



Frances

From Kitchener to Australia

Sydney is now my favourite city in the world

I still find it hard to believe I'm writing my second beavertale having already been in Australia for seven months. It feels strange counting down the months until I leave when before I was only counting the months since I've been here. Since I wrote my last beavertale I had two months of holidays most of which was spent at the beach surfing, catching up with friends, and seeing this beautiful country with my host families. But there are a few trips which stood out for me including my trip to Sydney, a week in Anglesea, as well as a ten day trip with the other exchange students along the Great Ocean Road. The time has gone by so fast and I have been getting used to days jam packed full of activities but that means I am not wasting my time here.

Christmas was one of the most challenging times of my exchange so far and it really didn't seem like Christmas at all. On Christmas day it was 35 degrees and a clear blue sky, quite a change from the white Christmas day's I'm used to back in Canada. We spent the entire day outside. We had a lovely Christmas lunch with my host family's relatives and when we were finished the children all went surfing at the beach! That was a truly unique experience that I'm quite sure I will never get to do again. For Christmas I received a gift voucher to go swim with the sharks at the Melbourne Aquarium and four days later I made my way to Melbourne with my host family for what was sure to be an incredible experience. When we got to the aquarium I was paired up with another person and we were made to put on full body wetsuits along with a helmet that made us look like astronauts. We were then submerged into Australia's biggest aquarium and walked along the ground as numerous stingrays, manta rays, fish, and sharks swam around us. We were in the water for half an

hour and it was scary but truly beautiful and I could not thank my host family enough for what they had given me.

Not long after that I headed off to Sydney with my councillor who was my host mother at the time. It was a beautiful drive but lasted more than 10 hours and by the end I would have been happy to never see a car again for the rest of my life. I can truly say that Sydney is my favourite city in the entire world. The first day there I spent at the world famous Bondi Beach with 30,000 other people and I got to meet the Bondi Lifeguards as well. I spent the day relaxing and surfing as well as people watching. I went to so many incredible places in Sydney I cannot even name them all but a few of the highlights would be driving across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, going to the Sydney Opera House, Manly Beach, and going to the Sydney Zoo. My host sister at the time was living in Sydney so every night we went to a different restaurant each extremely different but the food was always superb. I loved Sydney so much and I can't wait till the day that I go back but I was still happy to go back to Geelong.

I only got to spend two days in Geelong before I was put on a bus for six hours to go to Mount Gambier in South Australia where I was to meet the other exchange students and we would begin our incredible Mini Safari. The first three days were spent in Mount Gambier where we did a high ropes course, went to the crystal blue beaches, and went cliff jumping. During the nights we were billeted out to host families for one or two nights but we spent every day together and we became so close with each other. We then went to Warrnambool for three days and spent the days surfing, sailing, rifle shooting, and canoeing. We continued onto Ballarat and then spent a day in Melbourne doing a scavenger hunt and that night we went up to watch the sunset at the top of the Eureka Tower. It was incredible and I cannot wait until we do our big Safari in April.

For the last week of holidays I went to a town on the coast for five days and the couple I stayed with had no internet and no television so I spent all day trying to soak up as much sun as possible and spent all day in the ocean surfing it was probably the highlight of my summer. On the last Sunday before I went back to school I went to Melbourne with four other exchange students for a music festival called Big Day Out. It was the year's biggest music festival with more than 42,000 people attending and some of the performers included Kanye West, Foster the People, and Nero, it was an amazing day and it was a great end to the best summer of my life. I'm still happy that I have another five months still to go and I cannot thank Rotary enough for giving me the experience of a lifetime.

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