

Thursday July 7-Friday July 8, 2011

Day 1 – USA to Vienna

By Allison Butler

Northern Lights 17-2

Our first day was great! We took an 8 hour flight, that was nice and cozy, into Amsterdam. We then sprinted to our next gate to board the plane right away and go straight to Vienna, Austria. When we landed we went to go get our bags but only one was there, they had lost all our luggage and we were not going to get it until late that night.

We met our tour guide Cory who introduced us to his friend Djuro who happened to be 22 year old, single, attractive volleyball playing man ☺, he would also tour us around Vienna. They took us to our hotel and we dropped off our bags and hit the city of Vienna. We went in a beautiful cathedral and shopped before dinner.

Bitteburger was the restaurant we went to. We started with soup which had around 3 noodles for each person but was very good, then the main course was Weiner schnitzel which is fried veal and also very good. Dessert was a delicious apple strudel but for me and Kelley it also consisted of Curt buying us gelato and he has now paid off his debt!

To end the day we headed back to our hotel and went straight to bed with no suit cases and in the same clothes from that day. All in all it was a great first day with a lot of food and adventure. I cannot wait for the rest of the trip!

Alli Butler

Saturday July 9, 2011

Day 2 – Vienna to Maribor, Slovenia

By Calleigh Steichen

Northern Lights 16-1

Today we woke up excited and ready to go to the castle in Vienna, Austria. Most of us were expecting a castle that you would see in fairytales or old movies... But nope! It was more of a HUGE mansion. It was beautiful, but we didn't know just how much beauty it held until we went behind the castle into the gardens and over the hills. Many pictures were taken and the view from the top of the hill was breath taking. You could see what seemed like all of Vienna. With the castle as the foreground, the city of Vienna as the middle ground, and the beautiful mountains and hills as the

background. Sam and Calleigh bought vintage watches at the gift shop, along with the best Popsicles they had ever had! The castle was a great hit with the parents and team.

After the castle, we jumped into the vans again and got settled for a two hour drive to Slovenia. When we arrived to Slovenia we were tired and groggy and not too excited for lunch considering the breakfast back in Vienna wasn't too appealing... But surprisingly the buffet at our new hotel had normal looking and smelling food (normal as in it was recognizable). We had noodles with creamy white cheese sauce, chicken, fruit, and ICE CREAM :) ! After lunch we got dressed for volleyball, and headed off to play the Slovenian women's team. Unfortunately we lost all four games and were very tired after the defeat.

Later that night we got all fancy and charged up our cameras because we were going to dinner on a mountain! We rode a gondola up the mountain, and again our breath was taken at the beauty of the nature around us. Slovenia was even more gorgeous than Vienna, and great pictures were captured from the gondola. Although Nora wasn't too fond of the gondola and she almost pooped her pants every time it would make a noise or shake. When we reached the top of the mountain two men asked for a picture with us... creepy? Kinda. But we agreed and life went on. We get stared at a lot over here in Europe, although I really don't think we look that different from the people here. But it's probably just because we're all so beautiful, including Andy. His man purse really adds to his look. 😊

Dinner on the mountain was very delicious; we had sausage, burgers, chicken kabobs, and french fries. We were provided with ketchup, but the ketchup here is so different that none of us really used it. After dinner the night slowly started to slide when Haley's eye swelled up and started watering, and went blood shot. She ended up being allergic to the horses by the restaurant. Jocelyn got a killer stomach, and Kara was worried her appendix exploded! Then Sarah dropped her camera when taking a picture and she, nor Curt, could find a way to fix it. Ms. Vicki Swenson came to the rescue and lent Sarah her camera for the trip. So in the end Haley's eye returned to normal, Jocelyn's appendix was still whole and Sarah had a camera, and all was good again.

Later that night Curt had a surprise for us, which was going to a festival with fireworks. The festival was gross, smelly, crowded, and very different from festivals or fairs in the US. The people at the festival were very pushy and of course they stared at us some more. I think most of us had our hopes up for the festival and expected too much, but that is just how they like to party there in Slovenia. The fireworks on the other hand, were incredible. They were very explosive, bright, and big. So much better than the ones in the US! Towards the end they had fireworks raining off the side

of the bridge. As Alli described them they were "just like the ones in the Britney Spears video".

So overall the day was pretty eventful and fun. It was definitely a new experience. We're learning new things everyday and we're growing as individuals. As much as we may miss home, we all agree this is an experience of a life time and will continue to take in as much as we can.

See you soon then,
CalleighRae

P.S. We have said plenty of times now so far that we wish Mere and Jen were here, especially for cheering us on from the bench.

