

## News from our Outbound Students - Sept/Oct 2007



REBECCA HALE  
in ITALY

I arrived Monday afternoon after a long flight resulting in a 48-hour day but even my exhaustion couldn't stop me from being excited. My host family is wonderful, they have helped me with everything I need to get settled so far and they say that they are terrible cooks but if this is terrible cooking I can't even imagine how good the "good" cooking would be. Even though many people say that going to Europe is just like going to a different city in the United States I am already seeing so many differences. When we wake up in the morning (I'm still having a little trouble adjusting to the time difference, the first day I slept until 4 in the afternoon and they didn't even wake me!) we have a very small breakfast and then nothing else until 2 or 2:30 for lunch. My host mother says that I don't eat enough but I've been full since I got here. Again, later than in the US, we have dinner around 8 or 9 and then more coffee. The coffee is delicious but it probably doesn't help me with the time difference to drink it at night- it's cultural. My host mother has been helping me so much with my Italian, teaching me little bits each day. And I love to go around town with her because she always introduces me to people that don't speak any English so I can do the little Italian routine that she's taught me. The second night that I was here my host parents took me into the center of Monza, right outside of where we live. It is a beautiful city with cobblestone streets and music on every corner. It felt a lot like Arts Alive in Eureka but on a much grander and more European scale. I will attend my first Rotary meeting on the 15th of this month and after that I will send some pictures. Hopefully I can figure out how to get them on the computer. A presto è grazie mille.



ALEX BOTKIN  
In NORWAY

It's Alex, the funky trombone kid you sent to Norway. I would like to apologize for not touching base as soon as I arrived. I've been keeping myself very busy socializing with the locals, keeping touch with friends and family, checking out the beautiful scenery (I have been lucky to go hiking in the mountains three times now), attempting to study Norsk, and so on. I cannot thank you enough for making this possible. I realize now that I have been here for my first month and it is going wonderfully. My first host family has been great. My mother is a teacher at my school (Ringsaker Videgåendeskole, I hope that's the proper spelling... I've been more concerned with pronunciation...) and may I add that she's a killer cook. mm mm mmm. I'm talking about home made breads and jams, baby. Also, my father has been real fun to talk politics and movies with. He's a fisherman as well, so we've been eating some of the finest Norwegian salmon that he has caught himself. School has been going excellent. Some of the other exchange students in Norway have said it's boring but I don't really think so. Also talking to the Norwegians that actually understand the teachers' lectures say it's boring for them too, so I take it I'm not missing out on much. I was also warned by many people on arrival to Norway that it is a "cold country, and it may be hard for the locals to warm up to an outsider". This cannot be more UN-true. Perhaps I brought some California sun to Norway... but seeing as how I grew up under a fog belt my whole life I find that hard to believe. But honestly some of the Norwegians can be a bit shy so I must make the first move socially. And once I break the "Norwegian ice" they tend to be a very nice and open people. I don't really know what else to say right now but... ha det bra!



ELENO NUNEZ  
In GERMANY

Well hello. I am doing really good here in Germany. There are so many new things that I have done over here in these past six weeks. The time goes by so fast. I am currently playing soccer with a club and pretty soon I should start handball. I have traveled to the Cologne Cathedral. My host family is taking me to spend New Years in Austria, which is really cool. I am having a wonderful time over here. The food is really good I have tried almost everything that they have given me. The only thing that I did not like was sauerkraut, but at least I tried it. My school is going really well. I have started to make friends and it's all going really well. I am taking Math, History, Philosophy, Biology, Sports, Spanish, English, and Deutsch. I really like my school; it's really big and it takes me a while to get from place to place, but I am really liking my school. It's great and the people are great too. I am really liking Germany. Thanks Rotary!



JAYME TAUZER  
In SWITZERLAND

This Monday will begin my third week in the school everything is going really well including my German. My host Rotary club is really impressed with the effort I am putting into learning the language. The bread and cheese here is delicious! I am in choir in school and we are going to Romania for a week in January. I am taking all of the classes except for French and Russian the school days are long but I am usually expected to study German during class instead of participate just yet. I am meeting a lot of very nice students and I think I am fitting into the culture nicely.



ANDREW WHITE  
In SWEDEN

Everything is going great. My family is very nice and helpful. My Rotary club and counselor are inquisitive and willing to help with any problems that may arise. I have been told many times that I am welcome here by many different people and feel genuinely accepted. School is difficult as lessons are in Swedish. I am in the Social Science department and take business type classes. I tried to join my school hockey team but was denied for lack of skill but I have started kick boxing classes twice a week on my own which have turned out to be very fun. The food here is good. I have eaten more potatoes here than probably my whole life before this trip. Although the food here is very good I do miss American breakfast. Everything is going good so far and I'm looking forward to the rest of the year.



