

Monday July 9-Tuesday July 10, 2012

Day 1 – USA to Amsterdam

By Shelby Seurer

Northern Lights 16-1

So far, we have been very busy! We met at the airport yesterday (Monday) at 5:30. After we all checked in and checked our bags, we went to our gate in the international part of the airport. Our plane left right on time, which was at 7:30. The plane was super big! They provided us drinks, dinner, and breakfast once we woke up, which was really cool!

Sleeping, for all of us, was quite the struggle! No one could get comfortable! Abby, Rachel, Jess, Lydia, and me all took sleeping pills, but those didn't help that much.

There were screens in front of every seat, and there were a ton of movies to choose from for free. I think everyone did end up watching their own movie either before or after they slept, and some of us watched more than one.

We landed in Amsterdam around 10:30 am, so we lost 7 hours! Once we got off the plane, and got all of our luggage, we went to a Dutch village called Zaanse Schans, in Zaandam, which was about 30 minutes away from the airport. It was SO cute! There were lots of little cottages, and tons of little streams everywhere. There were so many windmills, and a countryside with animals like cows and sheep. There was a street on a sort of harbor type thing, with so many cute little buildings and boats everywhere. I took a lot of pictures, and I'm pretty sure I said "this is soo cute!" like 30 times☺. It was a really awesome place to start off the trip with.

After that, we went back to Amsterdam for lunch at a pancake corner, which was also a bar. All of us girls got huge crepes with ice cream and chocolate sauce and whipped cream. They were so good!

From the pancake house, we went sort of downtown, where there were tons of shops and people everywhere. We all did a little shopping, and we watched a group of guys perform street dances or routines which was actually really entertaining!

We did a lot of walking around in the city where there was lots of water and canals, and so many cute, old buildings. After that, we walked through the Red Light District. Let's just say it was very interesting... and very weird!

Finally, after all that walking around and shopping and touring, we took a bus to one of the Dutch Olympic training centers in Papendal, where we are staying

tonight. When we got there we found out that we are staying with the Dutch Youth National Team tonight, and each of us is rooming with a Dutch girl. It has been such a fun and crazy day!

Wednesday July 11, 2012

Day 2 – Papendal Training Center - Netherlands

By Rachel Schmidt

Northern Lights 16-1

Well, last night we had an awesome time hanging out with the Dutch volleyball team. We even got to teach them some of our dance moves! They were very impressed with our “skills” and eager to learn our unique styles of dancing, which is different than their styles. After going to bed, we woke up early and went down to breakfast. It was a very odd experience for us because they had very different foods for breakfast such as sliced meats and cheeses along with bread and Nutella.

After breakfast, we headed down to what we thought was the gym that we were practicing in, but it was actually where the badminton team was practicing. We sat there for about a half hour before the Dutch team came down and got us to show us the way to gym we would be practicing in. We practiced with Adam for about an hour before we went back and got ready to head into this enormous city (corrected by people who actually live here) nearby called Arnhem. We walked around and saw the different shops, bakeries and restaurants for a little while before it got really cold and started raining!

We headed back to the training center where we were staying and got ready for our match against the Dutch team. We played pretty decent after having been up for so long the day before, however we didn’t win any of the 5 games. We will be playing them again tomorrow so hopefully we will do much better. After the match, we all showered and got ready to go to the barbecue with the other team that was being held six or seven miles from where we were. We will be spending the next two nights before we head out to Belgium. We all miss our family and friends very much but are having too much fun here to come home now.

Thursday July 12, 2012

Day 4 – Papendal Training Center - Netherlands

By: Hannah Weidner

Northern Lights 16-1

Well today we woke up early and traveled an hour into Amsterdam to visit the Anne Frank house. It was very interesting for all of us to see. It was very cold and poured rain for most of the day. Most of us girls packed a lot of shorts and tank tops and we

were not prepared for this kind of weather. After visiting the house we all went to this cute pizzeria that had amazing pizza.

After we finished eating, we got to play to Dutch team for the second time. We beat them in the first game, but after that they beat us for the other four, which were all pretty close. Playing them was a great experience and it was cool learning about the international rules such as using paddles for substitutions. All of the girls are very nice and have been very welcoming to us while we were in the Netherlands. We also made very good friends with our drivers, Ruud and Vincent. They are very funny and we are all going to have another dance party tonight. Although we will be traveling to other countries, we will not forget our fun times with our new Dutch friends.

