



Mackenzie

from Ingersoll

to

Australia

“I wish I could restart the clock”

Six months ago, I sat down to write my first BeaverTale. I had done so much in Australia, and I was excited to share my adventures with everyone at home. Now, as I write my final BeaverTale, and my exchange comes to a close, I’m having a hard time remembering all the things I have done, and places I have been. The last ten months have been an absolute blur, filled with many adventures, laughs, good times spent with my friends and families but also many challenges I’ve had to overcome, but at the end of the day, if I had the chance to do it all again I would, without question.

One of the most exciting experiences since my last BeaverTale was getting to be a part of a debutant ball or a “deb”. For seven weeks before the actual event, my partner and I went to weekly trainings, along with six other pairs to learn a 12-minute dance, that we presented at the event. The seven weeks came and went so fast, and before I knew it, it was time for the deb! The day of my deb was so busy, I had to get my hair and makeup done, and get all dressed up to go out. My partner and I had professional photos done before we went to the town hall to get ready for our big night! I remember being backstage, so nervous to dance in front of everybody that came to watch, but as soon as we started it was lots of fun.



After my partner and I, along with all the others in our deb finished our presentation, the night was filled with dancing, and lots of photo taking with all my closest friends, and family. It was the most amazing night, and I couldn’t have asked for it to have gone any better.

My Deb partner and me.



With Friends at my Deb

Another big part of the last three months for me was our big end of year trip, Safari. This was a three-week tour of Australia done in a bus with forty two exchange students, along with six chaperones. Over these three weeks, we travelled nearly ten thousand kilometers, seeing the most famous parts of Australia. We began in Melbourne and from there we started our journey to Adelaide. After a night spent there, we headed for the middle of Australia, the outback. While in central Australia we went to Coober Pedy, which is a town nearly completely underground, Uluru, Kings Canyon, Alice Springs, Airlie Beach, the Great Barrier Reef, Gold Coast, Movie World, Surfers Paradise, Sydney, and Canberra, Australia's Capitol.



All of the Exchange Students coming back from the Great Barrier Reef.



My friend Lea, from France, with me at Uluru and at the Sydney Opera House.



All of this was packed into a twenty-one-day journey, and by the end of it we were all so exhausted, but every second of it was worth it. I can now say that I've climbed Uluru, and scuba dived at the Great Barrier Reef, which most Australians can't even say they've done. Even though all the travel was amazing, the best part about Safari was meeting so many people from all corners of the world and making friendships that will last a lifetime. When the trip was finished, I had to say goodbye to some of my closest friends, knowing that I would never see them again. This was the hardest thing I have had to do since coming to Australia, but I know that one day in the future our paths might cross again.

Since being back from Safari I have began settling back into my everyday life of school, and hanging out with my friends and family, but it's been different because I have started to have to say some goodbyes. With only three weeks of my exchange left, I've realized that when I visit people and see the people who may not live in my town, it could be for the last time. It's hard to wrap my head around it, but I am trying to make every moment count.

In a week I will be travelling back down to the coast again, to Warrnambool for a few days and the Geelong, staying with a few exchange students. It will be my last trip to the coast, so hopefully I will have the chance to go surfing one last time, even though its winter now in Australia. I will also be saying goodbye to one of my best friends, because he will be flying back to his home country. After my holidays on the coast, all the exchange students and I will be getting together one last time before we all go home.

Going home from exchange is really bitter sweet. As much as I'm looking forward to seeing all the people I left behind ten months ago, leaving this life behind forever is extremely hard to accept, but with the help of my friends and family, both Australian and Canadian, I'm slowly accepting that my time here is almost over. I have had the most amazing year of my life, and I am so grateful to have been able to have this experience. As my return date continues to get closer and closer, I'm realizing more and more that the most important part of my exchange isn't what I have done, but who I have shared this experience with.

Again, I'd like to thank everyone involved in my exchange year. This includes my friends, who have welcomed me to the school with open arms, and who I've shared so many good memories with over the past year, my host families, for giving me a home and always making me feel welcomed, my school teachers, for helping me get involved and being amazing support, and finally to rotary international, for giving me and thousands of students all over the world this amazing opportunity. I can't describe how life changing this has been, and none of it would have been possible without any of you. Thank you for giving me the best year of my life.

If I could restart the clock and re-live this whole experience again, I would in the blink of an eye, but I can't, so I'm going to enjoy every single moment I have left until I come home.

See you soon Canada,

Mackenzie