Denmark - Kate Condon

Everyday life in Denmark has become so normal for me now that I cannot imagine life any differently. But already, we are facing the fact that we are a long way past the half-way point in our overseas adventures, and we will soon be returning home to Australia. Since my last report I have seen more of the world and I have become a little bit more Danish by continually adopting language and culture from those around me.

During the summer holidays I not only spent my time away from school, but away from Denmark. My parents visited from Australia in July and we ventured to Norway, Sweden, Spain, and of course Copenhagen. It was one of my many unforgettable trips this year! It was fantastic to be able to see more of Scandinavia because it is the part of the world that I have chosen to live in. Norway, Sweden and Denmark are all very beautiful countries and a lot different to the rest of Europe. While in Sweden I managed to get down to Soderkoping to visit Kate Flemming, who is also from District 9600. It was so nice to see how another exchange student friend of mine was living in another country, and compare our exciting lives. Over the summer break I also attended a Danish music festival on Langeland (Long Island) in Denmark, where I stayed with two Rotarian families from my Club here in Denmark. It was an immense amount of fun and a very cultural experience, one that I won't forget. In fact my whole summer holiday was fantastic. I spent time with all of my families, my Danish friends and my exchange student friends.

I started back at school on August 16 and was very pleased to see all of my classmates again. This year is very important for my classmates as it is their graduating school year, and we are now the 'big kids' in school. I study the 'language line' in gymnasium (high school), and this year I have chosen to take Danish, English, Ancient History, Modern History, Physical Education, Art and Study of Religion. It was not until recently that I noticed I have chosen almost the same subjects as I took in my last high school year in Australia, only now I am studying the topics in Danish!

I feel that I have improved greatly in the Danish language as the year has gone by, and now I'm finding basic English words hard to remember. Just recently, in an English lesson, I asked my friend if I could borrow her scissors, but I couldn't remember the English name for scissors, only the Danish name *saks*. ''Can I please borrow your… ummm… *saks*, you know, *saks*, what are they called in English?'' It was very amusing, but also a little bit scary!

These days my life mostly evolves around my school life and Danish friends. Also, every now and then, I manage to catch up with the exchange students living in the greater-Copenhagen area. Martha Hume, also from District 9600, lives only a bike ride away from my house, and a few weeks ago Martha and I were lucky enough to have a visit from our good friend Kate Flemming, who is on exchange in Sweden from District 9600. The three of us will attend the University of Queensland next year, so to be able to spend some time together having fun and catching up in-person was very precious.

Since the start of the new school year my life has become very busy. I have joined the local basketball team for girls my age, which is a lot of fun. We train three times a week, plus a game, and I really enjoy being a part of the team because the girls are just interested in having fun. My school has also started rehearsals for the school musical, which this year will be the Aussie classic 'Strictly Ballroom'. When I heard that it was Strictly Ballroom I was so excited and wanted to be a part of it. So I went to the try-outs and on November 21 I will make my first debut as a singer. It will be a very multi-lingual performance as the actors will speak in Danish, (completely losing the story's Australian humour), and the songs will be sung in English and Spanish. I'm very excited to see how the Danes interpret the Australian story.

Two weeks ago I moved house for the last time before I pack my bags to go back to Australia. The fact that this is my last family, and that I have less than four months left, is very strange. It does not feel like I have been here for long enough and I do not feel ready to return to Australia yet, so right now it is very hard for me to accept that I will soon be back in the 40 degree or more summer heat of Brisbane. But right now, here in Copenhagen, the sun is shining and the weather is above 20 degrees, so everyone, including me, is excited about the

long summer and praying that it stays for a little while longer! I think when the snow comes back, that is when we will be ready to stop freezing and get on a plane to go home. But I do know that when that time comes I will be terribly upset to leave Denmark and everyone here that have not only become a part of my life, but have become my life.

Denmark - Martha Hume

As the rain sets in all over Denmark, it seems our beautiful Summer has come to an end, and we are rapidly approaching the end of our exchanges! This year has flown by, and the absolute highlight of it so far has been the Summer holidays. They started for me with 8 days at Roskilde, a famous European Music festival where I camped together with my Danish friends. It was an unforgettable experience, I got to meet some of the 100 000 people attending from all over the world and see some incredible bands; such as Guns N Roses, Roger Waters, Kayne West, Franz Ferdinand, Bob Dylan and Wolfmother. Denmark is overrun with festivals, and since I've been here I've attended 4 or 5. The atmosphere is always phenomenal and the people so friendly, I've never experienced anything like it at home.

After Roskilde I went camping with my host family an hour or so North of Copenhagen, on a quiet beach. Danish camping is a far cry from that at home, we had fully operating kitchens, a TV room (vital for watching the World Cup), bathrooms that were cleaned twice a day and real tables and chairs. We swam in the ocean, or at least I did, my host family thought that it was too cold. I must be completely acclimatised because 12 degree water didn't phase me at all. We went for walks in the forest and successfully went for a week without mobile phone reception.

The next week I spent on an Island called Fanø in the very West of Denmark near the German border. My host family and I stayed with about 5 other families. We spent our days cycling around the island and swimming at the beach. I managed to get heatstroke, very embarrassing, an Australian getting heatstroke in Denmark! Its been a record breaking Summer with temperatures in the high 30s.

I travelled to stay with some of my Danish friends for a week in a town called Aarhus in North Western Denmark. Aarhus is as old as Copenhagen, but smaller and possibly even more beautiful.

The last 3 weeks or so I spent at home in Copenhagen while my host family went back to work. Our dog had 3 puppies which chewed everything available. I wasn't bored for a moment and spent the time with my friends and exploring the city to make sure I'd seen every possible tourist attraction while the weather was still good.

Now I'm back to school which is much better after the holidays as my Danish has improved in leaps and bounds. Last Friday we had a school ireats day, which is an equivalent of a Australian School Sports Carnival, just a lot more fun. Each class dressed up with a theme so there was everything from a deck of cards, to a prison gang to my class who were extremely creative in wanting to be princesses, possibly just so the boys could have the chance to wear pink frilly dresses.

The classes then competed against each other in sports such as soccer, volleyball and skipping, where our class was shown up by a class entirely on boys, who managed to get all of the 22 in the class skipping under the same rope. My class, which is predominately girls could only manage 4 or 5 people skipping at one time. The whole day was very relaxed, due to the fact that people aren't usually very sporty when wearing costumes. The winning class was decided on points from the best costumes and from winning competitions. The prize for winning is the school's party crew (yes, my school has a party crew) is going to throw them a party.

My Rotary Club didn't meet once over the Summer, so I've only been to one meeting in about 3 months! Next weekend the exchange students from my district are have a get together weekend where we will go hiking in Sweden. Life here sure is hard.