



Morgan

from Oakville Trafalgar
to
Australia

“From Up Over to Down Under”

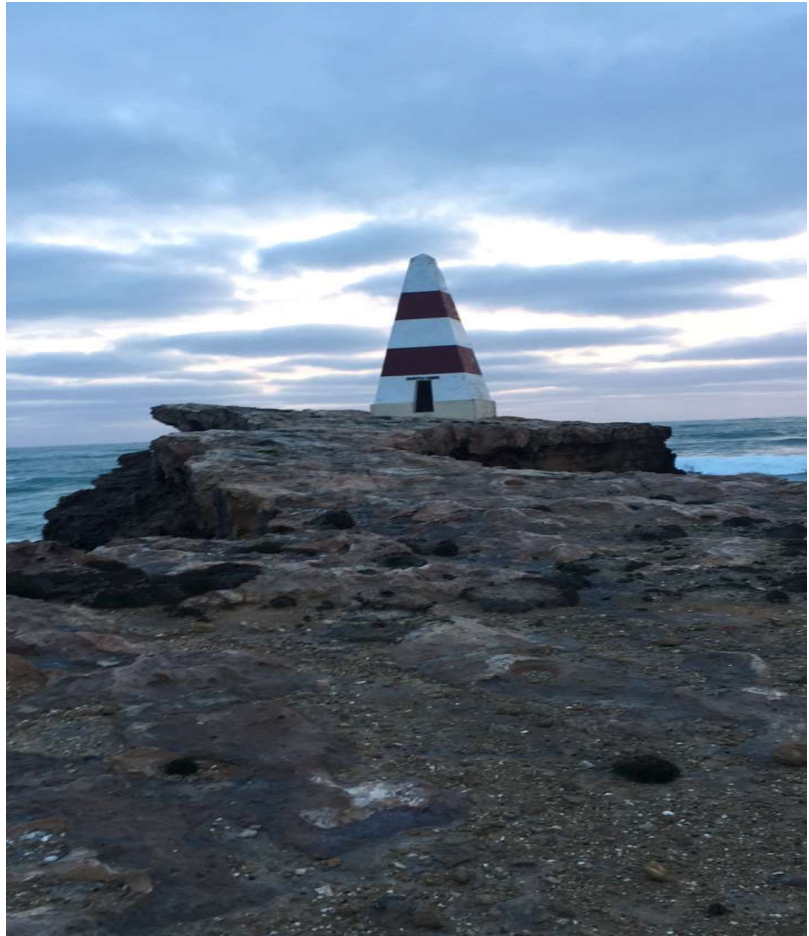
Wow. While it's been 119 days since arriving here in Australia, it feels like I walked off that plane in Melbourne airport just yesterday. Who would have thought that so much could happen in 3 and a half months! On the way over I experienced a new kind of luxury, as these 2 (very wealthy) businessmen who were on the same flight as me took pity on a dazed and lost exchange student in the L.A. airport. They told me to come with them, which I probably should have been suspicious of, but instead of mugging me they brought me to a VIP lounge, where they had an amazing buffet I stuffed myself on while waiting the 5 hours for a connecting flight to Australia.



Then finally, the time came to get on board. I never quite realized just how long a 16 hour flight really was, I don't think anyone can quite appreciate it until you're forced to spend that time in one seat, staring at the back of someone else's seat and wishing for that baby 3 rows behind you to stop crying.

Eventually, after what seemed like months, the plane ride came to an end, and I looked out at the vast Australian landscape for the first time, wondering if I would ever get used to this kind of view.

I walked out of the terminal and met my councillor Phil, as well as my host brother Ben. I was greeted with a very Australian welcome sign, and bright smiles on both of their faces as they welcomed me to my new home. Smiles quickly turned into grimaces though, as they said it was another 7 hour drive to Phil's house in Millicent, and another 40 minute drive from there to reach my first host family. But it wasn't all bad, since I got to see some more of the stunning views this country had to offer along the way, and shared a few "yarns" with the others while we drove.



After what seemed like ages, we finally arrived at my new home. I don't think it really hit me how rural they were until we travelled the kilometre long driveway to reach the house, and I realized that they owned all this land I was passing by. I later learned that they owned over 12,000 acres of land!! Never in my wildest dreams had I imagined that such a vast property could be maintained by just one family. They used all this land to grow potatoes and sometimes onions, my host Dad Terry was kind enough to take me out into the fields a few times and show me how the seed was spread.

Soon it came time for school to start up once again, and I honestly had no idea what to expect from somewhere with only 100 kids, running from kindergarten to year 12. However, I soon realized that their size barely changed what school was like, besides the fact that I get to know pretty much everyone, something you could never get back in my Canadian school.

While the classes are mostly similar, I am taking agriculture which is a completely new thing to me. In this class, I've been handling, feeding, cleaning, and leading 3 steers with my class, the goal being to prepare them for the Adelaide show. They were shown off in multiple competitions over the span of 4 days, all of which focused on certain aspects such as how well their handler could lead them around a stage, which is MUCH harder than it sounds when the animal you are leading weighs 6-8 times as much as you. Another category was on the hook, where they kill and judge the steers meat.



We must have been doing something right, because our limousin steer (light orange on the left) came 4th out of over 100 other competitors, while the angus (black middle one) came 12th! Then instead of travelling back home with the rest of the school, me and Ben stayed behind and visited his brother Luke for the rest of the weekend, who's attending the University of Adelaide for nursing.

As the 3rd term came to an end, I began to pack my bags in preparation for my next host family, the Lindners. They live about 40 minutes away from my previous home, and were extremely warm with their welcome. My host mum Tammy works at a servo in Millicent (I'm only 20 minutes away now), and my host dad Jason is a trucker who transports sheep and cattle in his huge trailer truck.



Within a week of arriving, we went on an amazing road trip through Bendigo, down to Melbourne, then travelled the great ocean road to come back home, which had the best ocean views I had ever seen.



About a month later I went on another school trip to Adelaide, this time to explore several universities, and travel around the city. We stayed in Lincoln College, and visited places such as the University of Adelaide, Adelaide College of the Arts, and Flinders Uni. Flinders really caught my attention, it had an awesome campus with live in accommodations, and they offered a really interesting mixed degree in criminal psychology. Not to make any extreme decisions now, but this place has definitely become a place of interest for my future.

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I would like to finish this by thanking Rotary, Rotarians, my past, present, and future host families, as well as all other volunteers involved in making this life changing journey possible for me. Not only am I having an amazing year here, but I am changing myself for the better while doing it. This program is something I hope all those reading will pursue because no matter how tough it may seem, your exchange will connect you with the world in a way words cannot describe. I have already created memories that will last me a lifetime, and I'm only a third of the way through.

Cheers,

Morgan