KATELYNN WILEY  
In CHILE

It's crazy to think that I have been here for a month. It feels as if I have been here for years, but also as if I only just arrived. It's an odd mixed feeling that would be difficult to explain, like most of the emotions involved in foreign exchange. I never knew it was possible to feel so many things at once.

I think the thing I've learned most is how to live comfortably in a state of constant confusion. I have perfected my nod and smile technique for when I don't understand, I am no longer shocked when I end up at a party when I thought I was going home, and in some cases I have even learned to use my confusion to my advantage. Of course it can be frustrating not to be able to respond to questions I want to answer

and it is especially difficult for me not to be able to defend my own opinions, but all in all I am getting used to it.

Also, my Spanish is improving phenomenally (while my English is getting worse, sorry if my spelling is sub par in this email). The idea that the average time to become fluent in a full emersion environment is three months was difficult for me to believe in the beginning. In my first week I would sit in my room at the end of the day and say, "There is no way I'm going to be fluent in three months. I can't imagine ever being able to speak this language." But now that I am almost having almost conversations it seems to be more in the realms of my imagination and I believe that I will be able to speak well, if not fluently by my three month mark and that is a huge relief.

Most everybody is very patient with me though, especially my host family. My mother is sometimes a bit too patient. I think that it can be easy to forget that a person shares an equal intelligence when you aren't able to speak with them. The other night my mother went on a long tangent and I understood what she was saying but wasn't sure if it was a question or a comment. She spent the next five minutes explaining the difference to me! haha. But I love her, I do. She's very nice and always makes a point to help me learn the names of whatever food we are eating and of random things we see in the street. She also tries to keep me from being bored and will sometimes drive me and my host brother around the city so that I can see the sights and take pictures. As for my host brother, Diego, he is amazing. He watches the same cartoons as me and plays similar video games and I usually understand what he's saying, which is a huge plus.

I also like my home, or homes I suppose. I normally live at my host mom's house. It is small but comfortably and decorated brightly with a lot of orangey yellow. Mostly I like that it's warm. My host dad's house on the other hand, is large and grand with a pool in the backyard along with a small soccer field, a playground, an extremely small orchard, and a ver, very small one row vineyard. If I had to choose between the house I would choose my host mom's house. The house of my host dad is freezing cold at all times. I sleep in a sweatshirt while I'm there.

My town is a lot bigger than Petaluma, but anybody here would tell you it's small. My school is big as well, but at least they acknowledge that. It's three stories tall and built around a series of court yards used for PE. It's called Liceo Abate Molina and is currently celebrating it's 180th birthday. haha. I am the 46th student in my class and it used to shock me that the classes were so large. Now it just seems natural. Everybody here is very friendly too. Since I only have one room for all of the different subjects, it is easier to get to know my classmates. I have been hanging out with two different groups of girls. At the moment I am trying to decide between the two. It is a difficult decision since I like them both for different reasons.

However, school is not all socializing. There is a lot of almost learning going on there for me too. I say "almost" because I have yet to understand even a sentence of curriculum that I haven't already learned in the USA or doesn't have to do with learning English or Spanish. I did a horrible thing and accidentally fell half asleep during my class with the strictest teacher. She was very angry and lectured me on my posture relentlessly, even when I tried to explain that I didn't know what she was saying (I only know now because all of my friends explained it to me later). After that I decided I needed something to keep me at least looking as if I were paying attention to the lesson. (Unless you've experienced it I'm sure you have no idea what it's like to try and pay attention to someone for an hour and a half when they are speaking words that to you sound like complete nonsense) I came up with the perfect way. I've always liked to observe people, so now in class I pay attention to the way my teachers move and talk and teach.

My professor of civics is my strictest teacher. She has deep-set frown lines and her smiles are square and look like they take physical effort. I get the impression that any hint of disorderliness stresses her horribly. She is the only one out of my 12 teachers who insists the desks of the classroom be in perfect rows upon her entrance and that we thank her when she says we can sit down (we have to stand when teachers come into the room here). She talks with her hands but she always keeps them between her shoulders and her elbows are at a constant 90 degree angle. Occasionally she only talks with her right hand, her left hand frozen in whatever contorted position it was in when she started using only her right.

