I'm trying to say.

Looking forward to getting back to good old Brizzy, driving my car and making enough money to return to Brasil. The thing they don't tell you about Exchange is that it hooks you for life. Not the lifestyle, but the friends and family you make in your year abroad.

Have a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Wish me luck and see you soon!

Elizabeth Gavranich

Germany - Sam Bain

Well here I am, sitting at my computer and thinking to myself...

'Oh god!' Only 5 weeks of school left before the Christmas holidays. Which means my last five weeks of school in Germany. Which means my time is running out!

Yes, I am another Rotary exchange student wondering how the hell almost a whole year just snuck past. I can remember being 10 years old, which is the age where life is all about waiting. It's the age when one waits for their birthday, waits for Christmas, waits for the Easter Bunny to come and hide its eggs, and when one says 'Oh I can't **wait** until I finish school!' Well the days of waiting are well and truly past and since then each year seems to get faster, this year being the faster yet!

The last 3 or so months have been pretty action packed! The arrival of the new exchange students was great. Being able to meet a whole group of new faces who come from a whole group of other countries was amazing! I got to meet most of them on the Germany Tour, or better know as the Berlin Tour, as it is the place where we spent most of our week. It was a rapidly moving week, where along with 30 other exchange students, I saw and learnt about the history of east and West Germany during the division of the two parts. It was extremely interesting, and having visited a concentration camp used in WWII and a large guard post used to guard the wall until 1989, I was really given an opportunity to glimpse what it may have been like back in those times.

Well not only have I seen a bit more of Germany in my last couple of months or so, but I've also been to Spain! Yes that's right, my English class field trip to Spain! Much better than year 10's trip to the Taxation Office... We spent a total of one week in Spain, where we stayed at Loret De Mar, about 40 minutes drive from Barcelona. Most of our time was spent soaking up the heat (of which I had been missing) the sun and the beach! It was not all beach and plugga's though, we did make our way to the Barcelona Football Stadium which serves as the largest stadium in Europe and 3rd largest in the world, and we also got to see the heart of Barcelona and visited the Salvador Dali museum. And did you know that a Cheeseburger from Maccas costs €2.10 (AUD\$3.50) in Loret De Mar!

A few weeks before leaving on my Germany Tour, I was visited by a really good Aussie mate of mine who came and stayed for 2 weeks while on leave from Iraq. It was great to have had him here, and to have been able to speak Australian again! The problem with the Australian accent here is the Germans have trouble understanding it, which my mate found out quick enough, later relying on me to translate for him :P

I celebrated my 18th birthday in October, which was something really special and a little strange too. Special that I was celebrating my 18th birthday and that I was in Germany doing it! But strange in that I wasn't with my real family, or in Australia for that fact! Although aside from being in another country, 23 hours from home I was still with friends and family.

Well Christmas is also rapidly approaching as I write this email, which means the Chrissy stands and markets are beginning to set up! Now when a town in Germany decides to get into the Christmas spirit, I can tell you that they don't make a half-hearted effort, they walk the whole nine yards! Although Targets annual 30 metre fake tree is pretty impressive, it doesn't compare to thousands of people walking the main street at night, roaming the hundreds of beer and food stalls (which are really really spectacular! Most of which are more restaurant style than stall style.), hearing the (slightly drunk) Germans singing folk songs to the music being played on every corner, all wrapped up nicely with some snow (hopefully!). I'm being continuously told by my mates here how much fun it is during Christmas time, so it's something I'm really looking forward to!

Well after Christmas comes New Years, and after New Years comes about the time where they tell me to get on a plane and go home...which I'm not really sure I'm looking forward to. It will be great to see family and friends again and of course see my beautiful Australia again, but ill also be leaving a great chunk of new family and friends behind.

All I can say is that ill live my last few months in German to their fullest! And ill see you all soon I suppose!

Hau rein!

Sam

Japan - Lana Stirling

My third and final boulder report finds me regretfully looking back at the past 9 months and trying to figure out where they went. But, admittedly the last 3 months since my mid-year report have been absolutely amazing. Every weekend has been full, and it seems like between Rotary events, student exams, and the school trip- I have barely spent any time at school. (In actuality fact I have had but one full week at school since we started back after summer holiday- good life hey!)

Firstly summer holidays. Once again I had a really great family, including a 22 year old host sister. It was awesome to have someone my age around for once! The big event with them was our climb of Mt Hakusan (one of Japan's 3 sacred mountains). My host mother's shoe managed to break within about the first 20 minutes of hiking but the rest of the way we had no dramas. It was good to see the top though! I don't ever recall climbing a mountain in my life and am so proud that I actually did it (Naoko my host sister and I were the 2 leading the group – would you believe it!!) Being the smart Australian that I am - I remembered to slip-slop-slap... well I remembered sunscreen for my FACE. My arms somewhat resembled lobsters, but have thankfully recovered now! We also did summer activities like going to our areas biggest Fireworks festival (that lasted for over 1 1/2 hours!!) wearing my Yukatta (cotton kimono) that Rotary bought for me!



