



Welcome to the February edition of the new and fresh YFU – PE newsletter!

This monthly newsletter is intended to serve the YFU volunteer network in Port Elizabeth and the surrounding regions of the Eastern Cape. Whether you are an exchange student, host family, volunteer or even if you are just interested in YFU and its activities, this newsletter will be of interest to you!

Read about international exchanges, experiences and past activities, keep up to date with the “YFU – PE Agenda” and get in touch with the YFU community. Do you want to contribute or comment? - drop us a line, you can find the contact details on the last page. Enjoy and greetings to all!

Did you know that...

YFU offers not just exchange programmes for a whole academic year but also short term programmes (around 6 weeks) in July-August?



The YFU – PE Agenda:

25 February 2006 (sat): Braai for all host families and exchange students in PE.

1 March 2006 (wed): Application deadline for programmes with departure in August 2006. Exceptions apply, enquire for details.

18 March 2006 (sat): Day trip for exchange students in PE.

22 April 2006 (sat): YFU-DAY. A training day for volunteers plus social activities. Location in Port Elizabeth to be confirmed.

1 June 2006 (thu): Application deadline for programmes with departure in January 2007. Exceptions apply, enquire for details.

WWW.YFU.ORG.ZA

The new YFU website went fully online last year and is constantly updated with the latest information. If you are interested in going abroad, why not visit the website and read all you need to know about the outbound programmes.

If you are on the website, click on Exchange Programmes. This page contains important information, both on YFU but also on the principles on which our programmes are based. It also gives you reasons why YFU is the organization to go with! On the same page you can click on Outbound Programmes, which contains a checklist of all the basic criteria that have to be met when you want to go on exchange with YFU. On this page, you can also download an example of the Student Application Form to see what type of information we need when you apply. Here, you can also click on any of the countries listed for more country-specific info and links to the YFU countries' own websites. You can also read stories written by two of our former South African exchange students on their experiences overseas to get an impression of what you might expect. So go on, have a look, and explore our website!



Why YFU?

Youth For Understanding is a non-profit, non-religious, non-political exchange organisation which offers young people (15-18 years old) a chance to go on exchange to experience and understand different cultures around the world. The YFU mission states that *Youth For Understanding prepares young people for their responsibilities and opportunities in a changing, interdependent world.* Just like South Africa is changing, so is the world; a world that is becoming increasingly smaller and interlinked, a world that needs people that understand and respect each other. Therefore, YFU strives to reach all people of the South African society regardless of race, religion, political background or economical situation. By doing so, it creates new opportunities for our youth and simply offers an amazing experience for all the people involved in the exchange programme.

YFU South Africa is a volunteer based organisation with a small professional office staff in Cape Town that both sends and hosts students from across the world. It offers qualitative and reliable programmes in a format that has been proven successful since the first YFU exchange programmes between Germany and the USA in 1951. Since that time, YFU has exchanged approximately 225.000 students worldwide, and about 4.000 students go global every year. So why be boring, if you could be exploring?!

Pass on the pen

Every month the spotlight will shine on one of YFU's volunteers, host families, exchange students, partner school staff or anyone else related to the YFU PE family! This month: the new regional coordinator in PE, Remco Vrolijk

Hello Everyone, let me use this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Remco Vrolijk and I was born 24 years ago in a small town in Holland called Leerdam, famous for its cheese and glass.

At the age of 16, I left Holland for an exchange year in Japan on one of scholarships that the Japanese government has available every year. I was placed in a host family on the tropical island of Okinawa, the birthplace of karate. I enjoyed my exchange year so much that I wanted to help other people to go on exchange to discover themselves and the world. After I returned to the Netherlands I remained active as a volunteer for YFU Netherlands doing various kinds of voluntary work. My main involvement however was to help organise and run the three orientations that foreign exchange students in Holland attend during their exchange year.

In 2000, I worked at the YFU Netherlands office as a staff member for about 5 months, after which I started a European Voluntary Service project run by YFU Germany. After working at the YFU Germany office in the city of Hamburg for half a year, I started my bachelor degree in England at Oxford Brookes University. My fields of study were Japanese and Tourism, obviously influenced by the experiences of my exchange year. The third year of my four year degree I spent again in Japan, this time in big city Osaka. During my time in England I tried to remain as active as possible for YFU Netherlands, helping out whenever I was back for holidays.

After I graduated from University I decided to do an internship at YFU South Africa. Partially because of my curiosity for the unknown but also because of all the great stories about South Africa that I had heard in Holland. My work here in Port Elizabeth will be to strengthen the volunteer network and to ensure that all the exchange students and host families are happy and having a great time. We are constantly looking for new students and host families to keep on opening windows to the world, not just for exchange students and host families but also for the wider community in PE! I am looking forward to meeting everyone and please do not hesitate to contact me!

