



Kalgi

From Brampton to Austria

"I can hear the bells ringing and singing every quarter hour and I love it"

I remember it like it was just yesterday; researching and discovering new opportunities with the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. I didn't know what to expect or what to even look for but, I knew it would come to me if I just kept looking through the website and researching. My mom gave me a huge stack of papers that she kindly printed out for me; it must've been about 1000 pages worth of material (Thank you mom!). I found what I was looking for with her help; I found the "Beaver Tails" section. It was so amazing to read about all the previous exchange students stories and what they experienced. They had nothing but kind words to say about RYE and I was intrigued with the way they discovered the new host country but, more importantly, themselves.

It's now a year later to the day and I'm sitting by my desk thinking about those wonderful stories I read; the catch is, now, I'm in Austria experiencing it for myself. I can finally understand and feel what they felt instead of dreaming about many possibilities. I'm so fortunate to be here and I really count my blessings, this place is amazing and I can't wait to discover more of it. The things I have discovered already I can't wait to share with you oh curious reader...

There are so many things to write about that I'm glad I have a diary to refer to for all the key important points. The water in Austria is very clear and very beautiful. Supposedly, you can drink from the lakes because they are so clear but, I didn't try it. Food is incredible; it's so hard not to eat because the cheeses, meats and breads are fresh and so delicious. Exercising is a must otherwise I'm sure I would gain quite a bit of pounds. The teachers are extremely generous and patient with my learning, though I understand and speak a lot already; same with my friends and my family. Everyone here is so easy to get along with and is very interested in learning about Canada and how we live. I also get questions about India and how the lifestyle is there too! It's exciting to be a part of two different cultures because then I can share the best of both worlds.

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The nature is really alive and evident here. Tons of trees surround the area and there are so many leaves that you cannot see the ground unless you rake them up. Even the cemeteries are beautiful at night because by every tombstone there is a candle lit up for the loved ones who passed away. (There is a special cover that fits over top of the candle and has holes punched out so the candle doesn't blow out.) It really symbolizes the unity and peace the Austrians share with one another; eye opening and breath taking.

There are so many things to live for and see here in beautiful Austria. People are just so giving it's really effortless to get along with everyone and now it makes me want to give to people too. I feel a change in me and I feel good being here. I really can't thank Rotary enough for this opportunity and of course my family for supporting me too.

Music is the best here. I play in an orchestra here with the Royal Conservatory of Music and it's amazing! I really get chills and excitement when we all play; much like my orchestra back home which I miss so dearly. Music is really Austria's calling; they have so many concerts native to the culture and it's a really nice blend in harmony when they sing together, so good it gives me goose bumps.

The buildings are very old and the architecture is very unique to the building which is nice because then you know that the same artwork isn't repeated again; same with the churches. There are so many churches here and I can hear the bells ringing and singing every quarter hour and I love it; I feel relaxed and free. I don't know what I will do when I come back to Canada because without the bells I will feel an absence in my heart...

I can't stop singing and laughing here; I really love to live in the moment and spend it with people that matter most to me. There is everything to smile about and nothing to frown about. Even the language had its barriers the first three days but, after I went to language camp those barriers vanished instantly. I love German and I knew I would. It's a very unique sounding language and I'm forever grateful that I am in a different language speaking country. I can wait to explore more of this country because I know that with each passing moment my stay here is going to come to an end and I'm not going to distract myself with things that may hold me back; I want to enjoy each and every moment here because it is true bliss and I want to make it last...

Love to all

Kalji

Austria