



## Emily

### From Burlington North to France

*"I was actually a spy"*

Coucou les gens,

As everyone else, I can't believe it is already time to write my last beaver tale. The first half of my year seemed to go by so slowly, now I will be home in less than two months and I know they will fly by. I have now moved to my third host family and they two very energetic little girls who are glued to me 24/7. Their house is amazing. I have a very stylish room with my own tv, bathroom, shower and a teddy bear beside my bed that is larger than me. I'm very happy to be here, I have a feeling they are going to be great hosts.

Since my last beaver tale I have been very busy. I have gone on both of my bus trips which were fantastic. The first began at the end of February and lasted 7 days. We began in Paris, had a bus tour, visited Les Champs Elisées, went up the Eiffel Tower and had lots of shopping time. We then had a very long bus ride to Carcassonne, where we spent some time visiting the old city which is in castle walls. After another long bus ride we arrived in Barcelona. The cathedral in Barcelona is one of the most beautiful buildings I have ever seen. We also visited the FC soccer stadium, Picasso museum and the Dali museum. I loved the Dali museum, his art is so unique. During the trip I had so much fun with the other exchange students, none of whom were from my district. I will never forget that trip. However, without a doubt, my Eurotour was even more amazing. I hardly know where to begin seeing as I have so many stories. During the tour we visited Paris, Reims, Strasbourg, Munich, Linderhof, Innsbruck, Venice, Florence, Pisa, Monaco, Geneva, Avignon, Lyon, and Dijon. I saw so many amazing things I never could have dreamed of seeing outside of books and movies. I have to say Italy was my favourite. Venice is amazing, and I had a very memorable gondola ride, the man sang to us and didn't want to let us get off. Florence is full of magnificent statues; it was like being in a museum. In Pisa, I'll never forget

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sitting beside the tower with a guitar and singing with the other exchange students. Italians are also very friendly, I couldn't go anywhere without being spoken to. Sometimes it was a little creepy, but mostly flattering. I even had some people wanting to take pictures with me, I guess it's because I'm blond. I really didn't want the trip to end, I had such a great experience. I became so close with my exchange friends, there is always something special between exchange students. Our relationship is incomparable to the rest. We, and only we, understand why we do the things we do. We had to say our goodbyes after our final weekend at Lac Guerledan. After a weekend of canoeing, kayaking and rock climbing, we all cried and hugged as our host families waited for us to leave. We all have very wishful thinking, and we are hoping to all get back together one day. I have friends all over the world, and one day I will make my way to see them again.

Other than Rotary trips, I have still been very busy. I preformed in our school play in April which we had been preparing since October. I played a crazy English woman who got lost in the Amazon forest and was captured by Indians. I was captured with French tourists but I thought the whole thing was a joke. The whole play is really random, but very funny. At the end, surprise, I was actually a spy, there to capture the chief who was trafficking illegal animal skins. I had a lot to memorize, more than most of the French kids. It took me a lot of work to first understand the play, learn the vocabulary and pronunciation, then memorize and act at the same time. I had to get my friends to help me a lot, and it really helped me learn how to pronounce words better as well as learn new vocabulary. Doing theater also helped me get closer with my friends, it was the only possible after school activity I could be involved in. The play was supposed to be funny and we had a good time preparing it. I was so sad when it was over, every week I had looked forward to our rehearsals. I can't wait to come home to show everyone the DVD.

Aside from performing, I also went to the theater twice with school. Once to see a one man show called "Les Caractères". It was the day after Eurotour and I fell asleep, oops. Though you can't blame me, even the teacher fell asleep. The play was lit by candles, read in Old French and accompanied by slow music. The second time however was completely different. We went to see a remake of a Shakespeare play which was lively and hilarious. In English the title would be 'The comedy of errors'. The whole play was set up like a party scene, and they were dressed like it was the 80's. It was done so well explaining it would not serve it justice.

I have also been lucky enough to have outings with a group a Czech students staying at my school. There were four who stayed for a month, and 12 who came for a week. We visited Bretagne, which was lovely because I got to discover how amazing this region really is. We visited the Northern coast which is made of rugged red stones. Some of the stones are placed in what would seem to be impossible positions. In some of the rocks you can see faces or animals, kind of like you would see in the

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clouds. There are also a few lovely beaches, huge and deserted; it was like a paradise, yet still too cold. We also visited a boat museum, a bird museum and had a tour of one of the most important fishing ports in France. Though usually I would love missing class, school is almost over and I'm starting to realize how everything is coming to an end. I want to spend as much time with my French friends as possible before they all disappear for a month for their exams.

The other outings I have been on were with my Rotary club and their twin Rotary club from England. Every year they visit each other either in England or France for a weekend. It's too bad this year that came here, because otherwise they would have taken me to England! I was the official translator 24/7. We visited a linen museum and a famous Abbaye. We spoke, drank, and had lots of good food. I think it's funny how well I can get along with adults now, before I never would have wanted to be the only young person. Though, as many older French people have told me, they always stay young in their minds.

My departure is still far enough away that it hasn't really hit me yet what it will be like leaving here. I am very excited to go home and resume normal life. My exchange has been difficult and I had never felt very attached to living here unlike most students do very quickly. However this place that seemed so strange is now where I feel at home. When I'm on way back from other places and I see the rolling hills, the fields, the cows, the blanket of stars, the broken down barns, the little chapels that are hundreds of years old, I know I'm home. I didn't get the chance to spend my exchange in a big city with other students and lots of different people. I spent my whole year in Centre Bretagne absorbing the culture like others didn't get the chance. I was only able to speak in French and I stayed with my same group of French friends throughout the whole year. My friends in France have seen me through a lot and I can't even imagine leaving them. They helped me through my year and without them I wouldn't have made it through. From every day at school to celebrating all of our 18th birthdays I have made incredible memories with them. I am so used to seeing them every day, saying goodbye seems out of the question. I have a few days of school left until I am in summer holidays. I will have to say goodbye to my old, strict, private catholic school for the last time. I don't think I will realize how special things are to me here until they are my last. It will be weird for me to stop speaking French. I think, dream, and live in French. It is still perfectible, though I am definitely fluent. I want to keep speaking French after I get home so I don't lose any of the progress I have made here.

So, Canada, I'll be home on July 24th. I'll have to leave for the airport at 4am, and I'll be going to a concert the night before. It will be interesting to see how my last few weeks unfold. This year has been one of a kind, and I will never forget it.

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À bientôt, bisous,

*Emily*

France