Sunday July 10, 2011
Day 3 –Maribor, Slovenia
By Kara Cousins
Northern Lights 16-1

Today we got to sleep in late, well 9. We had eggs, fruit, croissants, bacon and really appley apple juice! After breakfast we headed to the pool for a while to soak up some Slovenian sun!

A while later most of us headed to the alpine slide with Curt! There were a whole bunch of straight down drops and quick turns, it was super fun, except the part where I actually had to stop because I was approximately 2 feet away from Sam.

Then we went to the gym to play some volleyball! We did a lot better than Saturday and we went 1-3! We got home from volleyball, showered and changed quick then we walked to Paradise, an amazing sladoled shop!

The cars picked us up from there and we headed to the Slovenia, Belgium match we were cheering for Slovenian but sadly they lost in three. It was still fun though because the guys on that team were really, really good looking!

After that we went to dinner and had really good pizza! One of the Slovenian players was there that's when we found out that he had a girlfriend, sad moment for a few of us. There were also a few Italian guys who were straight creeping on us the whole time!

We went back to the hotel and hung out in the lobby and the halls until about eleven creeping on sparkle shades (# 2 on slovenia) and the rest of his friends! By the way Nora means crazy in Slovenian that is Djuro and Adam's fav new comeback!

Deuces,
Karbear

Shoutout to Merbear and Jenny J we miss you guys!

Monday July 11, 2011
Day 4 –Maribor, Slovenia to Brno Czech Republic
By Nora Reed
Northern Lights 16-1

Today we woke up and ate breakfast which consisted of a multitude of breads along with pastries, cereal, eggs and more. After breakfast, we departed the hotel in our vans to embark on a 4 hour ride to the city center of Brno, Czech Republic with our amazing driver Djuro ;).

After being dropped off, we were set free for an hour in the city center to eat lunch. We all ate pizza and drank tap water but Calleigh, Sarah and Sam also ate pasta. After our lunch we split up and went to two different ice cream shops for dessert.

When we met back up, we got in our vans for the final trip with Djuro. When we arrived back at the hotel, we were forced to say our goodbyes to him and the other drivers. This goodbye was painful but we are able to cherish the memory because of how many pictures we took. We didn't know what we had until he was gone.

Still in despair, we changed into our volleyball uniforms and rode the tram to the sport hall to play a Brno club team. The team was mostly older players around 20 years old. The un-air-conditioned gym was warmer than expected, even our water in our water bottles was hot. We pushed through the heat and played 4 games. The Brno team won 3 while we won 1.

Our team returned back to the hotel by the tram and quickly showered and changed so we could eat dinner. Our dinner was delicious with a roasted ham and vegetables outside on the patio.

A few of the Brno players even stopped by to chat with us. We learned so much about them including one who was a gorgeous model and had not played volleyball for three years other than for fun and another player was in the Czech military. It was very

interesting to listen to their stories and learn about their lives. The players left at around 10:15 and we promptly went to sleep. Overall, it was a sic day brahh.

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Ps. Hola para mi favorita senoritas Jen y Mer! ☺

Tuesday July 12, 2011

Day 5 –Brno Czech Republic to Krakow Poland

By: Haley Fogarty

Northern Lights 16-1

Today we woke up and went shopping in Brno, Czech Republic. We found some good stuff there and it was an interesting place, although there wasn't a lot of time this morning. Then, we had to go back to our hotel and pack for our bus ride to Raciborski, Poland.

Half way there, we stopped for lunch. WE HAD AMERICAN FOOD!!! We were allowed to eat at KFC for the first time on this trip☺ We got a taste of home and they had normal sauces too! It was different than the American KFC but still good. Then, we had more ice cream, which we've been eating a lot of this trip!

We got back in the bus and were on the road again to Poland. I slept most of the way, but from what I saw the houses in Raciborski are much different than in the US. They're so cute and colorful and a lot of them have flower boxes in the windows.

When we got there we played a team from the small town. It was a very different atmosphere than what we're used to here. It was almost like a high school match. I feel like the whole town came to watch us! We played well, but lost in five. Alyssa got MVP of the "friendly match" and we got plenty of goodies including a flash drive and a nice large collared shirt.

We then went out to dinner with the Polish team. We had chicken, french fries, and salad. The girls didn't speak much English so it was tricky to talk about a lot. We did learn to swear in Polish, which Alyssa liked and decided to use on the street! After dinner we said goodbye and are back on the bus now, headed off to Krakow!

-Haley

Friday July 13, 2011

Day 6 –Krakow Poland

By: Kelley Wollak

Northern Lights 16-1

Well, hello there! This is Kelley Wollak here reporting to you about our first day in Krakow, Poland. A day full of misfit adventures, Oscar Schindler's Factory, and many Polish boys. I will share with you a day in the life of the Europe trip from the eyes of an extremely grateful and lucky girl who got the chance to come. So, let's start at the beginning, our first Polish breakfast.

