

Moi! My name is Kayla Callista. I am a 17-years-old young girl from Jakarta, Indonesia. In August 2022, I flew to Finland for my exchange year. Why Finland?

Throwback to December 2021, that's when I started applying for the Rotary Youth Exchange Program to the Rotary Club of Jakarta. The next month, I received a notification regarding my selection, I got accepted! Not long after the acceptance, I was asked to fill in a form where I had to put a list of countries I wanted to be placed in. Of my top three, I chose Japan, South Korea and Germany since I was studying Japanese, Korean and German at the time. I was thinking of increasing my level in at least one of the languages by going there for an exchange year. But after a long process of selections such as interviews and tests, it turned out that I will be going to Finland for my exchange year. I had mixed-feelings but was still enthusiastic to discover new things on the other side of the world.

During my 10 months in Turku, it turned out to be me gaining a lot of new friends, experiences and lessons. By going to school every day like other Finnish teenagers do, I get to know many people from school, although it was quite a challenge to be friends with Finnish people at first. My host-family kept on encouraging me to take it slowly as Finns take time to get to know new people. They were right when they said,



once you get to know Finns, they are your friends-for-life. Even until today, I am still actively in contact with the people I met in Finland!



Most of the new experiences I had happened in the winter season, obviously the season I don't have in my country. Experiences such as 'avanto' and skiing with friends and host-family will always be in my core memory. In



November, I even went to Lapland, northern part of Finland, as a part of the tour provided by Rotary Finland where I finally check-listed some of my life wish list, which is to be in a reindeer ride and crossing the Arctic circle.





Another memory I will forever cherish would be Wanhat, the Finnish highschool prom. Wanhat was definitely something I never knew existed before, but it was very unique so I really enjoyed every single process of it. 4 months full of dance practice felt worth it when the 2 days event went incredibly well.

By being in Finland, I obviously tried my best to learn Finnish. Without any intention to show off, a lot of people told me I pronounce Finnish very well although grammarly, I am still improving. I do enjoy learning Finnish as my surroundings keep on giving me endless support and tips in improving. Once, I was given a chance to speak in Finnish about my exchange year in a Rotary Conference. That was one of my proudest moments during my exchange year. From knowing 0 Finnish to giving a speech in Finnish in front of more than 50 Finnish people? I still can't believe it myself.



To sum up my exchange year summary, I think the most important thing overall happened



was my self-growth or improvement within myself. By doing an exchange year, I got an opportunity to discover myself more thoroughly, widen my knowledge, and visit places I've once seen on the screen before. I feel thankful for everyone that I met and I will hold on to the memories and lessons I received during my exchange year forever.

Kiitos!