

Sunday July 7 - Monday July 8

Day 1 – USA to Berlin

By Mira Grinsfelder

Northern Lights 16-1

After 13 hours of travel, we finally arrived in Berlin.

Besides travelling over 3,000 miles, the day's activities included:

- Visiting the Berlin wall, Alexander Platz and the Berliner Dom
- Eating 36 cm pizzas at an Italian restaurant where we were confused when they asked us whether we wanted “water from the tap or water with gas”
- And SLEEPING

First impressions of Berlin- populated, loud, diverse, boxy cars, lots of graffiti, lots of smokers, aggressive drivers

We're alive, can't say awake, but doing well.

Love you all,

Mira

Tuesday July 9

Day 2 –Berlin

By Kelly Law

Northern Lights 16-1

Guten Tag from Berlin!

We started our second day playing by the German high performance volleyball team. They were all tall and one of the girls is even going to Marquette next year with Lauren Houg! We lost the first three sets, but we were able to take the 4th. (It's all about improvement.☺)

After we came back to the hotel and ate lunch we headed off the Reichstag, which is kinda like the German White House. Then we went to the Brandenburg Tour (Elmo and Jade took pictures with some actors dressed up in German and American uniforms) which was used as the gates to Berlin back in the 1700's. Then we visited the Jewish Holocaust memorial. We then made our way to the Potsdam Platz where we shopped for an hour and half. And after that we had dinner where we all ate Schnitzel, yum!

We had our first gelato with Curt, which he claims will be our last, but we know we can get him again.

It was a great second day and we are excited about tomorrow!

Wednesday July 10
Day 3 –Berlin
By Elmo
Northern Lights 16-1

Today we got up, ate meatballs for breakfast, and went to play the Germans. We did the same as yesterday, losing the first three and winning the fourth.

After that, we went back to our hotel, showered, ate chicken schnitzel for lunch at the hotel, and left to go shopping. We visited the second largest department store in Europe. They sold everything from suitcases to lobsters to chocolate. The entire top fourth floor sold chocolate of all shapes and sizes. They even had chocolate sculptures. Jess proceeded to get her long skirt stuck in an escalator and had to take it off in front of the watching eyes of chocolate truffles and raspberry macaroons! I had my first macaroon. Highly recommended.

After shopping around the area for a bit we went back to the hotel to eat our chicken schnitzel again while all the adults went out. I tried facetimeing my mom like three times but to no avail. We all packed up and got ready to leave in the morning for Gera. We're having fun but miss everyone back home!

Auf weidersein
Elmo

Thursday July 11
Day 3 –Berlin to Gera
By Taylor Soine ♥
Northern Lights 16-1

Today we took 3 trains to get to Gera, Germany. We left Berlin at 8:00 and got to Gera at 12:30 it was a long day of traveling for us. When we arrived in Gera we met Stephanie and Hanes, they showed us to our hotel and to the gym.

After we got in to our rooms at the hotel we went to go get lunch at the grocery store I got strawberries, pineapple and a sandwich. For dessert I had ben and jerry's cookie dough ice cream!

After we were all done eating me, Jade, Kelly, Caroline, Jordan and Lauren all went back to the hotel while Jess, Mira, Elmo and Danielle went to downtown Gera to site see. After all of them were back at the hotel we had to go to the pre-game snack exactly a hour and a half before the match against TVV. We played them at a military base on the outskirts of Gera. We played there because the gym we were supposed to play in got rain damage to its foundation so it was hazardous to play in.

TVV was late to the pre-game snack so we ate without them there. We played them at 6:30 we actually had an audience there to watch us play. It was really fun to have people cheering for us and TVV. We beat them all 4 games we played. They were girls ages from 12-16. After the match was done we went out to dinner with them it was really fun to get to know them and to talk to them about volleyball and their lives in Germany.

