

Latest News from our District 5130 Outbound 2006-07 Exchange Students....



Chauncey Wilburn
Fortuna Sunrise / Argentina

I have tried a myriad of new foods including but not limited to: Milanese chorizo pan con grasa choripan empanadas pizza and more candy than you could ever imagine. The Argentines seem to culturally have a sweet tooth. School at first honestly was a little boring in part because i couldn't understand anything and in part because they stuck me in a bunch of English classes which still doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. But now I understand Castellano a lot better and they're realizing that I don't want to improve my English. As for the other classes, I'm in an art class, which is fun, and a class about the history of language, which is really interesting. My professors are extremely helpful and are putting a lot of extra time into me to help me learn faster. In addition to the help received at school I am being tutored three times a week by a friend of my father. She's awesome. She and her nephew and two nieces help me out. They're always joking around and keeping the mood light so it never feels like school although I do get quite a bit of homework. But I figure it's good for me; I don't want to get soft. Sports: there is this ridiculously fun game called pale (I think this is this correct spelling but don't hold me to it) that's kind of like a mix between tennis and racquetball. I've fallen in love with it and am already better than a couple of my friends due to a previous fetish for ping-pong. As previously noted I am going to Cordoba this weekend with the other intercambios for a big pow-wow about what I'm still a little fuzzy on. What is new and exciting for me? The streets are crazy. I've almost been hit by a motorcycle three times. Rather exciting no? Also and I say this with the utmost respect the women are amazing. How exactly do you guys define SERIOUS dating because that is going to be a tricky one to avoid breaking. Also one of my crew has property in the country and he's going to teach me how to be a gaucho. I mean the whole nine yards: riding horses hunting pumas roping cattle. I can't wait. Even though I don't think it could be possible to get a better family (good luck getting me to switch families) I guess I am starting to miss home. But as so simply graphed in my Rotary handbook I know this is normal and am loving everything here so far. Well it is pushing 3 in the morning here and I have to get up around 7 to ride in this bicycle marathon for school tomorrow. That probably will be a little rough but I know I won't have time tomorrow to write. Thanks for everything I'm having the time of my life. and if anyone is curious and wants to know more--because I have no idea who reads this-- just drop me a line. Chau, Chauncey el cambio



Stephanie Wenning
Crescent City / France

Things are going great! I love it here! My host family is awesome and sooo nice and I am picking up on the French language quickly! I get homesick for Nor Cal a little, but then I remember where I am. I am enjoying myself so much. Thank you for the opportunity.



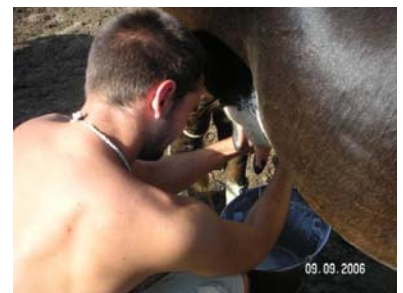
Grant Livingston
Petaluma Valley / Brazil

Hey Everyone,

Time for another update. Today is September 10th. Life is more exciting all the time. My Portuguese is improving; I am now translating emails for my host sister, Rose (Leaving for Alaska Sunday) in English. Learning to speak the language is really the path to happiness. I've been going to school now for a few weeks. I am making a lot of friends, but still haven't hung out with them much outside of school (I went to the movies with 7 people once).

I went to my family's farm on Wednesday, and returned Sunday. They have 650 acres, and about 65 cows for milk. They have a total of 4 houses, one in Natal, one at the farm, an hour inland in Brazil. This one is like a little village, with a church too. There is one in the town (3,000 people) just outside of the farm (9km from farm) then there is one at some beach that I have not yet been to. My host father, Jorge, works in an office for a lawyer, is 1 of 9 people in the congress for my state (Rio Grande do Norte), and he runs the farm on the weekend. There are also about 5 workers that he has that run the farm during the week. He told me that he generally works about 4 or 5 hours a day, 5 days a week, and sometimes a little more if there is more work to be done in his office.

Last Thursday, (7th of Sept) was the birthday of my host brother, George, and also the



Independence Day of Brazil (Year 1822). We had a party out at the farm with family members and friends, about 30 in all. It was a lot of fun. I rode a horse, milked a cow, ate a type of bird called Ginei, and ate goat. The people that work on the farm are all poor, and don't seem to have anything much, (no car, some have motorcycles) only a small place to live on the farm.

