

Macau Rotary Club outbound-only youth exchange

*By Eric Cowcill, Governor-Elect, R.I. District 1285 (Northwest England and the Isle of Man)
10 March 2017*



The Rotary Youth Exchange students from Macau.

The Rotary clubs of Sandbach, United Kingdom, and Macau have worked together for several years to provide opportunities for Macau youth to attend the annual District 1285 Summer Camp in northwest England. This year Macau Rotarians were ready to expand opportunities for young people and together we embarked on creating a short-term exchange.

Our simple idea turned into a huge success! This summer, nine 16 year-old students and two teachers from St. Paul's School, Macau, arrived in the UK for a visit.

The Rotary Club of Macau is certified for “outbound-only” youth exchange, which is special because other parts of District 3450 (China, Hong Kong, Mongolia) are not yet certified to participate in Rotary Youth Exchange. Working with an “outbound-only” district has not been a challenge for our club (Rotarians in Macau worked hard to complete all the certification requirements required by Rotary International).

A tropical cyclone delayed the arrival of the students at Manchester airport for 36 hours, but when they finally arrived, hosts provided a variety of programs showing them our beautiful countryside. All of the students enjoyed their time; and their command of the English language and home cooking skills improved immensely.



One of the teachers samples British food.

A weekend of home hosting by members of Rotary clubs of Sandbach and Alsager provided a much needed contrast with life in Macau. Their country is a Special Administrative Region of China with a population of over 600,000 in an area of 30 square kilometers, making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world. They have over 25 million visitors annually, drawn by the many casinos.

The students' first impressions were that we all lived in castles compared to their normal apartments in blocks of high rises. For many, the journey to the UK was their first-ever flight. It was also the first time that many had traveled by train or seen sheep, cows, pigs, or horses in nearby fields.

At the farewell party, the students put on a short program of music and singing before they bid a tearful farewell to their host families. The party then took a train to London for two days of sightseeing before returning home to Macau.

The benefits of the visit were immense; with most of the students improving their language skills while experiencing a completely different culture. Their self-confidence grew immeasurably and they all have newly adopted "grandparents" with whom they keep in touch. I highly recommend any

club in a certified district to host students in an outbound-only exchange — it will truly be a one-of-a-kind experience.



The exchange students visit The Beatles Story in Liverpool.

Rotary  **rotary
youth
exchange**

