



My Canadian Exchange

Ryan Lennox

Hi my name is Ryan Lennox I've been a member of Lesmahagow young farmers club for the past 8 years. This year SAYFC (Scottish Association of Young Farmers Club) gave me the incredible opportunity to travel to Canada on an international exchange for 10 weeks and stay with members of JFAO (Junior Farmers Association of Ontario). I got to tour and help out on many farms as well as see the local tourist spots around Canada. While I was there we changed hosts every week with one week for ourselves in the middle to do our own thing.

Week 1

My travels started with me and William Campbell, my fellow Scottish delegate flying from Glasgow to Toronto to meet our first host's Matt Smith and Jolande Oudshoorn (past president of JFAO) who stayed in Wentworth Niagara. Then we met our other delegates who we would be travelling with Christin Specketer (Germany) Angelika Zimmermann (Switzerland) Lauren McRoberts (northern Ireland) while we stayed there we got the chance to see local farms, Thwaites fruit orchards, wineries, distilleries, many waterfalls including the famous Niagara falls and a lift lock. One day we even got the chance to go for a drive in an old fire engine to a farm that had a rescue camel. Some days we all just relax at the house and help out with chores like watering plants, cutting grass and even helping with putting in a fruit patch in the garden. We also got to see what is believed to be the oldest living maple tree in Canada as well as try a bit of lacrosse and paddle boarding. It was an incredible week and a great way to start off the trip.

Week 2

Week two started with travelling to Durham with our new arrival Colin Byrne (Ireland) joining us on the exchange and meeting our new hosts. Angelika and I were paired up to stay with our hosts Brian Wetheral and Megan McLeod. Whilst there we toured dairy farms, Toronto to see the incredible CN tower, beatties potato farm, Alliance agri-turf and even spent a day at a cabin on the lake. One morning I helped Brian wrap bale which was fun as I had never done that before. Me and Angelika went to Herbert's, a cowboy boot shop which came in handy for when we all went for a night of line dancing and I won best dressed cowboy with the new boots and amazing dance moves. We also went clay pigeon shooting, did a bathtub racing one night and Brian's dad took me and Angelika out for a spin in his Case Titan and gave us both a shot of driving. One night when everyone was together outside we got a visit from a wee snake, our first interaction with Canadian wildlife. Another great week spent with lots to do and plenty of new experiences.



Week 3

Week three was Renfrew county and I was staying with Angelika and Lauren at our host Meeka Bromleys parents' dairy farm. This week was amazing as we were going to a variety of farms from dairy, sheep, beef feedlots and cash crops farms and also fun activities. One morning me and Lauren helped with the milking of their jersey cows in the tie stall which was nice getting to help out. Some of the activities we got to do were white water rafting and ziplining which I love and clay pottery making, cave walking, visiting winery and even a drive in movie night the film was the new King Kong movie. I loved going to see the cash crop farm seeing the size of the land and equipment, even their vintage collection of Allis tractors they had. One morning we got to see part of a 4h meeting on dairy cattle dressing which was cool. A highlight of mine this week was getting to see the local auction mart where they were selling beef cattle, some with calves at foot.



Week 4

Moving on to week four we were in Carlton and joined by our final delegate Eva Zaubmair (Austria). This week I was staying with Colin and William kindly hosted by Ian Burnett. The first day we went on a tour of the Diefenbunker. Some of the other activities this week were going to a Canada Vs Scotland rugby game and also an American football game which was great to see. We also got to celebrate Canada day in Ottawa. It was a great day and amazing getting to watch the air show they put on for the day. One day we went to Burnett's family cabin and some of us went out that night to a Nickel back concert which was just an amazing experience seeing live. Some other cool sites this week were to see the equipment farmers use in the area and how big the machines are. Near the end of the week we went out one night to a country bar and had a shot of the bucking bull and got my personal best time of 53 seconds. This was an action packed week for us and I could have asked for a better experience.





Week 5

Week five is the week we had to ourselves and we all as a group chose to fly out to Calgary for a few days and went to the Calgary stampede rodeo. It was great to see and the atmosphere in the stadium was amazing. We also got cowboy hats for watching the rodeo and chuckwagon races. It was incredible and something I would recommend for everyone to go and see. Some of the events they had were bull riding, bucking broncos, barely racing and steer wrestling.

After the rodeo we all drove to Banff and got to see some of Canada's amazingly beautiful scenery like lake Louise, Moraine and Peyto. Pictures do these places no justice, the amazing experience of seeing it in person was incredible. I really enjoyed the week getting to spend time with my fellow delegates and getting to know them all so much better. We flew back for a couple of nights back in Niagara for a big barbeque night at Matt Smith's which was a great night and we all had a great time together.