Friday July 13, 2012
Day 2 – Brussels Belgium
By Mackenzie Horkey
Northern Lights 16-1

Today, we woke up at 7:15 and went down to the Papendal Training Center for some breakfast. After that we packed up and ran through pouring rain to our vans, for a two hour ride where most of us slept.

We finally got to Brussels! We then all got ready to play the Belgium Youth National Team. The first game we lost by a little, but played very well! The next three games, we did not do as well and lost...Over all the most important part is playing aggressive and having fun!

We all got ready to go shopping and see the famous “Manneken Pis!” When we got there, we ate some famous and delicious “Belgium Waffles” covered with strawberry, bananas and CHOCOLATLE! We all separated into threes and went shopping in the rain for lots of gifts for our families and ourselves.

All of us then traveled back by bus to the Eurovolleycenter, where we watched the Germans vs. Austrians! We all left half way through the match to eat an amazing supper, chicken and potatoes with vegetables. Ending the day we packed a little and got some well needed sleep!

Saturday July 14, 2012
Day 5 – Brussels – St. Die-Des-Vosges, France
By: Lydia Dimke
Northern Lights 16-1

After many active days, today was the first day we were allowed to sleep in. We were all very exhausted after five action packed days so we got to bed early and woke up at 9:00 for breakfast. After that, many of us went back to our hotel rooms and slept again! It felt very nice to get to rest and catch up on some sleep!

Once we were rested, we got into our uniforms and were ready for a rematch against the Belgium youth team. I'm not sure if it was the sense of revenge or the hours of rest our team had, but we came into this match with large amounts of heart and energy. We battled the whole way and ended up taking the first set 25-23, only our second win of the trip! The Belgium team was not happy and came back firing, winning the second set 20-25. From then on out both teams played their hearts out putting everything they had into this match. The third set went to the Belgium team 24-26. So close, but we couldn't pull through in the end.

Our team had played so good and so hard, we were not about to lose in only four sets. So we got some enthusiasm back and ended up winning the fourth set 26-24. It was all tied up now and it was anyone's match. Both teams were exhausted, but we dug deep and found our very last bit on energy. We started off to a shaky start, but after a quick timeout things started to change. We went back and forth up until the very end when we let it slip away and lost 14-16. It was a hard fought battle and we were all very proud of each other. We played very and did some really great things! In the end there were just too many errors.

We then quickly showered, ate lunch and were on our way to France. We left Belgium with smiles on our faces and many more fun memories to remember forever. We got on the bus and slept some more! We stopped at a rest area and grabbed a bite to eat before we got back to our 5 hour journey to France. Us girls can hardly sit still because we are so excited to get to France! It has been such a fun trip so far, I can not wait to keep our adventure going.

Sunday July 15, 2012
Day 6 St. Die-Des-Vosges, France
By: Kylee Zumach
Northern Lights 16-1

Hello everyone in America!

Today was a real early start because as you may or may not know today was our 5th straight day of playing! Each of which days consist of five whole games. Except for one day, we only played 4.

(The night before) When we arrived from our grueling 5 hour bus ride yesterday we had an... Interesting encounter with our first French meal. For starters we had a strange salad that consisted of coos-coos and seafood. (Not a big fan of) and then potatoes that were dipped in what we thought was mustard and Mayonnaise (Also not a big fan of either) then our main course came we had the option of a white fish with potatoes or ham with potatoes. Everyone got the “ham” with potatoes except for Shelby, Abby, and Hannah. When our meal came out, our dear friend Jess who is part vegetarian saw her ham plate which was actually an assortment of ham and sausages and almost started crying because she said the meat looked so bad she couldn't eat it. So Abby and her switched so everyone was happy 😊

Then we got to see our own “French Chalets”. Ooooo we are living the fancy life! Just kidding they are super small and we only share with one person. Some of the girls on the team were so freaked out that they checked the closet for “murderers.” To our luck there was none 😊 Oops I almost forgot! Our own fancy French Chalets had NO WIFI IN IT! This sucks because that's all my roommate, Rachel, and I whined about last night, Oh well! Lastly last night Rachel and I washed our jerseys in the sink. I have never done this before and neither has Rachel so let's just say... Our bathroom was soaked. 😊

Okay so now onto actually today. We woke up and had delicious breakfast. (Personally my favorite meal so far) and then we went back to our fancy chalets and changed into our practice uniforms. Yes, we had to practice, again. UGH. I was so tired. But, it did help a lot. We had a lesson on moving backwards before we passed the ball because, unfortunately, our team has problems with not moving back fast enough to pass the ball and just did usual practice things.