As I walked out the large wooden door to the street, I struggled. I did not realize that it was a pull and I was pushing with all my might, more like hip checking the door... but that's beside the point. I was soon found by our tour guide Cory who looked at me, told me I was smarter than that, and pulled the door open. Embarrassed? Yes, but happier to go to breakfast and eat something. The small dining area was packed. I walked, more like side shuffled through chairs, to the buffet to find the best morning surprise ever. Cookie Crisp. Yes, the favorite childhood cereal of all American kids, Cookie Crisp. I filled my bowl to the brim and dowsed it with warm milk. I might have gone up to get a second bowl or two. So, it is safe to say I had a wonderful, nutritious breakfast.

Once our wonderful breakfast was finished, and my coffee cup only had a slight residue of coffee in it, we returned to our rooms and get ready for the day. This daily ritual our teenage girls consists of trying on multiple outfits, running to other rooms to see what the other girls think, then running back to our room to change once again. But, when we find the perfect combination of top, shorts or skirts, hair, makeup, shoes, and accessories, we are ready to take Krakow by the dragon.

Our first stop was the city center. With beautiful architecture, thousands of people, and vendors calling for your sales, this was the place to be. In one corner of the square, not really a square but a hexagon stood a towering gothic cathedral. Our Polish tour guide Dominic, not as cute as Djuro sadly to say, led us inside. We were met by a not so happy church patroness, who scolded us in Polish. I can understand where the scolding was coming from. If a bunch of Polish tourists, with shoulders exposed and not seeing the no pictures signs, came into my church while the rosary was praying the rosary, I would be a little upset too. But the scolding was not enough to stop me from soaking in the amazing gothic art that filled the cathedral. It was like something from a movie. High ceilings, hand-carved wooden beams, and gold garnishing gave the church a grand aura. Since we could not take real pictures, I was taking countless mental pictures... don't tell the patroness.

Next we started to walk down the streets of Krakow lined with small shops in old beautiful buildings. We were now walking to the palace and church. What we didn't

know was that the last leg of the walk was going to be uphill. Our calves were burning but our SAQ training reminded us to power through and keep going, also Curt's fast pace was threatening to leave us behind. The palace was seated on the hill next to the river with tall brick walls surrounding it. Once we reached the top of the hill we saw the amazing view overlooking the whole city of Krakow, the city, the river, everything.

Dominic, our tour guide then directed us into the church. This time the rosary was not being prayed, luckily. It was full of people from all different countries speaking languages that I could not even recognize. We were lead around the church admiring the incredible architecture and art. But there was something different about this church that set it apart from the others we had visited. In this church there were tombs of famous arch bishops, poets, kings, and other political leaders. We went underneath the church to see all of the tombs. Some were lavishly decorated and others were very simple. I like to think that the tombs maybe reflected their personalities, but that might be that darn imagination Pat, my dad, gave me.

Anyways, we had one more place to look around before we left the church and palace and that was the bell tower. I felt like the hunch back of Notre Dame climbing the hundreds of stairs and passing through small wooden doorways to get to the top bell. After a few, alright many, more steps we turned right and went through a small opening to find the top bell. It was a small room width wise, but had high ceilings for the bell, which was hanging in the center of the room. Naturally we took a ton of pictures under it. After our check muscles were cramping and our happy smiles went to painful looks on our faces, we stopped the picture taking and went to the windows. The high bell tower gave us an even more amazing view of the city. We climbed back down the stairs, careful not to fall, and exited through the church. And big surprise, we started walking, again.

We walked a little ways down a few streets then stopped for lunch at a little restaurant on the corner of one of the streets. It was a pizza and gyro shop. Man, it hit the spot after so much walking and site seeing! We walked a little more to the train stop and hopped on. I don't know if any of the girls were aware of where we were going. Because I can surely say I had no idea myself! But, through this past week or so I've learned to not ask a lot of questions because most of the time no one really knows how to answer them. So, I went with the flow and got off when Cory or Dominic or one of the other adults told me to. Then, surprise, we started walking again. This time, we went through kind of an interesting neighborhood. It was very industrial and lots of big warehouses. I was very confused but just kept walking. We finally came to our destination, The Oscar Schindler factory and museum.

I will be completely honest; I have never seen the movie Schindler's list. Bridget, my sister got it on netflix once but I never got a chance to watch it... probably at lights practice. But, Andy and Alli soon told me the story of Oscar Schindler and the lives he saved during World War II. We all sat in the lobby and Eric Swenson gave us a little intro to the Holocaust and World War II. The museum was very well done. It had so many first hand stories on film and hundreds of pictures and artifacts from Poland during the war. There were special rooms for different times in the war. They had a room modeled after what a room in a Jewish ghetto would have looked like. There were letters and notes telling about the conditions in Krakow and a scrapbook of pictures with places I recognized going past earlier in the day. Two rooms were my favorite. First was Schindler's office. It had the original floor and desk and map, but there was also a memorial to all of the lives he saved in his office too. My second favorite room was last room. I can see it vividly in my mind but it is very hard to describe. It was a circular room that was very bright and had newspaper headlines of the war covering the walls. It just made you stop in awe and look around. It felt like time stood still in that room remembering the past. It was a very moving place to be and I am very happy we went there.

