



My road to an exchange

I'm going to talk about the beginning of my exchange year, though it already started about a year and a half ago, when I first decided to become an exchange student.

The thought of becoming an exchange student was bizarre at first. I had met a few people, who had connections to YFU and they had shared some of their thoughts about it. The idea got me interested and I learned more about it. By the first months of 2015, I was completely sure I'm going abroad. Mom approved my decision, but had one condition: It must be an European country. I am not utterly sure why I chose Belgium, but I am very delighted that I did choose it. I did pick Flanders, because I really like the sound of Flemish.

I then filled my application for the exchange program, thinking there's nothing to lose. After receiving the message that I've made it to the next "round", I got unbelievably happy. True happiness struck once I got the final confirmation that I'm going to become an exchange student, I started crying of happiness and cheering out loud in a bus stop.

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In that moment I did not yet realize what I had gotten myself into. It took some time to realize that the time I have to prepare is not endless and the top priority is going to be the money. Motivated by this I brought to life my biggest achievement yet: Organized a huge charity fair at one of the biggest malls in Estonia. 10 of the soon-to-be exchange students joined, to sell their products in order to fulfill their dream. I also got a quite popular band to play there, who supported us with their songs and raised the mood. That was the start of the habit to visit fairs and sell my very own handmade products. Not all of them were entirely successful.

About a month before leaving home, the panic hit: “What should I bring with me and what should I leave home?”. Of course, I wanted to bring my dog, Perry. Unfortunately that was only a dream. The massive YFU suitcase had been lying down on the floor for a few weeks, constantly being filled and then emptied once again. A week before leaving everything had been packed, paperwork done and riddled with anxiety.

Everything was made easier by the fact that in March I received a phone call, informing me that I have a host family. From that moment, I chatted with them almost daily.

The flight left during the evening, meaning that during the rest of the day I was overly anxious and not in a good way. The most difficult part of leaving was, what felt like eternity, the good bye to my dog. Fortunately, I didn't have to fly alone and an other local girl accompanied me for the flight as we both started a new chapter in our lives.

The first thing I learned in dutch was “ik ben heel mooi”.

Kerstin

Kerstin is een meisje uit Estland. Ze woont nu in Schriek met Karin, Jacques en hun 2 jarige Chloë.