



Merci France!

On 8 July, full of excitement and joy, I embarked on my first solo trip to France, more precisely Rennes. My name is Marialucia Barbaro and I am 18 years old, and I was soon to have one of the most beautiful and formative experiences offered to me. I experienced the thrill of travelling alone, taking three planes, and learning what it is like without the constant guidance of an adult at your side. After landing in the Breton city, I spent the next 3 days in the city of Nantes, hosted and accompanied by the 2 daughters of the host family, who took me around the streets of the



city.



I was then taken to the town of Fontenay-le-Comte, in the Vendée region, where I was welcomed by the Domingues family, consisting of 7 children. I therefore spent the remaining days of my stay at home, in the company especially of the young children with whom I spent fun times at the beach, at the cinema, and with their respective friends. I was able to leave my comfort-zone and enter a new domestic dimension that required new habits and new ways of doing things. For the celebration of the national holiday on 14 July, we went to the Ile de Ré for three days where I witnessed the wonderful fireworks displays and typical celebratory

processions. Another particular attraction we visited was the Puy du Fou, a unique historical park in the world.



After the family time, which I said goodbye to with sadness and bitterness in my heart, I went to the Youth Camp, near Dinan (Brittany). Here I spent the most fantastic days of my French stay. The company played a key role because I met fantastic people from all over the world, with whom I established special friendships and with whom I experienced unforgettable moments of fun, including games, jokes and culinary recipes that came out in no small measure. Some of the most memorable places we visited include the town of Saint-Malo, Dinard or the visit to the beaches of Normandy, site of the famous historic landing in '44, with its cemetery of American soldiers who fell on French soil.



Another memorable activity undertaken was kayaking, in the open sea in canoes.



We spent the last few days with the sad awareness that this adventure was coming to an end. The day before departure, we travelled to the city of Rennes where we spent the entire day and here the first early tears for the impending end also broke out. The next day of departure was almost a blow to everyone's heart and saying goodbye was not easy, in fact it was very painful and emotional. Leaving that small reality that had become almost like a second family for me was hard and sad, but

above all leaving my dear new friends. It was not a farewell, but rather a goodbye. I will keep this beautiful memory for a long time.

