
2021-22 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

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Travel, Travel and More Travel

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Travel, Travel and More Travel

Grüß Gott!!

One of the amazing aspects of studying abroad is the ability to travel wherever. Even in these dark times of the pandemic, so long as the appropriate precautions are taken, traveling is heavily encouraged! I have had the special privilege to travel several times since my stay out here has begun and it has led me to understanding so much of the rich and diverse culture that is right around the corner here! I mean, travel in any direction and things start to change. I have been to the Czech Republic, Poland and I even found myself in Bulgaria! I emphasize the word privilege because these countries and the cities and/or small towns I have found myself in, have opened my eyes not only to the general culture but also, the family values, religious values, burial traditions, and so much more!

My first excursion, if you will, was to Prague in the beginning of the semester. It was only 6 hours away by train and once a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, but my goodness how quickly things can change. One of my colleagues quickly made the side remark that people were already starting to dress more alternatively here. The Bohemian tradition still runs very deep and within five minutes of getting off the train it was explicit. The history here ran twice as deep. From Old Town to the Jewish Quarter and all the way up to the Prague Castle – this city, like many others, holds a plethora of stories to tell.



Bohemian street music in Prague.

My second excursion was to Bulgaria over my fall break. Another one of my colleagues and Linfield student has family there and we had the treat of being able to stay with them. Two hours outside of the city of Sophia, there is located the small town of Troyan. It is filled with tiny, quaint farms that are blocked side by side with little romantic courtyards filling the middle. Here I grew a stronger understanding of the Orthodox Church and how that really aids in creating the fundamentals of the family structure here. This is something I will cherish.

We were able to see one of the oldest monasteries in Bulgaria, learn some of the brutal history behind religious wars and struggle and see some of the old remnants of the Eastern bloc from the late portion of the 20th century.



Chris and I (Dmitri) standing in front of one of the oldest monasteries in Bulgaria.

Third, was my recent trip to Poland. Much like Troyan, the signs of the Eastern bloc can still be seen. However, we spent the majority of our time in Krakow, a prospering city that mostly went untouched by the fabled War. This trip was primarily centered around the Jewish population and included a very hard, yet very needed, trip to Auschwitz. We also had the lovely opportunity to attend traditional Polish music performances. (Which if you have never listened to it- DO IT -RIGHT NOW. You can thank me later.)



A traditional band playing in the streets of Krakow.

Traveling here is vastly different to the United States. Sure, you may get some different aspects of our own culture as you go state-to-state or town-to-town, but it all varies so quickly out here it truly can make your head spin.

-Dmitri Sofranko