We got back on the train after leaving the museum and headed back to the city center where some serious shopping was about to go down. The adults let us loose in the square, in groups of three of course, and we shopped. There were a lot vendors with real traditional, but touristy, gifts. We got stuff for our parents, like coffee mugs and necklaces, and our siblings, like daggers (really letter openers, but Nora found that out after her purchase) and scarves. And don't forget about the boyfriends, we got them T-shirts, bracelets, and dragon stuffed animals. After our two hours of shopping was up we meandered our way back to the hotel to get ready for dinner. The big question of the night was: do we wear dresses or nice shorts?

Answer: nice shorts. We walked not even two minutes down the street to a cute little Polish restaurant that wasn't too much smaller than the coach's room at the Warehouse. The seventeen of us filled the restaurant to capacity as we sat down to eat. On the menu tonight was a few Polish favorites like ground turkey, ribs, potatoes, cole slaw, and pierogis. Sounds like a Saturday night dinner at the Wollak house! So I ate great! The potatoes had a little bit of dill on the top and they melted in our mouths. But I must say real treat was the fact that we were able to get two drinks instead of one, Cory must have been feeling a little off to give us that treat! But I was pretty much 100% okay with it 😊

After dinner we were let loose again to roam city center. But first, Andy bought us all ice cream! A real staple for this trip, considering we have had it literally everyday since we have arrived in Europe. The deliciousness was done and Alli and I broke a

rule and went off to explore by ourselves. We really wanted to find a movie theater to try and see the last Harry Potter movie. But we got lost in translation with the street performers who lead us to a theater that performs plays. Since that idea was a bust Alli and I decided to go on a horse and buggy ride around the city square.

We waved to the people like we were royals and had a ball riding around and site seeing from a new perspective. One of the most memorable group of people we waved to was a group of guys who were a little under the influence and trying to speak to us in Polish and pointing at their friend. Alli and I gave them a little confused look and said, "English?" To which he responded, "Oh shit." One thing we have learned in the European culture is that swearing is not exactly frowned upon, really ignored and used as just another word to express your self.

The carriage ride was a lot of fun for the two of us. But now, we did not now what to do. We walked around a little bit and found street performers that were setting up for their show. So, we got front row action at one of the coolest street shows ever, fire dancers. We were mesmerized and in awe with our jaws open at how cool it was. This guy was flippin' around and these girls were twirling fiery yo-yo's. The drums were beating and Alli and I were hooked. That was super cool. No joke.

After the street show we decided to sit on the statue in the middle of the square and people watch for a while. We met up with the rest of the girls who came in groups and they shared their stories of the night with us. Alyssa told us she thinks she just fell in love at first sight. While Callie had told us a creepy guy winked at her. So it turned out to be an interesting night for all of us. A new adventure in a new city was the story for all of us.

It seems so surreal to be sitting across the world and typing this up. Not many people can say they went on a horse and buggy ride in the heart of Krakow, Poland or visited Oscar Schindler's office. We are doing so many amazing once in a lifetime things here everyday. I am so fortunate to have gotten the chance to come and I am extremely grateful. So, thank you Curt for taking me along. I can't imagine what tomorrow holds if today and the rest of the days we have been here were so amazing.

Saturday July 14, 2011
Day 6 –Krakow Poland Auschwitz
By: Samantha Swenson
Northern Lights 16-1

Today was a very memorable day. To start off, we ate breakfast. I had my usual, two slices of hard bread and Nutella, pretty much a traditional European meal. Then we

began on our long, sweaty journey to Auschwitz Concentration Camp. We rode in an 18 passenger van for 1½ hours with not enough leg room and no air conditioning. The sun was beating down on my face, and I felt like if I made one move, I would break out into an extreme sweat.

When we arrived to the museum, we had a bathroom break. It cost 1 Polish coin to use it. There were men cleaning the women's bathroom, and women cleaning the men's bathroom. Can you say awkward?

