



Bailey

from
Oakville-Trafalgar
to
France

“My first meal in France was at McDonalds”

After delaying my flight by a week, I was starting to feel like I might never arrive in France, with all of the other outbounds out on their own adventures and me sitting at home waiting for a visa that felt like would never arrive, it seemed my exchange had become a dream that would never come true. Finally boarding my plane, getting comfy and taking off I was absolutely terrified that I was dreaming and may wake up at any minute. I have traveled before with my family by plane and having that experience didn't make the journey any less nerve-racking.

I would like to be able to say that I was able to see the French countryside upon our arrival, but I can't because I happened to sleep through the whole flight, comfortable and happily I will add. Since I slept through my flight, I don't have much to talk about the actual flight but landing in France and stepping out of the plane was the first time I realized that my exchange had finally become a reality, it was no longer a dream.

Crowded around a black conveyor belt watching bags come and go is one of the most anxious things I have ever experienced. The longer I stood there waiting the more I began to wonder if my bags would every arrive, wondering if all the gifts I had spent months collecting, the clothes I had spent days sorting and packing then rearranging again, wondering if they had decided to go on their own adventure leaving me alone in France. Thankfully this worry was quickly put to rest as my bright blue bags slowly moved towards me on the conveyor belt.

Walking through the doors of the airport I was greeted by my first host family that happily welcomed me into their house. Showing me my new school and taking me for my first meal in France, the 5-star restaurant we all know and love but with a slight twist... a green McDonalds. Yes, my first meal in France was at McDonalds, it was a light meal to tide us over until dinner time at a real restaurant with the best chicken burger I have ever had. This was my first introduction to eating in France; a meal in France is not something to be rushed

through but rather to be enjoyed. This being shown through their many courses. An average meal starts with a pre-meal snack where you drink and talk with your family and if you are at a restaurant this is followed by an appetizer but if at home it moves straight into the main course and it's always wrapped up with a dessert. Meals in France are made to be enjoyed with your friends, family of loved ones.

My first day at school was a fun and interesting experience, it was here that I was introduced to my second host mother my mathematics teacher, my second host dad I am not sure what he teaches but I see him in the school quite often, and my third host mother she is my SES teacher. Having my teachers also be my future family has been helpful for me in my transition, they are always quick to help me understand the work when I am confused and do not show signs of frustration when I am unable to understand but rather help me understand the new words.

On my first day, I also meet 3 of my friends that have made my transition at school a lot easier, by introducing me to the other students, helping me with my notes when the teachers speak faster than I thought humanly possible, or by helping me decipher the hieroglyphics upon the board. The French school system is very different from the Canadian school system, instead of picking each of your courses you instead pick a stream that you wish to learn and because of this you stay with the same students throughout the day only changing rooms and teachers. The days also start earlier and end later but I am lucky starting around 9 and set free around 4 with an hour or two lunch to break up the day.

Since I had a late arrival, I was not able to go to the first District gathering with all the other Inbounds, but I was able to meet them in early October for our weekend to Mont St. Michel. Everyone was kind and welcoming to the new Canadian and I quickly made friends with one of the Americans, a Korean girl and a very fun girl from Thailand in my District. This weekend was a special one because it wasn't only our District going to Mont St. Michel but most of the Districts in France that we shared this weekend with. All the Districts walked along the beach of Mont St. Michel together with most of our flags used as a cape or another article of clothing. We also got to play with quicksand which was fun until you had to find a way out without falling over, that was stressful in the moment but after it was fun just hanging out with the other students everyone covered in mud together. Saying goodbye to the other students was definitely sad but I enjoyed getting to meet them and spending time with the other Districts. I happily look forward to the next meeting with my District and getting to try all the different foods that the other students have chosen to make, and what foods they think best represent their countries.

After being here for just over 2 months I am still unsure and terrified this dream will come to an early end, but I plan to make every moment count. I am so grateful to have this opportunity and would like to thank everyone that helps keep this program going, giving so many students and I a year that we will never forget.

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