

# "Here I Can Be the Best Version of Myself"

Didi Vissier from South Africa tells the school assembly why she made the long way to Salem.

"Good Morning fellow students and teachers! My name is Didi Visser and I am here in Salem on exchange all the way from South Africa, where the days are short, the sunsets look like paintings, and we ride to school on lions. My family has a really fast lion, his name is George. No, I'm just joking, you'll only find a lion if you really look for one, protected behind high fences and maybe on a game drive through the Kruger National Park. Today I am going to give you a few brief snippets of my life back in South Africa.

I go to Roedean school, which is an all-girls private school, and, like Salem, a Round Square School. We have to wear a strict uniform, are mostly polite and some say well-mannered. A typical day in my life looks like this: I wake up at 5:20 a.m. and get dressed, maybe drink coffee and broom off to school, in a car of course. Then I start my day with refreshing water polo practice in the crisp morning air as the sun is rising. After that I quickly change into my school uniform and run to flute ensemble. Finally, at 7:35 a.m. my school day begins. School finishes at 2:40 p.m., I have a dance lesson and then at 4:00 p.m. I have water polo again. I finish at 7:00 p.m. and then I head home. I'm supposed to do homework or study when I'm home, but I'm usually too tired after the long day so I just go straight to bed. And the cycle repeats.

At the risk of sounding cheesy, my motivation for applying for this exchange is tied to my daily routine. I had to learn that I can't be a child in a sweet shop wanting to taste every sweet, because that would just give me a tummy ache. In other words, I had to figure out what is important to me now. My daily routine taught me to never stop something out of fear or when I am in a bad place with it. So, it is not talent or opportunity that got me here, it is simple hardiness. Hardiness is when I don't know how I am going to do it, but I know I can. Some days I am so tired that I don't know how I will make it through the day, but then, I make it through.



With this attitude of never giving up I realised that what was more important to me than bling on a blazer or external achievements: an internal sense of okayness and kindness. I realised how kind it was of Salem to offer this opportunity to a Roedean student. I realised how okay I would have to be to make this trip. I came to Salem and found a fortune of friendly, kind and caring people. The ethos of Roedean is to live a life of significance, to allow every child to leave his or her unique mark or stamp on the world. My exchange is evidence of how they encourage this. I believe the ethos of Salem is to be a responsible citizen in the community who is offered opportunities to become the best versions of themselves. I like that a lot! I was definitely offered a brilliant opportunity to be the best version of myself and I will take that adventure back with me to South Africa. I am humbled by the care that everyone at Salem offered me. My biggest experience is that I will always get up when I have fallen because someone will be there to hold my hand, thank you Salem! And in my home language: Baie dankie Salem, ek sal julle ewig dankbaar wees."

Didi Vissier, 10 IC

## INFO

### INTERNATIONALER AUSTAUSCH

Austausch ist nicht (nur) das persönliche Abenteuer mit Verbesserung der Englischkenntnisse und Nachweis im Lebenslauf. Unser Austauschprogramm ist eine wichtige Säule in der Erziehung zu Weltoffenheit: Gefragt sind Eigenverantwortung bei der Planung, Empathievermögen bei der Aufnahme von Gästen, Reflexionsvermögen beim Hinterfragen unserer Gewohnheiten sowie Mut und Vertrauen, sich unbekanntem Situationen zu stellen. Salem ist durch die pädagogische Basis der IDEALS (Internationalism · Democracy · Environmentalism · Adventure · Leadership · Service) nicht nur theoretisch, sondern ganz praktisch mit vielen Schulen weltweit verbunden. Gemeinsam ermöglichen wir unseren Schüler:innen, sich als Weltbürger zu erproben.

#### Was wird in Salem angeboten?

Gruppenaustausch nach Frankreich/China (Anaïs Tommy-Martin/Kai Hoffmann); individuelle Austausche nach Spanien (Erika Stauder-Perwer) und englischsprachige Austausche weltweit sowie virtuelle Austauschprogramme (Nina Peters). Alle Austausche basieren auf reziproker Basis (gegenseitiger Besuch).

- **Dauer:** mindestens 4, maximal 12 Wochen
- **Kosten:** Flug, Taschengeld und ggf. Extraausgaben. Schulgeld wird an der Heimatschule weiterbezahlt.
- **Zielgruppe:** Jahrgänge 9/10 mit guter bis sehr guter akademischer Basis und positivem internationalen Engagement

Nina Peters, International Office