

Report from our Exchange Student, just arrived in Spain.

MADELINE HANNAN-JONES

Hola!!

I hope all is well.

I have had the best first two weeks in Spain. My flight over was so long but bearable



all in all, changeovers in Madrid and Paris were overwhelming but it was all fine and ran as smoothly as I hoped for, with no problems encountered. I was welcomed extremely warmly by my Host Parents and a couple of the other inbounds to Pamplona at Pamplona Airport at 9:30 on Sunday night, extremely tired (I fell asleep on the tiny plane from Madrid to Pamplona) and read to sleep. Little did I know that it wasn't even dinner time yet, and that I was still to go home and eat

before getting to sleep. My first day in Pamplona was predominantly running errands with my host mum, who I instantly got along with. She is really gentle and kind, and I love talking with her.

My first rotary meeting was on that night, and since there are only 12 in the club, there weren't too many to meet, and generally the exchange students don't attend the actual meetings, so I was there to meet the Rotarians and then the 5 other exchange girls (from Taiwan, India, USA and Germany) took me out to eat some tapas, or as we call it 'Pintxos' up here in northern Spain.

I won't bore you too much with the details of school, only that it is really different to Australian school in that the teacher stands at the blackboard and lectures for an hour, repeated 6 times daily. On the first day I was told of for having a water bottle in class, but a super lovely group of girls asked me to sit with them and everyone was extremely welcoming and understanding of my language barriers, exhaustion etc.

I quickly bonded with the 5 other exchange girls, since they spend quite a bit of time together and I really enjoy their company, though when I'm with them sometimes I feel that I'm not learning as much as I could be because we speak English 100% of the time, but I also feel so lucky that they



have accepted me as one of their own and that I am able to have such a good group of girls to tap in to for the next 6 months.

Quite a noteworthy point that I find really different is the eating culture here in Spain. As you may know, Spanish eating times are very strange. For breakfast, we have coffee with milk and something small to eat such as fruit or some bread (We eat SO MUCH bread!). At school, there is one half an hour break in which we eat a small sandwich which for me usually has some ham or chorizo, and after walk home from school at 2:30, a three course lunch is waiting for me as I walk into the apartment. The food is so delicious but there is always so much of it and my host mum really loves to feed me lots! We have a maid who comes around every day to cook lunch and clean the apartment, her name is Milena and she is very nice though she doesn't speak any English!! Dinner is served at around 10:00pm and it is a light meal. I have already cooked dinner for my host parents a couple of times!



Name : Madeline Hannan-Jones
Country of Origin: Australia
Host Country: Spain

I live really central in Pamplona, about 20 minutes walk from the centre of the city. This has proved very useful because if I find myself bored or a bit sad I can simply walk through the city and explore. That's also the great thing about living in such a small city, is that I can get everywhere by foot, which I love. The city itself is so beautiful and very typical of northern Spain, and the nightlife is definitely a highlight of living here, with people (including children) out on the streets shopping and socialising until late every night.

I have been so lucky enough to be taken on two out of town trips already by a few sets of the host parents in the city, with the other 5 inbounds. The first Saturday, we were taken up to Basque France, along the coast from a beach town called Hendaye to another beach town called Saint-Jean-De-Luz. It was so beautiful and really exciting to just pop over the border for a day trip!

Last Saturday we went to the Castilla-Leon region to a village just outside of Burgos for a rotary event which was actually based around an ancient winter Spanish tradition in which a pig is slaughtered in front of the people, and then butchered in order to feast on. This was really intense for me, as I was a vegetarian before coming to Spain and so I was a little upset about the whole situation but still very respectful of the culture and tradition and am glad that we were invited to experience it. This week, I am going with my host mum down to Madrid for a few days which I am really excited about!! You will read more about it on my blog etc.

Language is a big thing on my mind at the moment. I have learnt more than I ever would have thought in the last two weeks, and I am now able to understand my host parents when they are speaking to me, and also reply with basic sentence structure.

It really excites me, how quickly I am learning and it feels like such a tangible thing that at the end of each day I can actually notice how much I have improved and what I have learnt. There is still a really long way to go though, especially in terms of school and understanding my friends and teachers.

Talk soon,

Madi