Then we came back and had lunch and prepped for our games (like packed our jersey did our hair, you know, usual girl things)

Now onto the game! 😊

Today we brought the French youth national team to 5 games! That's awesome to think about because those girls are the best in their country and we are just the 10 best in MN. The pattern was- Win, loss, loss, win, loss. Which was a good warm up because tomorrow we are going to- WIN, WIN, WIN 😊

After our games we were all bummed because we could have won but we didn't. Oh well, like I said before we are going to be all wins tomorrow!

When we got back from the facility we were all STARVING so we ate right away then took a refreshing shower. Now everyone is Skypeing, facetiming, or just chilling in the main lobby. I think in a little bit we might even watch *Finding Nemo* on Adam and Barb's Ipad. ☺ Yay!

Lastly I would just like to thank Curt, Adam, Linda, Barb, Northern Lights and my parents for this awesome once in a life time opportunity! It's truly amazing and I am blessed for this experience! SO THANKS EVERYONE ☺

Peace out, Kylee

Monday July 16, 2012

Day 7 St. Die-Des-Vosges, France

By: Greta Geist

Northern Lights 16-1

This morning at 8:00am we all met outside of our little cabins to go have a delicious breakfast. We were finished eating our amazing bread, nutella, cereal, yogurt, and orange juice when we all walked back and fell back asleep.

At 9:30, Linda, one of the French coaches, and Federica all went to the doctor with me.

We had a long wait so I slept in the waiting room until my name was called. I couldn't understand a word the doctor was saying, but it feels better so that's good ☺ We got back to the hotel around 11:30 which is when we all had lunch! Today it was either chicken or fish with pasta. After we all finished our desserts we all got ready to play and also packed up our suitcases.

Our match against the French team was a very good match. We won the first game but we lost the next three...it was close though! We had about an hour after that to go back and shower before leaving France. We all made sure we took pictures of the pretty mountains that surrounded us!

Our van ride wasn't too long, and on the way to the train station we stopped at a town called Nancy. All the buildings were gorgeous! That was just a quick stop and then we got to the train station and off we were to Paris!!!!!!!!!!!!!! The train ride was only about an hour and a half. After we got off the train we hopped onto a subway. Federica, Adam, and Curt reminded us to watch for pick-pockets and to jump on and off the subway fast because it won't wait for you!...which Lydia learned ☺ We all were so relieved to get out of the subway and to arrive in Paris! We went to the best

pizza place IN THE WORLD...literally....and then Curt treated us to ice cream which totally hit the spot ☺ “Officially the spot has been hit” were Kylee’s words ! All of us are PUMPED to be in Paris and are looking forward to the rest of the trip!!! ☺

Tuesday July 17, 2012

Day 8 Paris, France

By: Brittany Jessen

Northern Lights 16-1

Saying that we woke up excited today would be an understatement. We got ready for the day in our hotel rooms that are quite lacking in size and went down to breakfast all dressed up and anxious for the day. Curt suggested that we wear good walking shoes and we were all very glad we did.

First we went to the subway that took us to the Eiffel tower. It was such an amazing thing to see and seemed to be the definition of a great photo opportunity. We took tons of pictures with each other and basically every angle of the tower! As we were taking one of many team pictures, some Chinese tourists decided to jump in the picture with us.. to them, tall blonde Americans are a rare sight.

After the Eiffel tower we walked along the Seine River and stopped quickly for sandwiches on our way to Notre Dame. When we got there, we waited in line to go into the church. It was so beautiful inside and the architecture was amazing.

After, we went shopping down the busy streets filled with small shops perfect for tourists. With hands full of new things and feet a little sore, we headed back to the hotel.

We rested for a little while in the hotel and then got ready to go out to dinner. A subway ride and a mile walk later we arrived at the Mexican restaurant. We enjoyed the food and atmosphere. Some of us even tried salsa dancing.

After a long day of walking and taking many memorable pictures, we walked back to the hotel and got ready for bed, very excited for the many fun filled days to come.

Wednesday July 18, 2012

Day 9 Paris, France

By: Jessica Jorgensen

Northern Lights 16-1

Today we woke up, went down to eat breakfast in the hotel and I had 3 mini crepes with nutella in them, it was very delicious! We then left the hotel and got on the metro to get to the train to Versailles, which was about 35 minutes long. We were all still pretty tired from the night before so a few of us slept on the train.

When we got off our train we started walking towards the palace in Versailles, and we had to wait in a really long that was about a mile long! When we finally got into the palace we toured the whole palace it was so pretty when we got into the rooms that had the murals on the ceiling we all took a lot of pictures! More towards the end of the palace there was a room with a pink feather helicopter (that I thought was very pretty☺). When everyone was done touring the inside of the palace, we all went outside and looked at the garden and took lots of pictures!

