

# Luminescence Review

## Volume I, Edition I: September 2006

Salut! (Hi!)

Welcome to my first official newsletter from France. I'm becoming firmly settled here and thought it wise to share my experiences: conference in Holland, learning to cope in a new culture and figuring out how to work in a new context.



Windmill in Holland

The Debron conference in Holland was amazing! There were about 250 of us from all over the world and the meetings were translated into several languages including German, Spanish and Korean. My roommates were from Poland and Germany, but they both spoke English very well which was great since my Polish is non-existent and my German is limited to phrases like "you are fat" and "lightning war". I did manage to pick up a bit of Finnish though. It was good to have a controlled place to get over jetlag with a definitive schedule, but time to process and nap if necessary. We learned about different cultures and overcoming culture shock. One night was a talent show/skit night that featured several different cultures including a Korean

step routine and a Canadian dance party.

After a six hour car ride, I arrived at my new place of residence for the next 2 years and met the France office team. My specific team is a lot smaller than expected. Right now, there are just two of us here for the 2 year program promoting literacy. Celeste is from Florida and has been here for a year. When I got here, she had just had her tonsils taken out, which explains the excitement everyone had when she finished her lunch the first day I arrived. It was really quiet when I first got here because she was recovering and the office staff was gone for the weekend. It was hard to go from 100 mph in the States at Markel and church with packing and goodbying to 10 mph here having to figure out where the grocery store was and trying to entertain myself reading books all day by myself. Fortunately, I finished some great books and now I can get places by myself. I even successfully rollerbladed to church last week. You know what? They all speak French here. After sitting through a 2 planning day meeting, I was exhausted trying to communicate since I had to think about what I was going to say and then translate into French. My French is coming back at a good rate. I can get by and mostly understand church services and my officemates when they speak in French. I'm just grateful that I have a foundation in French. I can't imagine being dropped into a culture where I didn't understand any of the language.



Our house

Classes have not officially started, but an American group came through with literally 5 suitcases full of makeup and we did beauty treatments to break the ice with women from our classes. We taught them how to use "American" make-up and nail polish and they taught us how to put on their make-up and henna, a plant based dye for temporary "tattoos". Tuesdays and Thursdays, we'll be teaching French literacy and on Wednesdays, we teach English, mostly to teenagers, but maybe to some women as well. Right now, there are several teachers, but several of them will be leaving at the end of the year to go home. We live about an hour from where we work by train and tram, which is always an adventure.



Yays!:

- I'm here and learning my way around.
- I don't have to go to language school!

Needs:

- More teachers for next year to come along side those of us who will be staying. It would be helpful to have someone to watch the children during classes as well.
- I get horribly motion sick in transit and sometimes it's okay, but other times, I come home and have to take a nap until my head stops spinning. It's also hard to be present in the lives of our students when we live so far away.
- We have a couple of events coming up. One is on the other side of the city at the beginning of October. We'll still be teaching our regular classes, but have additional responsibilities as well. The other one is the "Route de Rhum" (Rum Route) at Saint-Malo, which is on the northern coast of France and the kickoff for a solo transatlantic sailboat race to Guadeloupe at the end of October.

**Siunausta!** (Bless you in Finnish)

Lisa

Address:

Lisa  
c/o OM France  
BP 57  
Pontault-Combault CEDEX  
77341 France

Check [www.myspace.com/lisail715](http://www.myspace.com/lisail715) and [www.coolspring.org](http://www.coolspring.org) for more updates and pics.

Things I Miss:

- Peppermint patties
- Reeses cups
- Hershey's kisses & hugs
- Old Bay seasoning
- Chocolate chips
- Peanut butter
- Cake & Brownie mixes
- Ranch dressing
- Smiling faces