

# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## Reunion Island Exchange 2016

In Week 9 and 10 of Term 3, Yvette, Hayley, Alana and Brooke, accompanied by Mr Smith and Mrs Du Rieu, travelled to Reunion Island to participate in an exchange program. We had hosted students from Reunion earlier in the year and were taking part in the return leg of the program. We flew from Adelaide to Perth and then on to Mauritius and finally Reunion Island. In total, it took about 22 hours. After staying the night in St Denis, the capital city, we made our way to Les Avirons where the school, Lycée Antonie de Saint Exupéry is situated.

## School in Reunion

The school was 5 stories high with a separate sports complex which was a 5-10 minute walk away from the main area of the school. School started at 7:30am and went til 5pm and classes were broken up into hour sessions with a 5 minute break in between. Lunch went for an hour and a half and students would either go to 'self' (AKA the cafeteria) or home to eat - it wasn't common for student to bring their lunch to school from home. Classes were different as the teacher's desk was situated out the front of the classroom, the students would write down what the teacher says and some students would help teach the class. Surprisingly, their school didn't have a uniform - they'd wear casual clothes.

## Visit to the volcano

On Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> we visited the *Piton de la Fournaise* volcano, which was nothing short of amazing. The volcano, still active, had only finished erupting days before we arrived. We took a bus from school to the base of the volcano, stopping along the way to admire the view from above the clouds. It was an amazing experience being so far above sea level (2,632 metres at the highest point), looking down on the island.

Reaching the top of the volcano the view was spectacular. It was almost as if looking at the surface of the moon; a huge expanse littered with various craters. The surface was still soft from the recent eruptions so we were unable to go down there but it was still an experience I don't think any of us will forget.

## Snorkelling at St. Leu

On Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup> September we went snorkelling. The water was 25°C and the locals said that to them the water was cold, but to us the water was beautiful. There were many beautiful fish and the coolest fish we saw was a Lagoon Triggerfish. We also saw Surgeon fish, Humbug Dascyllus and lots of Sea Cucumbers, one of which we were lucky enough to pat. Fortunately, the lagoon was protected by a coral reef, as otherwise swimming in the ocean is considered too dangerous due to the threat of shark attacks.



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## ***Journée Européenne et Internationale***

On the 26<sup>th</sup> September it was European Day. Students celebrated by wearing blue and yellow clothing. At lunch time there was a celebration where we watched a short video which showed different European locations. Then we joined an English class singing the acoustic version I'm Yours by Jason Mraz. Afterwards we had some food which students brought in and there was plenty of chocolate!

## **Excursion to Saint Gilles and Musée de Villèle.**

Going to La Cascade des Aigrettes and Le Musée de Villèle was a great experience. To get to the waterfall, we went on a short hike through some extremely lush wilderness and before we knew it, we were standing in front of a beautiful waterfall. It was the first waterfall I had ever seen and it was just extraordinary. After this we had a short lunch in Saint-Gilles, a popular coastal town. We then went to Le Musée de Villèle, a museum which was a former sugar cane plantation and processing facility. It was also famous as being among the most liberal with regards to the rights that were given to the slaves who worked on the property. The house itself was an interesting reminder of how people lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Lava Tunnels**

On Thursday the 29<sup>th</sup> of September we visited the lava tunnels on the Eastern side of the island. The countryside here had been completely covered by lava from an eruption of the volcano in 2007. While the lava cooled, tunnels were formed underneath the surface, which we were able to walk (and crawl) through for about 600 metres. We were given an excellent explanation by the guide about how the tunnels were formed and, on the surface, about how the landscape regenerates after a lava flow.

## **Overall**

The host families we stayed with and everyone we met were extremely welcoming and made us feel at home. Having the opportunity to converse in French and immerse ourselves in the French culture was a wonderful learning experience. Our French has benefited greatly. Participating in the activities whilst enjoying the beautiful sunny weather and tropical climate was great fun. We have all made close friends with the staff, students and families of Lycée Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and hope to go back again one day. Overall the Reunion Island exchange was a once in a lifetime opportunity and anyone who has the chance should definitely grab it. C'était magnifique !!

## **Yvette, Alana, Hayley and Brooke**