We all went back to the hotel after and relaxed for a little bit until about 7:30. at 7:30 we walked to the Sacre Coeur a big gorgeous church that was on hill that over looked Paris and a couple of us couldn't go in because we were wearing tank tops including Rachel, Mackenzie and me. After all of us looked at that and were done taking pictures we went to artisan hill where we ate dinner and most of us either had a salad, chicken or steak then for dessert the choices were banana pudding or chocolate moose, everyone got chocolate moose except for Brittany she got the pudding and it was very interesting because it was a piece of banana bread then some yellow liquid that tasted like nothing... but she liked it.

After dinner we went and walked around the artist's hill and Hannah, Kenzie, Abby, Greta and I all got our portraits drawn and they were very good! Then Britt, Shelby bought a canvas painting which was very pretty. After that we had to walk through the area outside the Sacre Coeur to get back to the metro and everybody had beers and was drinking also we were walking towards Moulin Rouge, just to see the outside of it and the street that it was on was so sketchy and kind of scary. There were mainly black men saying things like "Hey sexy" or "How you doin'" or "Hey Beautiful" when we were walking and it was pretty late at night which made it a little more scary. It was quite the experience walking down that street at night, but I think we were all pretty relieved to get down into the metro station and then back to our hotel.

Thursday July 19, 2012
Day 9 Paris to Geneva Switzerland
By: Abby Monson
Northern Lights 16-1

So today we left for GENEVA!!!!!!!!!! This morning was very hectic due some girls alarms not going off...cough cough (Me, Greta, Hannah, and Mac). But after that we all got right back on the schedule and got ready for our fun train ride to Geneva, Switzerland. So on the train ride most of the girls caught some Z's and others like Rachel and I couldn't find a good position to sleep!

So after everyone caught up on there sleep, Curt came to our area on the train and gave us the hardest game in the world! The game was called Mind Bending Numbers where you would try to figure out the initials of some words while trying to incorporate the number you were given also. The deal was that if Rachel got 20 sayings right, that we would get ice cream! So the entire time at lunch sat there trying to figure out sayings as a team and we got them all but ONE! Which is still okay considering we still get ice cream! ☺

So after lunch we got to go on a sight seeing trip of basically all Geneva, which was really interesting because we got to see the original red cross building and also where the United Nations building is also. So after the tour ended at 4:30 we went back to the hotel to get ready to play the Geneva Club team! We played 4 games, won all 4 of them, and finally.....WON A MATCH!! Then we were so happy with ourselves that we WOPPED it out at the end! (which is our team's dance) and tried to get Adam to do his shower dance for us but he said no! ☹

Then after we played we went to dinner at this awesome pizza place where the served us egg plant pizza! Hahah don't worry it didn't go to waste most everyone tried some, but not everyone liked it! After dinner we walked home and on the walk home Shelby screamed because she almost stepped on a baby bird(she kinda has a phobia of birds) hahah but of course Fredrica to the rescue she came in and picked it up and carried it to safety! Then we finally got back to the hotel had are annual meeting and everyone went up stairs to shower and go to sleep! We love and miss you we'll be home soon!

-Abby

Friday July 20, 2012

Day 11 Geneva Switzerland

By: Curt

Our 2nd day in Geneva started with breakfast at 9:00am. It was the usual breakfast of croissants, various breads, meats, cheeses, cereal, and that bad stuff...coffee.

Our guide Andrew met us at 9:30 and we walked to the old town part of Geneva. He gave us some brief history of things, not too much just enough so that everyone didn't

get bored. We went into the main church which used to be a catholic cathedral but was changed several hundred years ago to a protestant church. They stripped out all the glitz and left just your basic Lutheran non exciting church, but still called it St. Peters Cathedral.

We even climbed to the bell towers and got a great view of Geneva. Only about 200 tight winding stairs, considerably less than the 422 at Notre Dame.

After the church we continued on our walk around town ending up by the University buildings in a park. It was almost noon at this time and we had a lunch reservation at nice outdoor café in the park. The lunch was great, at least Adam, Curt, Barbara, Linda, & Federica thought so. It was Salad first then mac & cheese type noodles with smoked salmon. A couple of the girls liked the Salmon, some didn't. Too bad their loss.

After lunch we went back to the main shopping district and the team went shopping for the next 3 hours. Everyone had a good time walking around and shopping. Geneva is not cheap but they found some sales at various stores and were able to get some new clothes.