My language teacher is also serious, although in less deliberate way. His seriousness seems to be more natural and he continues teaching no matter what is going on in the classroom. He talks straight through disruptions as if they don't even faze him. He often makes jokes that I don't understand, but the rest of the class laughs at. When this happens he never smiles or laughs at his own joke, he is not even smiling when he says it. It's as if he never made a joke. The most acknowledgment I've seen to his own humor was a small smile and a laugh that was no more than a quick exhale of air. Whenever he talks he is

always touching something. He often carries around the white board pen for no obvious reason. Sometimes he touches the board with one hand and talks in gestures with his other, as if trying to channel the knowledge off the board, through his hands and into the students' minds.

But of course, I doubt many people want to hear about that for very long.

Hm... What else could I say? Oh! My favorite part of my entire trip was the celebration for the national day of Chile! It lasted for 6 days and if they had told me it was the national week I would have believed them without even a hint of suspicion. I had expected the short vacation to be boring, but I ended up at my host dad's house where there was party after party. A group of guys almost my age was there most days and at least one of them was there everyday. I enjoyed spending time with them since they listened to similar music as me and reminded me somewhat of my friends. By the end of the weekend I was so bruised and sore that it felt like I'd been hit by a car. haha. It was really from tug-a-war, sack races, every variation of hide and go seek in the world, some puck throwing game, climbing a tall pole twice barefoot, working out in the home gym, and mostly playing SOCCER!!!! It seems like every time we went outside we ended up playing soccer. They also taught me how to fly a kite, something I always thought I already knew how to do, but discovered I could not. haha.

I also have one non-Chilean friend here who lives very close. Her name is Marleen and she is the Holland Rotary exchange student at my school. She speaks flawless English and is very fun to hang out with. She ran into my class today and asked if I had afternoon class this afternoon (one day a week there is afternoon class... it's not fun) and when I said no she said good and drew me a map to her house and told me to meet her at the cab turn around at 4. I only got a little bit lost and I ended up meeting her at her house instead (I have a horrible sense of direction)

There is so much more I could say but there is no way I can fit it all into one email. I guess I will end by saying thank you to everyone. Thank you to my friends who supported me in this, even if they wished I wasn't going. Thank you to my family for putting up with me in my last stressful month at home and for helping me get all that horrible paper work together. And thank you most to my sponsoring rotary clubs. If it weren't for Petaluma Valley and Petaluma Sunrise Rotary Clubs I would never have been able to have this amazing experience. Don't stop sending out exchange students! This is a wonderful program! And tell the Brazilian I said hello and I hope his English is better than my Spanish! haha.



JULIA BRANDL  
In GERMANY

I have been in Germany now for exactly one month and one week. I love it so much!! The only thing that is hard for me to get used to is the weather!! I miss the California sun so much. Other than that everything is going great!! My first host family is amazing. I have seven brothers and sister, and they always keep me entertained. Speaking with the younger children really helps my German. And the sister that is just one year older than me introduces me to many new people. My host mom is so sweet!! She makes me feel like I am already truly a part of the family!! The language is still very hard for me, but I have a tutor twice a week and it seems to be helping some. It is just so frustrating because there are so many different rules and exceptions, and so many things you just have to memorize!! I just have to remember that it will come soon and I have only been here for just over a month! School is pretty boring since I still can't understand much of it. However I really like my class, all of the students are really nice and inclusive! Also all my teachers are really understanding!! So overall I really like school here! The food here is amazing! It is so healthy, but so good so all I want to do all the time is eat! It is horrible but delicious!! I think I have already gained ten or fifteen pounds just in this short time!! My Rotary club here is also great!! I have already had two really fun Rotary weekends and there are many more planned. Also the local Rotary club has invited me to go with them to Spain for four or five days in the spring!! I am very excited!!! I just wanted to give you an update on my stay here and let you know that everything is going great!! And to say thank you for this experience of a lifetime.