We then went to the food area and ate delicious hot dogs and pizza. For dessert we had various kinds of ice cream popsicles. Then our tour began. We visited Auschwitz I first. We saw glass cases full of hair, eyeglasses, suitcases, shoes, baby clothes, and hairbrushes from the deceased prisoners of the camp. It was life changing to see how much evil the world had at one point in time, and made me grateful for what I have in my life. We saw guard houses and electrical barbed wire fences. Our guide was very helpful, and he explained a lot of things to us. We learned that between blocks 10 and 11 there was the spot where they shot and executed the helpless prisoners of Auschwitz for being too weak or misbehaving. The SS Officers gave the people the mentality of : "If you are strong and work hard, work will set you free. You will soon be met with family and food will be given." Nearly 1.5 million people died at Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

After Auschwitz I, we rode the bus down the road to Auschwitz II-Birkenau. There we saw remains of a large gas chamber, a living barrack, and a washroom. There was also a memorial. Being at the camps was very interesting and I could not even fathom the cruelty of Nazi Germany. We then went to the gift shop, which consisted of different books in different languages. A couple of us bought informational books, and others bought books with just pictures.

When we got back, we went to dinner at a Polish restaurant down the street from our hotel. It was delicious. We got french fries and chicken breast with cranberry sauce. After dinner, we were set free. We went to the shops and bought many things! We also had ice cream (like we have had every other day we've been in Europe.) Most of us were tired, so we went back and went to bed. It was a very busy and fun day overall.

Now I'd like to give a shout out to Mere and Jen: We miss you so much and wish you could be here with us! See ya'll soon! Love you both!

Friday July 15, 2011
Day 8 –Krakow Poland - Prague

By: Sarah Wilhite
Northern Lights 16-1

Hey it's Sarah! I'm here to tell you about the exciting day today. First off, we got up early and headed to breakfast at 7:15 and ate mostly bread and yogurt, which seem to be our top picks on a daily basis. Shortly after, we headed back to our hotel rooms for last minute packing. As soon as we boarded the 18-seat crammed bus, Alyssa realized she forgot her purse with all her valuables, sprinted back to the room, and then we were on our way to Prague, Czech Republic. The rocky bus ride consisted of listening to our ipods, sleeping, and staring out the window at the beautiful scenery.

When we arrived at the border of Czech Republic, we transferred from the bus to a train, (first time experience for many of us). In Calleigh's words, it felt like we were "catchin' a ride to Hogwarts to meet Harry along with the whole Harry Potter crew!" Throughout the excursion, most slept and chatted in our six-person cabin, excited for the next two days ahead of us.

An hour or so after arriving in Prague, we settled into our hotel rooms and were on our way to play the Czech youth national team! Playing them was an awesome and joyful experience and we were so thankful to have the opportunity. Although we lost all 4 of our games, we enjoyed every minute of it! Everyone was dripping with sweat because European gyms are not well air-conditioned... but we headed to the shower/locker room to get ready for dinner with the Czech team after we were done scrimmaging. Showering was a struggle due to the fact that the water was freezing. A couple of us dealt with the bloody cold water but most didn't.

That morning, our team planned a joke to wear these "up-tight" polos and high waisted shorts out to dinner with the Czech's to make them think we were weird Americans and when we followed through with this plan, the coaches believed we looked nice and sharp, which made the "joke" part of it, a fail.. Dinner with the team was great! The food was delicious, including bread, salad, soup, grilled chicken, and some kind of apple dessert. The only problem was that it was a smoking restaurant (most restaurants are,) and European strangers were blowing smoke right into our faces. It was a fantastic experience to say hi and chat with the youth national team.

To end our first night in Prague, we took a night stroll to the Charles Bridge where we took pictures of the beautiful buildings and lights reflecting off of the river. Seeing such a marvelous city at night made me so grateful to even have this wonderful opportunity to go to Europe. It was the best way to end our first night in Prague, Czech Republic.

Saturday July 16, 2011
Day 9 – Prague
By: Jocelyn Youngdahl
Northern Lights 16-1

Today was quite an interesting day...

Breakfast started at about 9:30, most of us coming to the table with frizzy hair and sleepy eyes. We had the usual selections to choose from with various breads, meats, and fruits. Croissants have definitely been the crowd favorite. After finishing our meal, we headed up to get ready for the day. We all chose our favorite dresses, and after lots of time in front of the mirror and a couple outfit changes, we greeted the day with excitement and smiles.

Unfortunately, that happiness was short lived as Curt and Adam made the choice of walking up a huge sightseeing hill instead of waiting for the tram. The hike was longer than even they expected, with all of us passing around any water bottles that we had brought. We thought we had made it to the top when we reached a flat level. “Halfway there!” our tour guide called out. Not what we had wanted to hear. Not at all. We continued on with the trek, finally making it to the top.

After taking a moment to catch our breath, we headed into a hall of mirrors. Though the mirror maze was sub par, it was fun to see ourselves extra tall, short, or fat in the other various mirrors. We continued to walk around, and soon came to a miniature version of the Eiffel Tower. We chose to climb to the top of it for a better view of Prague. About halfway up the spiral staircase, we realized that the tower looked a lot smaller from the ground! Still winded from the walk up the hill, we struggled greatly to climb up the 300+ stairs.