We met back at 3:45 because it was Ice Cream time. Since they finished the word game yesterday they earned a free ice cream today. Ice cream in Geneva is not cheap! It ranges from \$3.70 - \$4.50 for a single scoop cone. We went to the \$3.70 place and had 1 scoop each. Definitely the most expensive I've ever paid on one of these trips. Last year in Poland we would find it for 1 Euro a scoop which was about \$1.30 at that time.

With our ice cream finished it was hotel time for about 45 minutes before we left at 5pm for our match with Geneva Volley. An interesting note about today...today is the last match this team will play together with each other. Like yesterday it was a fairly easy match for us. The girls we are playing would be about the middle of our power league. At times our hitters had a field day pounding balls straight down. But the girls on the Geneva team had fun playing so that was good.

Dinner tonight was at the same restaurant we have been at the last 3 nights. It started with tomatoes & mozzarella salad, then went to steak with fries and Spinach and finished with tiramisu. It was a pretty good meal that most everyone liked.

We got done around 10:15 and went back to the hotel because everyone was tired. Tomorrow is an early start day. We have to eat breakfast at 6:45 and be on our way by 7:05 for a 7:45 train.

Saturday July 21, 2012
Day 12 Milan Italy
By: Rachel Schmidt & Hannah Weidner
Northern Lights 16-1

Hello fellow Americans! We will be joining you shortly! It is very exciting! It is also sad at the same but I think we are all looking forward to going home. Today, we had an early morning by getting on the train at about 7:45 and riding for about four hours to Milan from Geneva. After finally arriving in Milan, we headed over to our hotel after a grueling walk from the train station which included stairs and lots of UV rays.

We all cooled off in the hotel for about a half an hour before we went out to go to the Duomo, which is in the main city square of Milan. Unfortunately, we were unable to go inside of the Duomo, which is a beautiful Catholic church, because they enforced a dress code that did not consist of skirts/shorts that were above the knees. As you can guess, we were all wearing some sort of clothing of this type and so we were unable to go inside of the Church except for Curt, who ran off without us, and Linda.

We then dispersed off into groups to do lots of shopping for a very long time. We all got lunch (some more expensive than others) and explored the square where we had many varieties of shops to choose from. There were tourist shops and boutiques to go to, or there were other more expensive stores to go to such as Prada, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Gucci, and many other stores that made me feel special just to be inside of them. We went shopping for a couple hours before resting again by the Duomo. After regaining our energy, we headed out for some more shopping before it started to downpour and hail.

We waited out the weather in a Burger King that we found near by which made us feel almost like we were back in Minnesota again. We headed back to the main part of the square, where we got harassed by people giving out "free" birdseed and pigeons that were unusually comfortable with people around (Shelby isn't exactly fond of pigeons). After finding Curt and the other chaperones, we went around in circles before finding the restaurant that we would be having dinner at. We had some delicious lasagna, and for dessert we had some amazing chocolate pudding covered cream puffs. (Curt still owes us ice cream however.)

The rest of the girls and I were then chosen to be the leaders to get us back to the hotel for our final night in Europe. After figuring out which way to go on the Metro, we then arrived in the general area of our hotel before asking for directions and finding

our hotel. We had one of our final team meetings before we split off to go to our rooms to finish packing and get ready for our long plane ride back to the U.S. of A.

Now, for my final notes about the trip. First, I would like to thank everyone at Lights and for my family for this amazing opportunity to travel to Europe. To be able to travel to all of these different countries and cities in a short amount of time has been both overwhelming but absolutely sensational at the same time. Each city was both very different and still similar to the last city we were at, but different parts of them still stuck out in my mind. I loved each and every city and can't wait to come back! It has definitely been a trip to remember, and I will never forget all the memories that I have here, from teaching the Dutch Team how to Wop to climbing the steps at Notre Dame. Secondly, I would like to thank my teammates for putting up with me for this whole trip, and for the trips before that. We have been through so much together, and got to spend over a month with each other which wasn't very easy at times but we all managed to survive. Congrats guys we made it! Lastly, I would like to thank Curt and all of the chaperones for dealing with us for these last 12 days. It must not have been easy dealing with 10 girls for that long, but you all did a phenomenal job. Whether it was making sure we got from one place to another, or getting us the kind of water we like (no gas) we were well taken care of and we knew it too. Once again, thank you to everyone for everything that you have done with us and for us to make this trip possible. It was incredible!

Signing off for the last time,
Hannah and Rachel