Best regards, Remco



Wish you were here! Greetings from ... Estonia

YFU South Africa offers programmes to various countries worldwide. Every month you can read something about a different country you could be exchanging to. At the moment there are three exchange students from Estonia staying in Port Elizabeth, and one student from Cape Town is on exchange in Estonia. Read more about this fascinating country.



Estonia is located in north-east Europe. With an area of 45 000sq km Estonia is 1.5 times larger than Lesotho. The closest countries are Finland (Helsinki, 85 km on the opposite shore of the Gulf of Finland), Latvia, Russia and Sweden. Estonia's capital city is Tallinn and with ca 408 329 people, it accounts for a third of the people living in Estonia. The other larger cities in Estonia are the university town of Tartu, the industrial border town of Narva and the summer capital Parnu. Estonia is relatively flat; the highest point is only 317 m above sea level! Estonia has over 1000 lakes, seven thousand rivers and streams carrying rainwater to the sea and various kinds of forests. The climate in Estonia is very extreme. It can be warm in summer (June-August) when it is around 20-30 C, but in winter it is cold and temperatures can range from 0 to -25 C!

Danes, Germans, Swedes and Russians occupied the territory that is known as Estonia today since 1219. Estonia restored the Republic of Estonia in 1991 after being under Soviet Union rule for 50 years. This restoration was called the "Singing Revolution". Estonia is now a proud member of the EU. It is situated on a busy trading route between East and West and this has always been important to the Estonian economy. Major employers are the paper, timber and textile industries. The country is also known for its strong IT based technology. Wireless internet access is for example freely available in some public parks in Tallinn.

The population of Estonia is about ca. 1, 5 million. Major ethnic groups are: Estonians (66 % of the total population), Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussia's and Finns. Estonians belong to the Finno-Ugic people, along with the Finns and Hungarians. Estonian is the official language of the country. The Estonians may seem distant and a bit cold in the beginning, but this holding back is mostly due to shyness and modesty and should never be seen as a sign of hostility. They are in fact warm-hearted and hospitable people once you get to know them. The Estonians are in general well-educated, friendly people. They love to travel, yet they are very proud of their own country and their culture.

Estonian culture has been and remains a strong symbol of national identity. For Estonians, culture evolves around music and art. Folk songs and dances are national treasures. Apart from their love for music and art, Estonians love to camp and hike. Many people have cottages in the country. For vacations, they enjoy adventures like swimming, canoeing or bicycle touring. People enjoy going out on a golfing or windsurfing expedition with siblings or friends. In wintertime many people go skiing. Attending plays, movies, exhibitions and concerts also make enjoyable family outings.

Why not explore this exciting country with YFU? Learners going to Estonia depart in January and return in December.



Exchange Experience

Every month you can read about the experiences of one of our exchange students. This month: Q&A with Maria Kingsepp from Estonia, currently on exchange in Port Elizabeth:

Why did you want to come to South Africa?

I've always been interested in African culture. I love drumming and things like that. South Africa was the only country in Africa I could go to and now I'm really happy I'm here.

What was your first impression of South Africa?

When I arrived in Cape Town it felt just like a very nice holiday, I didn't realise I would actually live in this country for a whole year!

What was your image of South Africa and what was different when you got here?

I read a lot about South Africa on the internet so I had a pretty good idea of what it would look like. But I didn't realise that there was actually so much crime that you have to be careful to just walk about. I also thought it would be a lot hotter!

What are the main differences at your school?

There are a lot of differences in school, for example we don't wear uniforms in my school in Estonia. Also the school here in Port Elizabeth, St. Marks Community School, is a lot smaller than what I'm used to back home. We also don't have detention! When you have done something wrong, you just get lower marks in class. Obviously I also don't get classes like Xhosa in Estonia.

What has been the best surprise so far?

Getting drumming class during the orientation and getting a drum as a present for Christmas!

What will you miss the most when you go back to Estonia?

I will miss the people, like my friends and host family the most when I go back to Estonia. Another thing I will miss is putting so many people into one single car!

The YFU exchange students that left from Cape Town in January 2006 to Germany, Holland and Estonia:



Contact Details – Please note change in phone number!

Remco Vrolijk
Intern – PE Regional Coordinator
Tel.: **082 4644 197**
Email: pe@yfu.org.za

YFU South Africa office in Cape Town:

15 Vlei Street, Bellville, 7530
PO BOX 334, Bellville, 7535
Phone: 021 946 3773
Fax: 021 946 3783
Email: info@yfu.org.za
Website: www.yfu.org.za