We have also had 3 main Rotary events of late. First was the 4 day Australian students' trip which was great even though there were just the 5 of us. Saw a lot of the main attractions that the mountains had to offer (no hiking though!) We also got to see the slopes of the 1998 (?) Nagano winter Olympics! It was so steep it was scary. A short time later 4 of us joined a group of about 40 Belgian students who were doing some type of short group exchange where we got to visit a traditional village and a robot factory.



Finally, a few weeks ago we had our first official Rotary event with the new inbounders from America and Canada. The festival held in my neighboring prefecture Toyama, was held on a Monday meaning we got 2 days off school! We also got to help push floats through the city whilst wearing our traditional work wear known as a Happi, given to us as a gift by the Rotary club who hosted us (we had short 2 night home stays).

My current host family own a Taiko (Japanese drum) company and my first weekend here I got the chance to travel to a prefecture I forget the name of for a Taiko competition. It was an awesome chance because they were performing at one of Japan's most famous shrines- and they are also one of the most famous Taiko group in Japan. Watching them really does take your breath away.

In school news things have been going really well. With each passing week I seem to be understanding more and more of my classes without even having to think about it. But the highlight of late would have had to be my class trip. I have just returned from a 4 day trip to Shanghai, China where I got to spend more time with my school friends, while experiencing a little bit of the Chinese culture.

I'd probably classify this as one of the highlights of my awesome year so far. Everyone seems just a little more relaxed and friendly outside of the normal school format, and I had the chance to talk to some of the girls I hadn't spoken to before. Shanghai was totally different to what I'd imagined it would be. So commercialized. As I had expected it is very different from Japan and after 4 days landing in Komatsu airport really did feel like I was 'back home'. Back where I can understand what's being said to me. It was scary how many foreigners I saw- and how weird it felt seeing them. Apparently we were a bit of a sight with people taking photos of us left right and centre as we walked through the streets of Shanghai in our 2 straight lines (yeah I suppose a little like they did in Madeline...)



Well the weather here is returning to how it was when we first arrived in January and that in itself is a scary fact. With only 12 weeks left in Japan, I've decided I don't want to waste any of my weekends. I have caught up with the other exchange students more than ever lately- weekends spent doing karaoke, shopping, eating sushi and lots of other fun things. One weekend I remember in particular 3 of us had a Fairy bread picnic in a park. The other exchange students make up just a small part of the long list of people I'm not looking forward to saying goodbye too.



With that I must just say a big thank you to Rotary district 9600 who have let me live out my dream this year. This year has met and exceeded any expectations I had of what such an experience could offer me. My only hope is that my last 3 months will be as good as these past months have been.

I'm sure I'll be seeing you all a little too soon for my liking- not that I don't miss everyone- I'm just not so keen on giving up my life as a Japanese exchange student. ☺ Until January- Take Care.

Love, Lana

Sweden - Michael trotter

So here we are again. Each day that goes by brings me closer to the end of my exchange and to Australia.



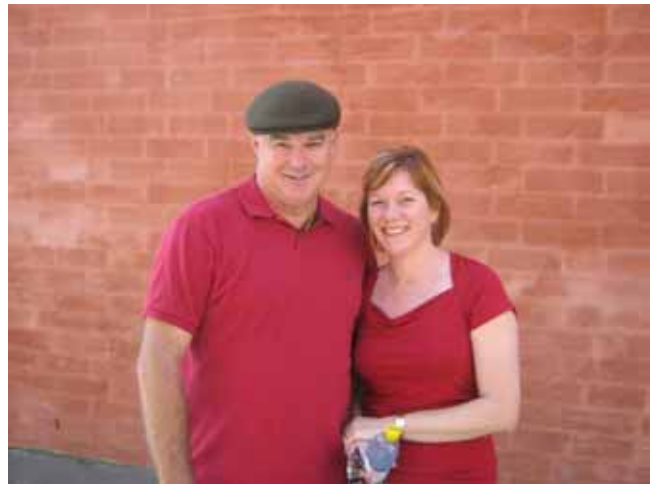
As usual exchange is fruitful with challenges and amazing experiences.

Since last time I reported I've had my one and only host family change. (When I arrived I came with a bag of 20kg and that's including the stuff I gave away. I was shocked when I came to move as to how much stuff I'd accumulated.) After living with a family for six months you really get to know a family and when it comes time to move it's quite sad. Though in the same moment the family you are arriving in is very excited to meet you and is very welcoming. So it's quite a mixture of feelings.

All said and done, it went smoothly and so began the final six months of my year in Sweden.

