



Bailey

from
Oakville-Trafalgar
to
France

"I've had so many amazing memories"

Honestly sitting down to write this I have no idea where to start; over the past week alone I've had so many amazing memories. My bus trip to Barcelona showed me so many things, gave me amazing memories with friends, both old and new, while showing me parts of Europe I never thought I'd be able to see. All those amazing memories of the past week alone made it hard for me to sit down and decide where to start this report because not only in this past week if I had an amazing time but that has continued through my past few months. Through this report it's going to be hard narrowing everything down into a reasonable length piece but I'm gonna try my best to give you an accurate breakdown of my amazing past few months.

Since my last report I change host families. In my entire life I've never been this far in the countryside and it's absolutely breathtaking. Every morning I look out my window and am greeted with a huge field of green grass lined by gorgeous trees, no cars driving by and no annoying city sounds; everything is so calming peaceful, a nice change for my normal life back in Canada. Not only has countryside brought me peaceful calm surroundings I'm also constantly seeing pheasants run through my front yard. Before coming to France, I had never seen a pheasant alive and now I see them every day running around the front yard. I'm not only greeted by wild pheasants, some days if I'm lucky enough, I'll see a group of deer grazing somewhere in the fields surrounding me.

In my class at school everyone is really nice to me but I'd have to say my 3 closest friends are the three girls from the beginning of the year that helped me through my first few months. Spending time with them throughout school has been one of the highlights of my exchange, they have helped me with so many things without them I don't think my French would be in the place it is now. Not only have they been helpful with improvement of my French but also the improvement of my fashion sense here in France.

Before coming to France my fashion consisting of hoodies and jeans. Quickly, after entering the country, I realised that would definitely not be flying during my exchange. My friends quickly stepped in offering to help me by taking me to the shopping centres in the big city of Lille near us. These shopping experience with them help me feel like one of them and helped me feel accepted amongst the group. Not only did it help with making me feel welcomed within the group but also helped me feel like I belong in the country and wasn't just a tourist here for quite a long time.

In my rotary district in France we have monthly get togethers where we spent the weekend together in a different city or little town. Each weekend has a different purpose and since our last report the last two weekends have been both the hardest and the most fun. In December we had to say goodbye to our oldies. After exchanging Christmas presents and the high of getting to be with each other for a few days was quickly followed by the sadness of never having a weekend like this with them again. Many tears of both happiness and sadness were shared that weekend, happiness from the memories we shared together, recapping our time over late nights but sadness from having to say goodbye. In January the following weekend ended up being one of the most fun weekends yet to come. It was the weekend we met our newbies, at first myself and most of the others were hesitant knowing that we had to welcome people that in our minds were replacements for what we had lost but quickly, after meeting them, we realised that they were not replacements but rather additions to our new family.



As January ended and February approaches so did my bus trip, I didn't feel like my bus trip was happening until I found myself on the bus and on my way to Barcelona; even then it didn't feel real. I knew a lot of people on my trip from my district in the overlapping district in our area but there were about 20 people I didn't know and throughout the week I found myself getting closer and closer with all of them. Our trip began in Paris and throughout the week we made our way to Barcelona, making stops along the way each a magnificent part of French history. The first few days spent in Paris were spent wondering the streets with new friends, taking pictures with the Eiffel Tower and spending way too much on things we didn't need but wanted.

The time in between each monument was spent on the bus where you were making memories within your small groups or a group as a whole; these little moments in between linked the whole trip together. In between castles, Eiffel Towers, cities and even countries, the small moments connecting each students is what made the trip worth it and irreplaceable. On the third day of the trip was the day of castles, the day was spent visiting two different castles and a lot of time on the bus.



This was the same day my friend and I found the love for taking photos. Before the start of this trip, the total number of photos that could have been found of me on my phone was probably under 50, I can now safely say after this trip photos of me are nearing closer to the four digits then I'd like to admit. By the end of that day our trip coordinator was into the photos just as much as my friends and I and even got her on her knees once or twice to make sure she had the best angle for us.

The next day and Toulouse was a bizarre one but full of fun surprises, we started off the day with a tour guide the handed us blindfolds and told us we would be experiencing Toulouse without our most important sense our vision. She took us place to place, getting us to feel things, to smell things, to taste without having our eyes tell us what to think beforehand. It was one of the weirdest tours I've ever been on but definitely the one with the most fun, we had a conga line going with 40 kids in blindfolds being LED through the heart of this large French city. I can only imagine how many weird looks we got that day but I'd have to say the fear of losing the person in front of you and the laughter when the person behind you accidentally let go leading the whole group to a stop and waiting as the person fumbled around trying to find a way back to the line connecting them once more what's a fun light-hearted bonding experience for the group.

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The second half of the trip was just as eventful as the first, if not more to the point where each moment seems to be mixed with the next. If you asked me to separate our 3 days in Barcelona into 3 separate events I don't think I could because it's hard to say when one moment ended and the next began, when one day finished and the next started because every moment was so full of memories either there with my small group of three friends or the entire bus.

The past 3 months of my exchange have been filled with many great memories but when sitting down and writing this beavertail I realised I only have 3 of these and now my second one is over I'm over halfway done my exchange and I'm not gonna lie reading this and seeing I only have a few months to have as much fun as I can, to better improve myself and my French, I plan on making the rest of my exchange just as eventful as the first half.

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