



Aislinn

From Brampton to

Thailand

Everything is Same Same, but Different!

สวัสดีค่ะ

Greetings from Thailand!

I'm finally getting into the last stretches of my exchange and I'm starting to realize something: it's really ending. People are going home left, right, and centre and all I can think is that I don't want to leave all the good times behind. We had two more trips since my last Beaver Tale which were the North Trip and the bonus trip that my year of inbounds got called the Eastern Seaboard trip and the Rotary International Convention in Bangkok.

The North trip was April 1st – 10th and I think it was the best trip we've had this year. It would take forever to describe everything we did so I'll just get to the biggest ones. First of all, we saw a snake show which included cobras, jumping snakes, and a python not in cages and slithering quickly toward the crowd. Needless to say, I jumped quite a few times and I'm not even scared of snakes! The guy with the microphone made everything so much better with his jokes like, “look like spaghetti but not spaghetti” and “same same but different” (which is something that inbounds will hear a lot from Thai people!)

After that, we got to go pet the tigers! It was amazing and the tigers were so cute when you weren't thinking about whether or not it's going to bite your hand off. The baby tigers were definitely the cutest though I don't think Mama Tiger was too happy with it all. There was even a 2 week old cub that they kept in a separate area. It was so small. Elephants, which we rode and watched play football and stuff, are not so small. Even the babies are huge. *I might* have a small fear of elephants.

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On another day, we went on the world's longest zipline. Now, when you're doing this, you have to be very careful not to put your fingers on the wire in front of you or else you might lose a few... Well, I had an accident. Luckily, only my gloves got caught (and shredded) but I still almost had a heart attack at that point. BE CAREFUL! I got over it when we went rafting later that day. My boat was the fun boat: we kept jumping into the river to go swimming at calm parts and purposefully crashed into everyone else.

On this trip, the inbounds were close but I think everyone got a little closer. I actually made friends with people I hadn't really known yet. I'm actually super scared to leave them now. I know I'll miss them so much!

After the trip was Song Kran which is like Thai New Year. It last about three days but everyone starts at different times. My host family told me that this was a time to spend with friends and not family so I ended up traveling again to Khon Kaen and Udon. For three days, it's a giant water fight. It's pretty much impossible to leave your house without being soaked by the time you get to wear you want to go. People will target you more if they think you're foreign since it's supposed to be lucky or something to touch a farang. They put tons of wet powder on your face too. Watch out for the cooling powder! It burns!

(I tanned during Song Kran, much to my dismay. I hate tanning. :(I also caught a massive cold.)

The Rotary International Convention was actually a lot of fun. The exchange students were like superstars with their blazers. Everyone's faces seriously began to hurt from smiling for the cameras. It was a good time to collect pins but I didn't get many. My friend was over loaded with them! Some people put their pins into cool designs but I actually disorganized mine on purpose because I thought it looked cooler. Exchange student problems!

I met people from all over the world at this place. Seriously, I don't even know how many countries were there. The House of Friendship was an area full of flowers and booths that people could walk around and meet people and get involved in some international projects. The opening ceremony was actually pretty much just a speech from the Princess of Thailand. I couldn't really understand all of it though: too many complicated words! I listened to a few speeches which were actually pretty inspiring. India is Polio-free now! Rotary is so close to eradicating it completely... Just a little more.

Anyway, I tried to find Rajeev, who was in Bangkok for the convention but I couldn't find him anywhere. I guess I'll have to see him when I get back to Canada. I did, however, meet Ed and Ruth while I was on my Eastern Seaboard trip. Talk about a heart attack and a half. One minute, I'm talking to my friends and the next minute, my

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YEO calls me and I see Canadian Rotarians. Culture shock round two! That's what it felt like, seriously.

That trip was the last inbound trip of the year which means that there was hugging and crying and more hugging. We didn't really do anything super exciting (except paintball! That was epic!) but it was enough just to be able to spend time with people again. We also had a Thai test which really confused me because the way I write Thai in English letters was completely different than what was on that paper. Also, they used words I have never used in my life and I have never heard anyone else use. I still did well but definitely not the best, considering that I was just reading the Thai words and guessing some meanings.

Now I'm at home for a few days until I go traveling for a few weeks to visit friends. My departure date seems so close right now. I don't want to leave the people here. I seriously hope we all follow through on our plans to see each other. Chantel... if you ever read this... I'm coming to your cottage this summer! Riley, I'm going to Wisconsin! Rachel... you come here with Vale because you're too far (you too, Brazilians!) Eye... have fun in British Columbia!

This has been the best year of my life. I've learned so much about the world, about people, and about myself in such a short amount of time. I really hope that there will be many, many more exchange students that can come. This is an experience that you just can't replace with anything else.

Thanks, Rotary!

Aislinn