Thank you for listening,
Taylor Soine ♥

Friday July 12
Day 5 –Gera to Munich
By Jessica Wolf ♦♦♦♦
Northern Lights 16-1

Awaking to the sounds of lawn mowers and the chirps of birds, we rolled out of our beds ready for 4 hours of train rides. We walked to the train station and soaked in the last bit of Gera, Germany that we could see. Around 10:00 am, we boarded the train on track 6a to make our first trip to Munich. Curt, in his young age, heard track 68 instead of 6a. We all struggled to explain the track number and from that point on we called it 6 Apple. Through the first train ride, most of us used our fluffy pillow pets and caught up on some lost sleep. At 11:15 am, we unloaded and reloaded our red, troublesome carry-on bags to the new train and sat comfortably by the window seat in the same car. As the meadows and hills flew by us, Curt cracked some jokes about cow poop, the little town of Waconia, and the farmers there. With about 15 minutes left in the ride to Munich, some handsome, bearded Spanish speaking men sat next to Kelly and Jordan on the train. With Kelly and Jordan basically fluent in Spanish, we learned that they were also heading to Munich and got a good laugh out of our pillow pets and oversized bags.

After about a 3 hour ride, we rushed off the train and walked through the hustled crowded train station to the hotel. Exhausted and sleepy, we crashed in our tiny, twin beds. At 4:30 pm, we met in the lobby to walk to hear the chimes ring at 5:00 pm in the plaza. With Curt in the lead, we rushed through the streets at Curt speed and made it to hear the chimes ring with 1 minute to spare. The old clock tower rang for about 15 minutes. The little horses and jousters spun in circles going round and round long enough for us to almost die of boredom.

Then, Curt gave us 2 hours to shop in the busy plaza. Taylor, Caroline, Lauren, and I headed off to a quaint shop called Pimke. Pimke had 4 floors and finding ways to spend more money was easy. After leaving that store, Taylor and Caroline needed to find an ATM. For the next 30 minutes, we entered stores trying to find someone to speak English to give us directions to the closest one. Finally, we found one at the opposite end of the plaza and withdrew more money to spend. Entering a few more stores, we shopped the next hour or so and met Curt back at the clock tower.

Discussing the options of dinner, the team decided to split up with 6 of us heading to a famous beer garden in Germany, Hofbrauhaus, and the other 4 girls headed off for pizza. Danielle, Jade, Kelly, Mira, Elmo, and I walked to the beer garden with Curt to experience some real authentic German sausage and pork. The restaurant was very busy. All the people were drinking large amounts of beer in mugs the size of my foot, and I have pretty big feet. Curt found us a table and we all ordered chicken or some sorts of sausage. Jade and I both ordered bockwurst with potato salad. Mira ordered the traditional veal and Elmo ordered a pig knuckle. Curt and Danielle ordered some chicken with potato salad as well. After ordering our meals, most of us went to the store to buy our families gifts. When we returned, a party of boys that appeared drunk were dancing in the walkway to the band and taking off the shirts while holding their large beer mugs. They whistled as we walked by and we were glad to be back at our seats in that moment.

As the food arrived at the table, we all became very nervous at the sight of our meals, but everyone willingly tried each other's meals. The bockwurst tasted just like a bratwurst in America, but looked like a hot dog. Elmo's pig knuckle looked raw and fatty, but after she cut it open and ate the inside, she enjoyed it and compared to ham in the U.S. Mira's veal appeared to be some floating white sausage in a white watery liquid. She cut it into pieces and ended up liking it immensely. She had no problem eating all of it.

With our food eaten and the German pork and sausage experience fulfilled, we walked to the nearest place for gelato. I ordered one scoop of vanilla and one scoop of tiramisu. They were a delicious combination. Elmo broke her spoon and with half of

the spoon in her hair and the other half in her hand, she walked to the trash can. To her surprise, a cute German boy came up to her and pulled the half of the spoon in her hair out. Elmo couldn't help but blush and a little flustered, she thanked him. The rest of us couldn't help but giggle and tease her when she walked back to the group.

Finishing off our gelato, we headed back to the hotel. As we walked back, we walked past the men Jordan and Kelly sat next to on the train to Munich. They spotted us and yelled to us. We once again got a good laugh out of it, even though Jordan and Kelly were a little suspicious of them for following us. We found a fountain and just had to have a little photo shoot in front of it. After multiple photos, we walked the rest of the way to the hotel with no more disturbances.