I went to 2 Forro (not fojo, pronounced fo-ho), concerts a few weekends ago with Rose, and some of George's friends. There were around 300 people and lots of dancing. I danced with a few girls. I also went surfing that weekend (borrowed a surfboard from a family member), the waves here are small, but it was still fun. I am now allowed to walk home for school (15 minutes) and walk to the mall (about 20 minutes), and I enjoy this very much because this is the only exercise that I get. My family doesn't really do much on a day to day basis but eat, talk, and watch TV.

All in all, everything is good and I have been pretty happy. I have some photos attached, so enjoy.



Today is Sept. 19th. Hi, I have been here for over a month. Brazilian life is wonderful. I had a great day of surfing on Saturday (about 7 hours) with my friend Luca. He lives in one of the tallest buildings in my city (31 floors). It has a great view of the city. My friends have been inviting me to go out with them on the weekends, but my family has other things already planned for me...oh well. It is still fun. My life is pretty routine these days. I wake up about 6, I eat breakfast (eggs, bread, tapioca (kinda like a tortilla), fruit), I go to school, I walk home from school, I eat lunch (Beans, rice, chicken, beef, pork, salad greens), I usually take a nap for an hour or so, I go to my host grandparents house and talk with them, or hang out and talk with my family, or work on my Portuguese, or help my host sister learn English (by the way her trip to Alaska got postponed because she can't speak English, so now I have a pretty important job), umm sometimes I go on errands like to the stores and stuff. They have supermarkets but they also have stores here that are small markets that just have like bread or fruit or something. Sometimes I'll go to the movies, I went to the movies with a friend last week, it is about a 20-30 minute walk from my house. I hope to go dancing with some friends Friday or Saturday, but I think my family already has plans to go to their farm (about an hour from the city). The weather has been wonderful; it rains sometimes, pretty tropical, generally between 25-30 degrees (about 85-95 degrees Fahrenheit). I have no need for those sweatshirts I packed. I generally just wear swim trunks or shorts and sandals. The housemaid, Dazinha (Da-zeen-ya), cooks and cleans all the dishes. Sometimes I try to help, but she just shoos me away. For dinner we usually eat soup, meat, rice, and bread.

School has been good; I have many friends. Everyone here is just so friendly, and they are not judgmental at all. Today there was an interesting experience in the classroom. My teacher was talking with one of the girls and me and made a deal saying that if she got the question he asked wrong, I had to kiss her on the cheek. So she got it wrong, and I did. Everyone cheered. I guess sometimes this professor plays this game with kids in class. Kissing on the cheek is very common here between students, sometimes even between kids and teachers. People touch a lot more here than in USA. Kids hug their teachers.

My class is all pretty close with each other (30 of us) and everyone gets along with each other; there aren't really clicks like in California. I don't understand much of what the teachers say, but a lot of the material I have already learned so I can kinda follow him/her when they use the whiteboard. They use refillable dry eraser markers here, something we should look into in the schools of the USA, instead of throwing one away every class.

As far as littering goes though, there are some problems here. People litter all the time. Everyone. The gutters and streets always have trash in them. But they don't have as much garbage here (inside of a household) as we do in USA. I think the biggest problem with the littering here is that I rarely see trashcans. They don't really recycle much either. My family doesn't anyway. I have talked with people about this and they know it is bad, but they don't seem to have any desire to change their ways. There is an election at the beginning of next month, maybe some new people in power will make some change.

Lula, the president here, seems to be pretty good. The poor people like him, and the rich people don't like him so much. He seems to be doing a good job of narrowing the bridge between rich and poor folks. There is a middle class. There aren't as many poor people on the street as there are in San Francisco. There are crappy shacks for houses here, but my neighborhood is mostly middle class.

Well, I'm headed back to my house now (I don't have internet access at my first family's house), it is about a 5 or 10-minute walk. I think I'm going to sign up with the gym that is next to this house (my third host family/parents of my 1st host dad) later this week. It is about 15 dollars a month. I hope your all having a good time entering winter.

Tchau

Love, Grant



Sarah Marshall
Calistoga / Germany

Hello everybody!

Germany is treating me well, I'm really liking it out here, although its getting COOOOLD!

