

## International Mounted Games Exchange 2012

Kirsten Radcliffe

Hello my name is Kirsten Radcliffe and I am from Grand River Pony Club in the Western Ontario Region. I was selected to represent Canada in the 2012 International Mounted Games Exchange held in Sydney and Canberra, Australia. The tour was from April 7<sup>th</sup> to April 22<sup>nd</sup>, and in this time we visited many amazing sightseeing attractions such as beaches, caves, natural landmarks, mines, markets, where we expanded our cultural knowledge and made life long memories and friends. The Canadian team consisted of 3 girls from Alberta, 1 girl from Vancouver and myself. We arrived at our training camp on April 1<sup>st</sup> in Vancouver where we hosted at my teammate Emma Weibe's home. The training camp was made an amazing experience by all who were involved by lending their ponies and time, and making us feel right at home.

The practices were fun and helped us bond as a team. We tried to have as many practices with as many different ponies as possible to practice our skills and techniques. We did a lot of fun things as a team. We went shopping, kayaking, and hung out playing sports. I had a lot of fun hanging out with my team learning how to tie a tie, going on public transit, and shopping for our banquet dresses. We had great times with each other no matter what we did. The last day of our training camp was spent doing laundry and packing and then it was off to the airport!

Our first place we stayed was a Bed and Breakfast in Sydney, Australia. I had a great time getting to know all of the teams and after only a few days we were like a family. At the B&B I was roommates with Megan Burke from Australia, who I became friends with instantly. We had lots of laughs and had fun learning about each other's countries and cultures. While in Sydney we toured beaches, local shops, and The Sydney Opera House. My favorite thing we did in Sydney was climbing the Sydney Harbor Bridge; at first it was sort of scary but it got better and was very interesting.

Then we went to the Blue Mountains where we went panning for gold, toured mines, caves, and zoos. Next we were hosted by a local pony club family who lived on a really cool sheep farm. While there we had the really good food and learned many things about sheep farming such as: how to shear a sheep, what show sheep are and what they do, how they sort the sheep, how to herd sheep and we watched one of their sheep dogs do a demonstration of rounding them up into pens. While there we toured Senic World, Tronga Zoo, and went swimming. Then we stayed with our billet families in Canberra. I stayed with Emma and Taylor from Canada and Penny and Skye from Australia. We had the most amazing billet home ever! We had the most amazing food ever. I especially liked the lemon meringue pie and custard. Our billet family always made sure we were having lots of fun and on my birthday had a cake and party for me. We were taken to the pony club camp near the house where we got to watch and help with the different disciplines and jobs which I found very cool and fun. Then we had a fun competition where we were mixed up into teams and got to ride the ponies we would be using in the real competition. It was really fun and everyone did a great job. On the day of the competition my team did really well. We were super positive and tried our best, placing 4<sup>th</sup> overall. Afterwards we said our finally goodbyes before we left.

I would like to thank everyone who made this trip possible, with special thanks to all of the pony lenders, host families, Gave and Di my billet family, our amazing coach and chaperone Margot Vilvang and Barb Robinson. Overall this was a trip of a life time that I am very grateful to have experienced. I have gained many great memories and made many new friends.

With many thanks,

Kirsten Radcliffe