Week 6

Now week six was Oxford where I was with Colin and staying with Carson Wagner (president of JFAO). This week was fun with farm tours from dairy to tobacco and ginseng growers which was interesting to learn about as I never knew about it before. We also visited a feed mill, John Deere dealership, farmer depot and farmers market. This week we met up with Andrew Bennie (Scottish delegate from last year). One night we went out and me, William and Andrew all wore our kilts out and it was fun with all the people wanting to speak and get pictures with us. Myself and Colin helped out Carson with bailing one day with the case 180 magnum pulling the new holland bailer and then we got to go and see how his tube wrapper worked which was cool to see. One day the whole club came together at Carson for a potluck dinner and a bonfire night. On our last day with them we went paintballing which can be fun but also painful at the same time.



Week 7

On week seven I was paired with William and Colin again staying with Cam Alton in Huron Perth. This week was fun getting to see two different types of dairy's one being a goat dairy with about 1000 head and another being a water buffalo dairy with about 150 head. It was interesting seeing the differences from each other and the difference from standard cattle dairy's. We also got a tour of the Toyota factory and saw the manufacturing process of vehicles. One day we also got to go on a tour of a tannery mostly with sheep hide's but also some goat, alpaca and even a couple of black bear hide's. Also got a tour of an Amish racehorse trainer's stables and they even took us out for a ride in their biggies and stopped in and visited an Amish lumber mill which was interesting to see and learn how they manage every day to day tasks. We also had a beach day at a cabin and it was so fun swimming and playing volleyball and just relaxing at the end of the night listening to music.

Week 8

Week eight us boys were staying together at Ian Pollard in Essex Kent county. This week was great with getting to see many different places like a hydroponic greenhouse growing foods like cucumbers and tomatoes which I found interesting getting to see. Ian's dad also got us a tour of his work in the Chrysler factory which was cool getting to see the start to finish process. We even visited a sugar beet farm and saw the yard they store it in after it's been collected. One day we even got to help cut, rake, chop and cart silages back to the yard and bag it. Ian took us all out on the town one night which was fun getting to experience the nightlife. We visited a dairy farm on the last day on our way to the embro tractor pull which was a class day and a fun night. This week was amazing and I had a great time. The week was packed full of different stuff to do.

Week 9

Week nine was Middlesex and I was paired with Colin and we were staying with Handsford Mahon. Our first day started with helping clean up the field after the tractor pull and got to drive the carts back at the end which was a great laugh and good fun. We also visited a curling stone manufacturer and a pallet manufacturer. One day we went to a beef feedlot which was impressive with them raising twelve thousand head of cattle and was one of my favourite farm tours. We also went on a hike in the woods to different falls and some had wee fossils which was cool to see. We visited another auction mart one day and even got a shout out from the auctioneer which made us all feel special. On our last day we helped with breakfast on the farm which was an event they host every year with fun games for kids and a chance to learn about farming live. This was also the last week for Lauren who had to head home which was sad for us all to see her leave after spending so much time together but was still a great last week for her.





Week 10

Week ten our final week I was with the boy again and we were staying with Justin Kidd and Lora Keitel in Peterborough. This week was a bit more relaxed for us after a lot of traveling for the past nine weeks. Some activities we discussed was axe throwing which William came first place and one day we even went golfing and to make it better we all went to the charity shop and bought each other clothes to wear as a laugh and I was buying for Eva and she was buying for me. We went on a tour of the fire station Justin worked at which was cut short after they had to go on a call. We also got a full tour of one of the oldest lift locks which was cool to see and learn how it works. The last night we went to an 80th ball JFAO hosted me and William both wore our kilts and we all got asked to give a speech about our trip and gave out small awards for things like best host, best driver, most eligible bachelor and most eligible bachelorette just wee silly awards it was a fun night dancing, socialising and having a laugh with everyone and getting to say our goodbyes it was a great way to end our trip.

This trip has been one of my best and favourite experiences with making new friends for life who I look forward to going back to visit. I wouldn't have changed a thing about any of it and I feel like I have a new second family with my fellow delegates. If anyone were to ask me about the trip I would tell them how amazing it was and I'd highly recommend it to any fellow young farmer to take the chance and apply for the exchange of a lifetime as it's something they wouldn't regret. I also have to give a special thank you to YFA (young farmers ambassadors) and the SAYFC international trust for all their support and funding, with this exchange it went a long way and couldn't thank them enough for everything. I'd also like to thank SAYFC for giving me this incredible opportunity, it is something I will never forget.