After finally reaching the top, we surveyed the landscape. Breathtaking. The river wound through the tightly packed European streets, with the castle and cathedral as the focus of the picture perfect scene. The climb down was much easier than the way up, and we stopped for an ice cream treat once we got down.

Next we continued on the Prague Castle and St. Vitus church. Both are incredibly designed buildings with beautiful architecture. The palace had the strict guards, but we managed to get one of them to smile a couple of times by either standing right in front of him and staring back, our pretending to lean in for a kiss. We got a chance to look inside the church, and were instantly amazed by the detailed and colorful stained glass windows.

As we continued to walk around the church grounds, we were stopped a few times by random people on the streets who wanted a picture with us. We ended up taking pictures with a couple of weird Austrian men in leather outfits, and a cute and tall European boy (our favorite).

We continued on our journey across town as we headed across the Charles Bridge. The bridge is very pretty, with a great view of Prague and many interesting sculptures. Soon we stopped for lunch, most of us having some much needed pizza.

Soon after, we were surprised to learn that we would be able to get to go to the “biggest music club in Central Europe” that evening. This was great news for us, and we were set loose for a few ours of shopping with a new found excitement! Some of the girls did the regular clothes shopping, while a lot of us took time on the bridge and bought a lot of local artwork. We learned about the “John Lennon Wall”, which is a colorful graffiti wall hidden in the city where people pay tribute to the legendary John Lennon with pictures and Beatles quotes.

We met back up for dinner, an absolute feast of Italian pizza and pasta. Leaving the restaurant full and in good spirits, we headed back to the hotel to get ready for our night at the discotheque! After the perfect outfits were chosen and the right amount of makeup was applied, we met in the lobby, ready to check out the Prague nightlife!

Led by our trusted guide, Jirka, we headed out for the night. We soon made it to the club, in awe of its 4 levels of dance greatness. Our favorites were the “Oldies” level for some disco battles, and the “R&B” level for our favorite party hits. A decision was soon made between the girls... What happens in the club, stays in the club. So despite most parents’ better interest, I am not allowed to share what happened during our great night out!

After a long but crazy fun night, we headed back to the hotel. A lot of us crashed the second we made it to our rooms, while some showered to freshen up before we went to sleep. All in all, it was a truly memorable (and safe) night for everyone!

Thus concludes my summary of yet another great day in Prague! It has really been a wonderful trip. We miss everyone at home and look forward to seeing you all soon!

WHADDUPPP MERE AND JEN!! (:

Sunday July 17, 2011

Day 10 – Prague to Budapest

By: Haley Fogarty

Northern Lights 16-1

Today we got to sleep in and then did some more shopping in Prague. Kelley, Alli, and I had some excellent pizza at the mall and ate lots of it! We walked around and shopped a little more, but mostly just waited for.....Harry Potter!

The coaches knew how much some of us wanted to see the new Harry Potter and how sad we were that we couldn't see the premier in the US. So, they decided to be nice and take us! I was so excited! I needed to see this movie. We went to this big theater found an English showing of the movie, with some other language subtitles, but it was still just as good! I was clapping and cheering during the movie with excitement, but some of the other girls weren't such big fans and listened to their ipods. Anyways, it was really good. I loved it and it was a highlight for me!

Then we went sightseeing a little more in Prague and it was our last chance to enjoy the bridges and beautiful scenery there. We ate dinner in this little restaurant and it was really good. We had some orange looking noodles that were delicious and plenty of pizza. Prague was excellent, one of my favorite cities that I have ever seen.

We then went back to our hotel and packed up for the long train ride to Budapest. The train was interesting! I had never ridden trains before this trip and definitely not a night train. The cabins on the train had three bunk beds stacked on top of each other and a tiny bathroom and shower. It was really cramped but I was glad we had a bed to lay on through the long ride. We were tired, but ready to see Budapest! It was a long day, but one of my favorites!

Haley

Tuesday July 19 & Wednesday July 20, 2011

Day 12 –Budapest & Our flight home

By: Kelley Wollak

Northern Lights 17-2...AAU National Champion & AAU All American MVP

Hello again! Thanks for the intro Curt! ^ haha This is Kelley writing our final journal of the once in a life time trip, unless you're Curt or Adam... Anyways, let's get right into it by starting off with our last full day in Budapest.

