

Back in America, I live in Suttons Bay, Michigan. Suttons Bay has a year round population of approximately 580 people, but is surrounded by many other small towns and a close-by city. The main industry in Suttons bay is agriculture, more specifically cherries. My county is actually known as the “cherry capital of the world.” Many people live on farms and the entire village and surrounding county has many orchards. There’s also a lot of really beautiful nature where I’m from. I live right on the coastline of Lake Michigan, so there are numerous beaches and sand dunes. Leelanau County has a gorgeous national park and lots of hiking trails. In fact, last summer, Good Morning America voted Leelanau County the “most beautiful place in America.”

Before I left for Croatia, I lived with my Mother, Father, brother and dog. My mom works as a chef and caters for wedding with her own small business. My dad is counselor and teaches at a local boarding school. Forest, my brother is attending his first year of university in Vermont, where he’s learning Japanese and studying foreign relations. All of my family has studied abroad, my mom to Sweden, my brother to Bolivia two years ago and my father to Iceland.

School in America is very different from school here. In Michigan, I only had eight classes, English, Spanish, Algebra, Civics & Economics, Biology, Photography, Publications and Film & Media. I had about 80 people in my grade, but every class I went to, about 30. Instead of staying with the same people for every class, I had new people in each class. While we don’t have as many subjects in America, the curriculum is very different from school in Croatia. Our classes are one and a half hours each with time for lecturing, in class work and time to get help with

homework. The structure of classes is also different. Instead of so much memorization, there is more in class work. I think that the two school systems each have their flaws and benefits, and can't be compared to each other too closely.

So far, I've been able to see a lot of Croatia, which has been really cool. Rotary took all the exchange students on trips to Bol, Plitvice, Trakošćan, and Salzburg. It's been so exciting to see Europe again and get to experience a new culture and way of life. Croatia is not a country you hear about a lot, so it has been really interesting to learn more about it.

Coming to Croatia has not been easy all the time. Before I left, I did not really realize how hard learning Croatian would be, and it has definitely proven to be quite the challenge. Adapting to a new family, language and continent was strange and it is easy to compare them to each other, but I try to remember the Rotary saying, "it's not better or worse, just different." I can't believe that my time here is more than halfway over and definitely don't want to think about going home. This year has taught me so much and given me the experience of a lifetime. I have already made many friends who I will never forget and have gained two new, incredible host – families from my time here. To think that I will be back in America in only four more months is really heartbreaking, but in the wise words of Dr Seuss, "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."

Morgan Jarvis