Curt gave us an hour to have free Wi-Fi and all of us called back home to check in with our families and friends. After our time was up, we headed up to our rooms for a nice hot shower and a good night of sleep.

End of Day 5

Saturday July 13

Day 6 – Munich

By Jade Tingelhoff

Northern Lights 16-1

It was a busy day for the group today!

We woke up, got ready, had breakfast, and then headed out to catch our bus for the castles at about 8. Our bus was running late so we had to wait around for about 20 minutes before getting on... we hate waiting! We had about a 2 hour bus ride so that means Kelly was out the second the bus left and she didn't wake up until we got there.

When we arrived to the castles, it was a 40 minute walk up to the bridge, but of course Curt told us we had to do it in half that time. We made it in about 15 minutes. The bridge looked over the river, trees and castles. The view was out of this world! It was definitely worth the hike.

Jordan got a little scared walking on a little wooden bridge really far up from the ground, but she made it. We had 10 minutes to make it back to the front of the castle to start our tour, so we ran back down in our dresses and flip flops.

The castle we went to was only 1 of the 4 other castles that belonged to the King. It was unfinished because the King died unexpectedly at age 40. It took 17 years just to

build 1/3 of the castle! Inside was HUGE! There was a room in the castle for the King to do just about anything, like a room just to look out his windows at the mountains (which isn't such a bad view).

After the tour we walked back down to our bus and ate lunch while we drove to the next castle. The second castle we went to was beautiful! It had a waterfall and pond that was right outside so that the King could see it from his bedroom window. Every room had pieces of gold carved in very detailed designs that took years to make.

We weren't allowed to take pictures of the inside, but we could sneak a few when our tour guide and Adam weren't looking.

After the castles we drove straight to the gym to play a Munich team. We lost the first set 25-15 and then came back to win the next 3 to win the match! It was a very fun match even though we were exhausted.

After the match we went out to dinner with the team to a Greek restaurant. We had chicken and pork with rice, salad, fries, and a cucumber dip. After dinner, some of the girls on the Munich team wanted to see Mira "dance" so we all watched her to pass time until we were all ready to leave, and at that time it was already 10:30pm. We had to catch a few buses and walk to our hotel until we finally made it back to the hotel at 11:30pm.

It was exhausting, but we had a lot of fun today! And now we're ready for some sleep.

Love,
Jade

Sunday July 14
Day 7 – Munich
By Danielle Gitzen
Northern Lights 16-1

Today, we woke up bright and early around 7. Everyone fueled their bodies and got dressed for the day. We left the hotel around 8 to catch the train. Once we arrived at our destination we had a short walk to the school.

We scrimmaged the same team from Munich that we played the prior day. It was a tough match, but we weren't able to come out on top; everyone was still exhausted from our long day of sightseeing yesterday. After we were finished playing, we said

our goodbyes to the girls and headed off to the train again; by now we are expert train passengers!

When we arrived, we grabbed a quick bite to eat, and took a bus to the Dachau concentration camp. Seeing how the people lived and were treated brought tears to some of our eyes. It's terrible to think, how one person could cause so much damage and influence so many lives. Once everyone was finished, we headed back to the hotel; once again taking a train.

For the first time on this trip we had some time to relax! Most of us were able to reach our parents and check in on what is happening at home. For dinner, we had pizza and pasta, which was very delicious. And as always, Curt treated us to some gelato for dessert! We can't go one day without gelato in Europe!

Tomorrow we are headed to Innsbruck, which is a beautiful little mountain town. By the time we leave, our cameras will be filled with a lot more pictures than when we arrived!

We'll see you in a couple days, but bye for now!
-Danielle!

Monday July 15
Day 8 – Munich to Innsbruck
By Lauren Mattison
Northern Lights 16-1

The day finally came when we did not have to wake up at the crack of dawn and it was a great relief to everyone. We woke up refreshed and ready to go.