I had the lovely pleasure of rooming with Alli Butler the night prior. We had a good hard sleep, it may be the fact that once our heads hit our pillows we were out, but that's neither here nor there. We awoke refreshed and ready to go! Breakfast was pretty uneventful, just the normal dream sharing and stuffing chocolate filled

croissants and coco puffs in our mouths. We returned to our rooms to get ready for the day. There was a collective agreement for everyone to look nice for our last day out on the town and so many dresses were pulled out of the dirty laundry and aired out... then sprayed... and sprayed again. Once we all looked nice we met in the lobby to find out where it was we will be going for the day.

The market place was our first stop on the schedule for the day. It was this huge building with three levels, a beautiful glass like ceiling, and rows of vendors. On the bottom level were fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats. It smelled like the farmers market in Bloomington on a Saturday morning, crisp and fresh. On the top two levels were souvenir vendors, many traditional little trinkets and what nots. I got two wooden boxes, one looks like a book, the other a jewelry box. They are both ornately painted with flowers, but the neat thing about them is that they only open in a very special way. I was very excited to show them off to the group because I thought they were just so cool! I tried showing Andy... but he got bored in the middle of me trying to open it but he paid attention anyway.

When we all met back up at our meeting place about a half hour later, we all got back on the train and went to our next stop of the day. We got off the bus and walked a little way to one of the main shopping centers in Budapest. We were set free for a couple of hours to go shopping and have lunch. Heni told us about this cool pasta place called Vapiano a couple of blocks away. Haley, Kara, Callie, Alli, Sam, and I decided to check it out. Basically, it was a Noodles. But, when you ordered, it was made right in front of you. Sounds easy right? Wrong. First off, the menu isn't exactly in English. The chefs making your meal aren't exactly friendly or patient. And lastly, there are many other customers who are waiting to order. The pressure was on. I pointed at the plate in front of me and said, "Can I get that?" The chef looked at me for a little bit, took a deep breath in then nodded. The experience in the restaurant was not the friendliest in the world, but the food was pretty good. I guess if you are a local (and can speak the language mostly) maybe the customer service is a little better.

Once we were out of the restaurant, the group walked back to the square and started looking around in stores. As we walked backed the girls talked about how they didn't want to spend money anymore and that they had spent so much money already, I could definitely agree with them. I know that seems like the last thing to go through a teenage girls head when they are given a couple hundred dollars to spend on what they like with no parental supervision on what they're buying. But, it's true! We really did not want to spend anymore money.

I unfortunately would like to inform you that we did spend money that day. It's a habit. And a hard one to break at that! But, our finds were on sale and we didn't buy as much as we did the prior days. So, I guess we were taking baby steps in not spending as much.

The big group met up again at the statue in the middle of the square and headed back to the hotel. We took a little rest then got ready to go back and play. We were expecting to play the younger Qatar team this time, but the women's team wanted to play us again. So, we obliged. It was kind of a quick, painless match and ended quickly. But, I will take a lot out of being able to meet and play against them. It was especially fun to meet and talk with the younger team because they were closer to our age. We had a real cultural exchange with them. Everybody asked questions about each others lives and how they lived. We found out it gets to 113 degrees in Qatar. But, looking at the weather in Minnesota lately... the gap was a lot closer than I thought. I made friends with a girl named Salha who had four older brothers! I can't even imagine! Everything about her life seemed a lot different from mine. But, we found a common ground in a couple of things: Beyonce and Volleyball. I won't ever forget that extremely unique experience we got to have. I don't know many people who can say they now have a friend in Qatar who loves both Beyonce and Volleyball 😊

After playing, taking pictures, and saying our goodbyes, we had a little team meeting where we were informed of a little information that made Kara a very happy girl. We were going to the disco tec again. You know what that means, the favorite part for any teenage girl, getting ready. But, this time we only had an hour to get ready and no party dresses left. So, it made it a little more difficult to get ready, but we managed to pull it together and look nice.

To our dismay, our hour of preparation was about to meet the arch nemesis of girls. Rain. But, it was not only raining, it was pouring. We ran to and from the bus stops, stopping occasionally under coverage to try and salvage some of our hair from the rain. We finally got to the mall, where the restaurant was, and let out a sigh of relief. Not only were we out of the rain, but we were in our home away from home, the mall. The pace slowed as we browsed through windows of shops. But then picked up when we smelt food.

The restaurant was a really cool with like life magazines on the walls. I can't tell you the name of the restaurant because I was too preoccupied with finding a spot to sit and eat as fast as possible. While waiting for our meal, Heni passed out these plastic Easter egg looking things. And told us we were not allowed to open them until we were done with dinner. Torture. Complete torture.

Dinner was very very good. We had like one of those flattened chicken nuggets and cheesy broccoli with homemade chips and a Salad. It really hit the spot. But, not only was the dinner good, the conversations at dinner were good, too. It was a great time to just be sitting in the company of one another and enjoying our dwindling time together.