-Sarah



Hannah Groff
Fortuna / Thailand

As though I even know where to start! How can I tell you about the trips I've taken when I take one every weekend? How can I describe new foods, when everything I've eaten I've never seen before and has a name I can't pronounce? Well, I guess I'll talk about my school first. I love it. I'm learning a Thai instrument, two forms of Thai dance, Japanese, art...and so much more! I'm allowed to study pretty much anything I want and because the teachers all strongly believe that I should learn about culture rather than study, book learning is kept to a minimum and my schedule is shuffled at will to meet the tastes of myself, teachers who want me in their class, students who want to study with me...The students, by the way, have made me feel beyond welcome. Wow, the first day of school you'd have thought I was a rock star the way the kids were screaming! Strangers give me gifts, invite me places, tell me they love me, etc. I admit, it's still a little lonely sometimes, though. Everyone speaks beautiful English and I'm learning Thai faster than it seems anyone expected I would. Still, my Japanese teacher once told me you never really know a person until you hear them speak their own language. How true that is! Being able to say, "I'm fifteen years old. I'm hungry. I like the color pink.", is useful in everyday life, but its so much different from being able to tell (or understand) a joke, have a debate, or engage in deep philosophical discussion.

As for the food, Thai meals are delicious, if rather large. Honestly, tonight was the first time I could eat everything my mother gave me, partly because I think she's finally realized I don't have a Thai appetite. Sometimes, it's hard because I'm a vegetarian and that can isolate me a little, but in most dishes it's easy to get a replacement of egg or tofu. Thai food is very spicy, though! I had one bite of somtam (papaya salad) and was rushing for water, milk, ice cream, a donut...and it still burned! One bite of salad!

And traveling? Well, my family took me to see the "most beautiful Buddha in the world" in Phitsanulok and it was gorgeous. And huge. And glittery and gold! Real gold! The next thing that really stands out was visiting ruins and temples in the ancient capital, Ayutthaya. I'd never been anywhere so historical before. Everywhere you go, you're like, "Wow, I was in a city that was pillaged and burned down. Monks and kings used to be walking, building, praying here, before my country was born!"

Well, that's pretty much all I can stand to write, too many new things going on! But I will mention that my music teacher is having me perform (solo!) on the "ranod ek" a type of traditional Thai xylophone, at the festival coming up in a couple of weeks, and I may go to China for three weeks. (I still have to get all the permission forms taken care of.) So maybe that's what I'll write about next time - - if it's not old news by then already!

In a later e-mail, Hannah responds to Dist Chair Sondra's inquiry about her well-being after the recent coup in Thailand:

I know everyone is really worried about me-- I've gotten so many emails just like yours!-- but even though I am deeply touched by the concern, rest assured that there is no need for it. Phetchabun is a much more rural community, far removed from the disturbances. But I will keep an eye on the news, and I promise I won't hesitate to ask for help should I need any. Don't worry! I'm very well taken care of here. -Hannah



Lauren Ivey
Garberville / Italy

I've just gotten here 3 days ago. I have not gone to school yet. My first impression is that this city appears very similar to a city in America, except for all the amazing architecture. The food is simple but of very good quality, and I have tried everything I've been given, including some VERY strong cheese.





Clara Saguto
Sebastopol / Argentina

All is well here. I am learning the language and adjusting better than I thought. The people here are so nice it's amazing. Last weekend I went on a school camping trip it was a lot of fun it was three days long and I swear we must have sang at least half that time. It was so much fun. I am having so much fun. Trying new foods. They eat this food called dulce de leche with everything and look at me like I am crazy when I ask for water. I went to my first group meeting where everyone in our district was given these huge books, one for history and the other for geography. And we were told they would send us a test every three months and that if we got a 7 or less three times in a row we would be sent home and then we would be graded on a couple of our classes in school. Oh yeah and the books are in Spanish so it's really hard to study. Everyone was really mad but I am trying to get the kids at school to help me study and it helps my Spanish a lot. Hope everyone else is doing well



Bergen Smeding
St. Helena / Switzerland

Life has been going good. I was a little bit home sick because of the drastic change of life style. Some of the foods I have had are spätzli like a pasta but also like a gnocchi. I've also eaten Hiersh it is a kind of elk deer thing that is wild, those are my favorite foods. I am currently taking German, Math, P.E, Chemistry, English, Biology, Art, History, and an extra sport class. I also joined the local golf club and I will maybe join a American football team if I have the time. I took a field trip with my class 5GK to Bern this last Friday the 15th. Yeah, so things are going well just getting settled in.



Leslie Kline
Fort Bragg / Norway

I'm having a really good time over here. I've tried sheep and shrimp and ox and raw fish since I came here. I've joined the 4-H program and I'm working on getting into a band. At school, I take regular classes and Spanish and P.E. The schedule is in block format so I get confused with what classes I have. I find math really easy because I did it in 8th grade. I have friends at school that I can grab to hang out with, but I still don't see many people after school. I really like my host parents and my counselor. My host parents have me read children's books to them for ½ hour every night for my pronunciation. I also found it odd that it's warmer up here. Love to you all.

-- Last updated October 2006.