We took two trains lasting approximately three hours to get to Innsbruck, Austria. On the way, the scenery was beautiful and the team, especially Jordan, was speechless when it came to the bright blue river that was caused by the runoff from the mountains. The picturesque landscape can be stared at for hours, and that is what many of us did. Curt took a nap with many pillow pets surrounding him and Elmo had her camera glued to the window trying to snap pictures of the beauty.

We arrived in Innsbruck and took taxis to our hotel. All of the cars over here are nicer, even their taxis. Adam, Barbara, and I rode in a Mercedes. We were very pleased to discover the hotel's free wifi in the rooms and not so pleased when we realized there wasn't any air conditioning.

We went to the old part of downtown to shop. We went shopping for a little over three hours and bought many things to remember the city. The buildings fit in well with the rest of the town and added to the feel of the place. The feeling you get while walking around cannot be portrayed in writing or pictures, it is something you can only experience when you are physically there. Many of my teammates have already decided their family's next vacations, destination: Innsbruck.

We ate dinner at an Italian place. Most people got pasta, but I got pizza because it is better than any pizza in the US. After dinner, we got our almost-daily gelato.

Back at the hotel, people contacted family and friends and took full advantage of the free internet. We wish we could have stayed longer. This city ranked first on many lists, but we are all excited to get to Italy to play on the beach, go swimming, and shopping.

Tuesday July 16
Day 9 –Innsbruck to Sicily
By Caroline Shelquist
Northern Lights 16-1

Today was a long day of traveling for us. We had to wake up early to catch two trains that would take us to the airport in Verona, Italy. We got lunch at the airport and got on our flight to Sicily. The flight was only about an hour and a half so most of us caught up on sleep.

When we landed, we walked off the plane and got on busses that would take us to baggage claim. In the short time that we were outside, everyone noticed the heat and clear skies. After we got our bags, we went to pick up the vans that we rented and meet the people who would be our guides for our short time in Sicily.

Our guide's names are Nelly and Carmelo. They speak very little English so it is always fun trying to ask them questions. Our bed and breakfasts are about an hour from the airport so we had another long drive, but with all of the beautiful scenery in Sicily, we were all very entertained.

After getting settled in, we went to dinner at a restaurant close to our bed and breakfasts. There we ate many unique pizzas (such as pizza with French fries on top) as well as regular pizzas. After dinner, we went to get gelato about 25 minutes away.

Upon arriving, we heard fireworks and saw a parade. The town was having a celebration for their city's saint. It was very fun to watch as it seemed that everybody

was out in the street taking part in the parade or sitting on their balconies spectating and throwing flower petals.

The gelato shop was different than any we had seen before. This one served different flavors with the options of having gelato in a cone, cup, or on bread like a sandwich. No one tried the gelato sandwich, but many of us regretted that decision later on.

We had another long ride back to the bed and breakfasts. Needless to say we all slept very well that night.

Wednesday July 17
Day 10 – Sicily
By Jordan Thompson
Northern Lights 16-1

Today we woke up at 8 and went to a cute local breakfast bar called Gelatomania. After breakfast we went to a flea market. Curt gave us 45 minutes to explore the stands before we headed to the beach.

The beach was amazing! Mira let us use her phone that had a waterproof case on it, to take pictures in the water. After that we went home and got suited up to play beach.

We were all dead after the warm-up. Even though it was tiring we had a ton of fun playing with Federica and her friends!

When we got done playing Curt surprised us by telling us that we were going to go out to a club that night. We were all super excited so we rushed home to get ready. We grabbed dinner at our "usual spot" and after that we enjoyed our girls night out with Federica at the club!

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<3 JORDY<3

Thursday July 18
Day 11 – Sicily
By Adam & Barbara Beamer

Our final day

Barbara and Adam started their day at 9:00 am with a walk to get coffee (espresso) at an ocean side cafe (really a hut that served everything from cocktails to pastries). We

sat at a small table across the street from the beach. The view was great, and the ocean was calm. The beach was already coming alive with young and old - but mostly old. We were surprised at the number of septuagenarians wearing speedos and bikinis. On our walk back to the Bed and Breakfast (it is really just a Bed and Bed because we have never had breakfast there) we stopped at the grocery store. There was a tremendous variety of fresh fruit and produce that was all sold for the flat rate of one Euro per kilo. How healthy, and what a bargain!