Not long after the change of host families, my real folks arrived, and with them came a very ser-real feeling. When I first arrived I remembered how everything felt new and exciting and a little nerve-racking. When I led them both down into the train station of Copenhagen airport. I thought I was very comfortable with Lund, and everything here, the moment they stepped threw the arrivals doors, it felt like I'd been in Sweden 5 minutes again.

We travelled up to visit Jonna the exchange student that lived with my family from Sweden over summer.



The Swedes have a different idea of how to let everyone know that Christmas is on the way. Instead of putting up trees and playing terrible Christmas carols in all the department stores they brought out a drink, in fact because they have focused all of their Christmas cheer on "Julmust" Coca cola has become cranky. In December the Swedes drink 45,000,000 litres of julmust and in a country of 9 million that's a lot of julmust per person.

With the coming of Xmas comes the cold (unlike home) so I took the opportunity when it presented itself and hoped a train to Denmark with my bike and did a 50km tour of the Zealand island. One of the things I love the most about Europe is how close all of the countries are to one another. I could stand on the shores of Denmark and look straight over to Sweden, and in some spots see both countries without having to move my eyes. Europe is truly beautiful.



The realisation that the year will very soon come to a grinding halt came the initiative to get out and see some of the more important Swedish icons. Seeing as I've managed see the Volvo place in Göteborg, the Swedish royal castle in Stockholm and driven past Ericsson it was time to work my way to the place where absolut vodka is produced. I went with a friend of mine. After two trains and two bus rides we arrived in the little town of Åhus where every drop of the famous Swedish vodka is produced.

When we arrived at the desk I asked if there were to be any tours and was promptly told "No I'm sorry only in summer"

My host mum had signed us up to a tour about a week earlier so I called her and was able to call the lady at the

desk and use her superior Swedish skills and sort everything out for us.

The tour was very interesting, I've never seen so many bottles of vodka in my entire life. Unfortunately because the drinking age in Sweden is 20 and most importantly because Rotary says no drinking we missed out on the tasting but instead received pins and a book all about absolut vodka!

See you in two months Australia.

Michael Trotter

Switzerland – Tom Rix

Hey everyone,

It has been quite some time since I wrote a boulder as I missed July due to being in the middle of summer holidays and spending 10 hours in Switzerland over 3 weeks. So since then I have done an incredible amount. I am traveled through a great deal of Europe; Italy, Germany, France, England, Austria, Czech Republic and the tiny countries of San Marino and Lichtenstein.



Most of these trips were done on my Eurotour, however I did spend a wonderful week in France and England with my Mum & Dad and fellow District 9600 Outbounder Phoebe. Also I spent a week with my Aunt and sister in Italy, visiting Florence, Rome and Pisa. It was such an amazing experience. And as soon as I got home from this trip I spent 10 hours, sleeping and washing before packing to go to Germany with my first host family for 4 days living in a castle just outside of Frankfurt. I stayed with the Prince and Princess of Braunfels and lived like a king.

Oh and for all you rugby lovers out there, I thought you may appreciate this photo of me at Australia's first game against Japan in Lyon, with Australian Reserve hooker Sean Hardman. We managed to snag tickets in the row behind the rest of the Australian squad. Apart from this photo I also met Phil Waugh, David Lyons, Sam Cordingly and Scott Staniforth. I also saw South Africa play Samoa the next day in Paris, which was also an amazing game of rugby to watch.

On the subject of rugby, my Swiss rugby career is coming along in leaps and bounds. I am a regular now on the 1st team bench and after breaking my finger in the Swiss National trials I am back on the paddock. Although I am not technically eligible to play for Switzerland, I did run on as flanker in a trial game against Germany in Geneva. It was quite entertaining to play and when we were in our final training session we discovered that in the 22-man squad there are only 8 Swiss nationals. We all lined up and mumble along to the Swiss National anthem, which I had never actually heard before, but it must have inspired us because we won 43 – 5. So that is the extent of my international rugby career, I have decided to hang up my boots. I hope it doesn't affect my chances of playing for the Wallabies. Haha, like that is going to happen. The photo is of the North Switzerland team from our 7's tournament in Neuchatel, Switzerland. We came 4th and I scored my first and only try all year. Spot the Aussie.....I am the only one with thongs on.



So to cap this off, I have had an absolutely amazing time this year. I have learnt German and Swiss German and the absolute basics of French, Italian and Spanish. I have had the opportunity to help out in a Rotary Project, in which a myself and another South African exchange student and his Rotary club headed into a remote part of the Swiss Alps to help rebuild a dairy that was demolished by a land slide. It was an amazing feeling to help this man and his family, as this was his only form of income and to help



them start to receive that income once more. It was a tough 2 and a half days in which I moved 4 and a half tones on cement on my own off the back of a truck into the mixer. It was such a rewarding experience.

Anyway, I have to wake up at 6:15am to walk through the snow to the train station, to sit on a train for an hour to get to school. I am getting over that pretty quickly. Have a great Christmas and New Year everyone, I hope mine is white.

See you in 2 months.

Tom