Adam and Curt made the executive decision to not go to the disco tec tonight because of the rain, lightning, and thunder. I don't think anyone was too disappointed. After that announcement, we were given the go ahead to open our eggs. Inside we found a little toy in one half and a chocolaty kind of dessert in the other. I got a spin the bottle sort of game. Alli got a spinning toy. And Nora got a parrot on a skateboard. An odd assortment of toys, but it surely kept us entertained.

The train took us back to the hotel where we said goodbye to Heni, packed the rest of our things up, and went to bed. I laid awake for a little bit thinking about how much we had done over the past 12 days. Wow, I can't even remember everything that happened. It seems like a month ago when we left.

The next morning we got up, ate breakfast, and got on a bus to the airport. I thought it was going to be an uneventful day of travel and sleeping on planes. But, I was mistaken. **WARNING:** I might have exaggerated a few parts of this next story.

We got to the airport and began to get in line to check our bags. We are a big group, so we take up a large amount of space in the line. Curt and Adam were printing off our boarding passes while we were waiting in line. The self-check in kiosk wasn't working right so a woman worker told Curt and Adam to go up to the desk for them to figure it out and told the rest of us to go on the other side of the ropes and wait until they had it figured out. It all seemed so simple, go and wait until it was ready then come and check our bags one by one.

A little while later, a sly looking man with gelled hair and a thin mustache came up to the group of us standing off to the side of the ropes and in a snotty kind of way told us to get in line. It all happened so fast, so I will try my best to remember everything in the sequence it happened with the correct people saying what they said. We tried to explain that we were with Curt at the desk but he would have none of it. Next thing I knew Curt came in like a mother bear protecting her cubs. Curt began informing the manager that we were told to come over to that spot by the woman in the blue dress and that we would not be getting back in the line that was now 30 people long. They began to talk at the same time repeating the same things. It was a flurry of words, getting a little louder each moment until it was at a tone above a normal

conversation. But, Curt was not backing down and we were backing him up. Vicki was reinforcing Curt with sayings like, “we’re not moving” and “where’s your manager”. The scene was getting heated. It seemed like the whole line was watching the drama unfold. The guy came over to ask the worker in the blue dress if she had in fact told us to stand where we were, but she lied. In my mind, and I am guessing the minds of a few other group members, it went something like this, “Oh helllllll no.”

The guy came back to our group and said, in an uppity foreign accent, “You are not going to do this, this way.” To which Curt responded, “YES. Yes, we are.” They were talking at the same time again, and then it was like it happened in slow motion. Curt pulled out his index finger and poked the guys shoulder and said with authority, “We are not going in line.”

The scene now was at a boiling point. I could not believe the next thing that happened. A slow roar came from the line, what they were chanting became clearer and clearer until I could make out what exactly they were saying. “Let them go! Let them go,” the line was chanting all together, louder and louder. It was like something from an epic movie scene where the crowd comes to the rescue of the gladiator and chants against the emperor.

The guy slowly began to realize he was even more out numbered than before. His eyes began to look around at the scene that was upon him. A flash of fear ran across his face. We had won this battle. With our leader, Curt, and the help of the crowd we checked our baggage with Mr. Jack something off to the side scowling in his defeat. It was a good feeling to come out on top. As we walked away all together towards security, I could swear I heard, “USA! USA,” being chanted in the distance.

We got through security fine and sat at our gate ready to board. When we got in line, we noticed another person standing at the desk in front of the gate, Mr. Thin Mustache. Ha, come back for more eh? Not really, but it was kind of funny to see him at our gate. Just for good measure, Vicki took a picture of him (pretending to take a picture of Alli and me).

We boarded the plane, ready to come home and enjoy the American things in life. Like, McChickens, ranch, and our own beds. We come back with many stories to tell family and friends, gifts to give from foreign lands, and a taste for the European way of life.

These last 13 days have been some of the most memorable days of my life so far. I will always remember my first time abroad, my first pat-down by an airport agent, and

my first Weiner Schnitzel. I will remember the carriage ride in Poland, that match in Maribor, and the last dinner together. And I will remember most of all the opportunity I was given to come with and experience it all.

I would like to thank Curt for inviting me along, the girls for making me feel like a sister, and the rest of the gang for making my experience truly unique. Like I said, I won't ever forget it.

-Kelley

P.S. Sorry that I am long winded... hope you made it through all the way!

Editor's Note: Curt didn't actually poke the guy, but he did get right in his face and tell him exactly what we were going to do. But what the heck...if you can't exaggerate it a bit what fun is a story!

This has been a wonderful trip and the 10 girls have been great to travel with. We've also immensely enjoyed having Andy along on the trip.

Our 7th summer European tour has come to an end. Where will our 8th one be going next year with 10 players from the 16's?

You'll have to tune back in later this fall when we announce it.