When we got back from our morning coffee the girls were all showered and ready to go - a little tired but still glowing from their previous night's experience at the beachside, outdoor, teen-only, dance party. They refused to divulge details, other than that they had a great time. We loaded the vans and headed to the "breakfast" place - the same place as yesterday. The breakfast is more like dessert, but the kids love it and apparently it is very common here. It is a glass of mostly whip cream on top of fruit purée, served with a sweetened bun that is used for dipping.

Then we loaded up the vans again and headed to the beach - not the one directly across the street from both our morning coffee and breakfast, but one that was a 20 minute drive away. 45 minutes later, we exited the auto strata (freeway) and hit the narrow, winding side-streets on the the other side of the island. This beach was not a sandy beach, but a beach made of stones. The beaches on this side of the island are at the bottom of high cliffs and mountains. They are quite beautiful, but definitely difficult to walk on. The stony beach was not a deterrent because it was packed with people and vendors. The girls seemed to enjoy the water. Curt pointed out the best location to enter the sea - all ten of them promptly took the shortest route to the water, which was not the direction Curt suggested. And all ten struggled to get in because of the rocky bottom, three got back out almost immediately, seven swam out to a large rocky point where people were climbing and jumping into the water. Four of them were brave enough to follow the other lemmings up the cliff and catapult themselves into the sea.

After the beach we loaded back into the vans and drove to a restaurant at the top of the mountain for a light lunch. The drive was harrowing, but the view was amazing! Lunch was served "family-style" and consisted of:

1. Light prosciutto
2. Medium prosciutto
3. Dark prosciutto
4. Salami
5. Turkey and Parmesan cheese wedges
6. Salmon

7. Sword fish
8. Octopus
9. Caprese salad
10. Chopped tuna salad
11. Undressed shrimp salad
12. Creamy shrimp salad
13. Whitefish salad
14. Steamed black mussels
15. Stuffed clams
16. Stuffed mussels
17. Steamed shell-on shrimp
18. Shrimp with pasta in red sauce
19. Linguine with mussels
20. Seafood risotto with mussels
21. Grilled tomatoes
22. Grilled eggplant
23. Grilled cabbage
24. Swordfish and eggplant in red sauce
25. Fish sausage in red sauce
26. Plain pasta in red sauce
27. Chocolate tarts
28. Fresh apricots
29. Bread
30. And a sorbetto al limony (a lemon drink)

Apparently, we were also supposed to have:

31. Roasted chicken
32. Baked fish

But these weren't served because most everybody was already stuffed and couldn't eat anymore. We say "most everybody" because some were adventurous and tried many of the offerings, while some tried the "plain pasta in red sauce". It truly was an amazing meal that most will never experience again! Even Curt was impressed!

Then we loaded up the vans again for our descent down the mountain to visit an ancient Roman amphitheater in a little village called Taormina. Apparently this little town is world famous and many celebrities and stars vacation there. The main part of town was very old with narrow streets and lots of shops. It was quite beautiful and quite crowded - we did not see any VIPs like Sting, Bono, Al Pacino, or George Clooney who are all reported to visit occasionally. Curt, Adam, Barbara, and Jessica

found the amphitheater fascinating! Pretty much the rest of them could not be bothered by it, and must have been saving their energy for shopping. They sat down on the stone seats and waited to be released to the shops.

After Taormina, we loaded the vans again for our jaunt back to our side of the island. We got back to the B and B at about 6:15. The players had ten minutes to grab their beach volleyball gear. We got to the sand courts at about 7:00, and their final volleyball for the season started. It was a sand tournament with pool play, then playoff brackets. The championship was decided well after sunset, with Taylor and Caroline defeating Jade and Mira in the final. It was nearly dark when they finished playing!

It has been an incredible trip the past ten days! We leave for the airport in about 6 hours for our long journey home. We have enjoyed getting to know your daughters and getting to spend time with them.

Many thanks to the parents and Curt for such a wonderful opportunity!

Ciao!

Barbara and Adam