SARAH SCUDDER  
In ARGENTINA

Hello everybody! How are you doing? I hope all is well in Arcata. I am doing great, way too distracted by all the things going on to think too much about missing home. Although I bet that is obvious since I've been here 2 and a half weeks and this is the first time I've written. My family here is amazing. My parents are really nice. My mom is an English and German teacher but she still finds it hard to speak with me in English plus I want her to speak Spanish with me, so we almost always speak Spanish unless there is something important that I need to know that I'm not understanding in Spanish. My father here is really fun, but he speaks only about 2 words in English so sometimes when it is just us we have fun trying to figure out what we're saying. I have two sisters and a brother who are all amazing. My younger sister Sofi who is 16 and I go to the gym on Tuesdays and Thursdays which is really cool because I'm not used to all the bread they eat. My school gets out at 1:30 on Mon, Weds, and Fri, so on those days I try to go to the gym by myself but its hard because I get tired so easily here. I'm starting to know my way around. Now I can find my way home from school no problem on the bus or with friends who have cars and live near me. Also, if my mother is busy when I want to go to the gym I can find my way there walking in about 40 minutes. Yesterday I went into the city on the bus (I only got a little bit lost) to meet with Tatiana Hernandez who was one of the students from Argentina last year in our district who lived in Eureka. It was great to see her and she is looking to start college here in Cordoba in February or March so she will be living in the city, which will be really cool for me to have her nearby. It was so funny because at first we spoke in English and then in Spanish and then in English again. I have also emailed with Franco Petrazzini about meeting up because he comes to Cordoba city almost every weekend. My school is really nice. We have uniforms (gray pants or skirt w/ blue knee socks and a blue shirt) but its cool not to have to think to hard about what to wear in the mornings. My school starts early at 7:30 but at least every other day a teacher doesn't come to school so we have a free period or get out a period early because they don't have substitute teachers here. We had our first Rotary Orientation last weekend in Alta Gracia, which is about an hour from my house. It was really fun to meet all of the exchange students (about 75 of them!) and the Argentineans that are getting ready to leave in January. The most people are going to Germany and then the U.S. My sister Trinidad is going to Austria and is practicing her German because she has never had classes. At the orientation we learned that the first trip to the south of Argentina is on the 23rd of October, so in about 2 weeks. It is so soon but I am so excited for it! It is seventeen days and we get to see penguins and for 5 of the nights we are sleeping on a bus so that should be...uncomfortable but fun I'm sure. We also pass through Chile, although I could say I have already been there because I was in the airport for a few hours. How are Gilberto and the girl from Italy? Is the San Francisco trip soon for them? In the orientation I also met a girl who is living in Celeste's house here in Argentina. Celeste is the Argentinean girl living in Eureka that I got to meet before I left so that was really cool. She couldn't believe I knew Celeste. I wrote this email in Castellano before I typed it in English to practice my writing and I am reading the 6th Harry Potter book in Spanish to practice reading. Please tell everyone in Rotary that I say Hi and thank you so much for sending me here, it is wonderful!! Chau suerte!



JOHNNY COLLARD  
In MEXICO

Well life here in Mexico it's pretty awesome. So far I have tried habanero, Shark, Empanada, Cameron cocktail, Paella, typical Mexican food (lots of tortillas and refried beans) Yucatecan dishes Flan, Guanabana, Chayote, Chimbo, ( honey bread) Tortas, and all types of different breads from Chiapas Mexico aka "pastelitos" . Also I have tried dead bread (pan de muerto)



and all natural peanut coconut strawberry and lemon ice creams. I love the desserts here they are very tasty however the cheese cake here is a little less than satisfactory along with the Chinese food that they sell in the mall.

