Austria - Mia Schaumberg

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

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!

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!

Exchange students in Bratislava...an interesting day!

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!

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!

Our sailing crew waiting to get cross the Croatian border

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 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!!!