



Aislinn

## From Brampton to Thailand

*I've made new friends, climbed mountains and visited Bangkok*

I've entered the second half of my exchange and being here has made me learn so much about everything you can think of. I might be starting to grasp a little about what it means to be a Rotary Exchange Student. I think it's a little more than filling your blazer up with pins and hanging out with friends.

On some days, I do many things and on others, I do very little but on both kinds of days, however, I find that I get some sort of opportunity to learn something new. Sometimes, it's only a new word or a random fact. Most of the time though, it's useful SOMEHOW! As an exchange student, you meet so many new people so often that you learn a lot about people in general. You get experience with watching how people interact and get along, as well as how you yourself interact with others. Plus, you now do it in two languages! It's kind of amazing. You end up learning so much about yourself.

I've learned a lot about Thai culture and some of Thailand's history. I don't even know how to compare it to Canadian culture because it's so completely... different. I still have a lot more to explore before I leave this place and I have plans to do just that. As an exchange student, I find that I have to take the initiative to do tourist-like things (like

visiting the popular tourist sites) otherwise I find myself falling into the routine of school, the mall, and home. It's easy to fall into that because that's what a lot of Thai teenagers tend to do. They also love the Facebook, I know!

Some things just fall into place though like Chinese New Year for me. I prayed in the Chinese temples the night before with my host family. The next day, we ate lunch with my host dad's whole family then headed to Bangkok. The first day was spent visiting lots of temples in Bangkok like the Temple of the Golden Buddha and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. Of course, this also was my first time to the Grand Palace. I have so many pictures! I also got to go on a boat ride (where we ran into some huge water monitors!) before heading to the Temple of Dawn. That evening, when we were in Chinatown after buying myself a Chinese-styled dress, waiting for the opening ceremony, I saw the Queen and the Princess! I really didn't know what to do besides 'wait'... It was an experience all right.

The next day, we went to Ancient Siam which has a bunch of life-sized models of interesting things you can find all over Thailand. It was cool but I tanned so much (which I really hate!)

I love trips and there is a trip in April that I will attend where I will get some more opportunities: elephant riding, playing with tigers, holding snakes, the world's longest zipline, the white Temple, and more! I'm very excited. After that, my host sister is thinking that we can take a trip to the south. We were supposed to take one in March but we had to cancel due to work. But my friends and my host sister on the south islands with their beautiful beaches? Yes, please! I don't care what month as long as I get to visit the south of Thailand just once on my exchange.

Anyway, so far, I know my experience is incomplete. I've had some fun times but there are still many things that I want to do and to learn. I've made friends, climbed a mountain, prayed in temples, and even shopped in Bangkok but I'm nowhere near finished. Until next time!

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*Aislinn*