School: I am in " Trecero de Prepa " which is basically a senior in the USA. Patria my school is a private university elementary and Jr. High and High School. In my classroom there are about 23 students. I am majoring in sociology although there are two other subject majors for seniors, which are Mathematics or Biology/Medical. My school is pretty nice all the classrooms have air conditioning and the air conditioning is ALWAYS on but is nice and refreshing because it is about 30 degrees Celsius outside or even more. Usually we have 8 Classes a day however some subjects are taught for two hours. After the fourth Class we have a 20 min break to eat and talk with friends after that we return to our classes. School is very different compared to my school in California here in Mexico we wear uniforms to school and have one classroom. We never change classrooms unless we are taking a big Exam however don't let that fool you into thinking that we only have one class because on the contrary we have 8. The 8 subjects that I am studying are: Catholicism Math sociology Administration Economics Professional Orientation Skills Workshop Literature and last but not least Adv. English. I dropped my English class because I speak more English than my English teacher whose credentials I can question. In general School is going well; it's kind of hard to understand the teachers but I'm getting use to the way they pronounce words. My friends in Patria are pretty cool; however a lot of my friends and the people in general speak English so it's been difficult to practice Spanish when they continue to talk to me in English. But my friends are really supportive and like scorning me when I talk in English. I keep the English to the most possible minimum at school. Although there are occasions when I forget I am in Mexico. Like when I wake up to my host mom knocking on the door calling my name because I over slept and I have to be at school in ten minutes. But I fixed that problem. "ya desperte" = " I'm awake" I just shout "ya desperte" and get dressed and ready as fast as I can. Or sometimes I forget I am in Mexico when I get really excited and speak before I think then get this really weird " I have no idea what you said" look. Sports: Lucky me I have been pretty active and taking advantage of all sorts of opportunities. Right now I am taking Track and tennis Monday- Friday at a nearby Sports Club and Every Monday and Wednesday I practice Soccer for an hour and a half at my school. I have had two soccer games so far; however my lovely committed teammates usually arrive late or don't arrive at all. But that doesn't stop us from playing we just borrow players from the other team. I learned something about my self that I didn't know I had some many doubts about and that is that I am probably the worst and most pain inflicting soccer player in Mexico but that doesn't keep me from having fun. My friends are just extra careful and always have their shin-guards. Also I ran in a 5 Km race with over 350 participants. It was a community event held by my host dad's bank/work there were over 700 people who either assisted in the race ran in the race or who were helping in someway. Out of all the runners I came in fourth place, the first place finisher was only 1: 30 in front of me. However I came in first in my category for youth and I received a nice trophy, a medal, a new shirt and a little towel. Trips: Mexico is beautiful!!! So far I have had the pleasure of visiting Cancun, Isla Mujeres, Playa Progreso, Chi Chen Itza ( Maya ruins), Dzibilchaltun ( Maya ruins ), the Zoo in Merida, most of the Museums and art galleries in my city and all of the malls in my area. Tips: After many trails and errors I have finally accomplished the task of taking a bus to the mall and returning back where I was suppose to. Also Mexico has a addition of a 2 hour time difference from the USA; Plus an additional 30min- 1 hour. What I mean is when the people here give you a specific time to arrive somewhere automatically without questions add 30mins – 1 hour. Because if you don't you will be super early and will end up waiting that extra 30 min – 1 hour by yourself. Well all is well and I am having a blast. My Spanish is improving and so is my Maya which I am learning too !!!



CHRISTINE HAWLEY  
in HUNGARY

Second Month Things are going pretty good here. It has already been over a month, and it feels like I just got here. My host family and friends are great. The students in my school are extremely friendly, patient, and eager to help me. They translate courses, teach me new phrases, and actually care for me. It is an awesome experience. I also have my literature teacher who volunteered to give me Hungarian classes. So we do that during the week. My family is great. The little 6-year boy, is constantly running around, pointing and saying things in Hungarian. We just got done reading his 'Lego' book. So I have some interesting Hungarian vocabulary now: things like (space craft, alien, bad guy, ext.) Maybe someday I will use them. haha. Last weekend the whole family and I went up to the highest point in

Hungary. I would have to say, back home, I live on a hill that big. But I definitely enjoyed it. We went hiking. And let's just say, that family can GO! They made me look bad, and I have always loved and been good at hiking. We went to an old hunter's cabin and had lunch half way. Just being around trees, mountains, and away from the City life reminded me of Nor Cal. It has been a month since I have been around that, so it was a little treat for me. We then headed back home and they surprised me by taking me to a restaurant named 'Arizona Steak House'. I ordered chicken wings and an excuse to not eat with my fork. I think that weekend brought me closer to my host family. My second outing was my trip to Italy with the Hungarian Rotary. We left Friday and stopped at churches and for dinner. All 50 exchanges crammed in a bus for 15 hours. Man, everyone that didn't go missed out on that part. I think we all got about one hour of sleep on the ride there. We arrived on Saturday morning. I was proud to say I was the first off the bus jumping around and chasing birds. Throughout the day we just formed our own groups and went around San Marcos square. We did a lot of shopping (mostly for Christmas) and took ALOT of pictures. We found an Italian restaurant that has somewhat inexpensive pizza and ordered our own. When we got the pizza, it was about the size of a medium-large pizza in the states. But we made a pact, that this is our first time in Italy, and our first Italian pizza, so we HAD to eat ALL of it. You can say we were a little dizzy and full by the end. We then decided to go on a gondola to relax and take a breather. That was truly amazing. Just seeing the old architecture, bridges, and homes. After, we went and visited churches and museums. We stayed there till 8 at night. And watched the sun go down. And not to forget, the weather that day was clear, sunny and the warmest it has been in weeks there. So I truly felt blessed on that day. I would have to say it was once of the best days of my life. I was just in awe looking around. You can't close your eyes because there is so much to see in so little time. So I definitely had a VERY GOOD time. I have only been here for a month and half, and I can say I have already had moments that I know will stay with me through out my whole life. Thank you Rotary for giving me this opportunity.

