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Postcards from Abroad

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Schottenstift and the UN

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Schottenstift and the UN



The UN complex is quite beautiful.

As I write this, I'm on a bus to Prague, so you, dear reader, can look forward to an interesting post next week. Which isn't to say this past week wasn't interesting, because it definitely was - we had another of those tours, and I'm going to do a bit more explaining about the UN event that Paris and I helped out with last Friday. Plus, y'know, hopping on a bus to Prague.

I'll start off with the tour - this week, we were off to Schottenstift, the Irish monastery built under Heinrich "Jasomirgott" Babenberg, the first Duke of Austria. It's an interesting place, and I got some nice spooky pictures. (I was very tempted to photoshop a ghost into one of them and pretend to have no idea how it got there, but that seemed a bit disrespectful of a 1,000-year-old church, so I decided against it.)

After exploring the undercroft, we headed up above the main level, to the museum - the floors were very creaky, since they're probably a couple hundred years old in their own right, but the art itself was beautiful. Unfortunately, they had a "no pictures" rule in the museum, so I wasn't able to get any pictures, but it was a pretty cool experience. They had a few paintings of Bible scenes where Vienna, as it was at the time of the painting, is visible. I found that odd - did they really think nobody was going to notice that the then-new church of Vienna was visible in the background of this scene that was supposed to have taken place in 3 BCE? Apparently they figured they could get away with it, though, because it happened in quite a few of the paintings.

There was also, of all things, a taxidermy room. About as creepy as you'd expect, although I think that when I hit my "eccentric old man" stage of life I'm going to build one... that has some animatronics hidden in a few places, just to mess with people. ("Mom! That one winked at me!")

The next day, Paris and I hopped aboard the U1 and went out to the Vienna International Center, home of the UN's Austrian headquarters. I'm not sure if you, dear reader, know this, but September 21st, as well as

being my birthday, is the International Day of Peace. The UN as a whole was celebrating a few days early, in an effort to get people thinking about the idea of 'world peace' before the General Assembly as a whole started meeting.

The group we were working with was specifically drawing attention to the intergenerational issue of peace - the word 'peace' has a rather different meaning, in a way, for people who lived through World War II than for people who lived under the shadow of the Cold War, and yet another meaning for the people like me who were born after both of those had come to an end. I actually wound up writing a mini-essay on the subject pulling together some of the thoughts I had, with specific focus on nuclear weapons, during the event.

That aside, it was a really cool opportunity - we got to help out with a really meaningful event, and hear speeches from three women who had survived World War II with *incredibly* different perspectives (one endured the Blitz; one survived a concentration camp; and the third watched the annihilation of Hiroshima from outside an over-filled bomb shelter) - that I'm glad we got. Plus, access to the UN itself isn't the *easiest* to come by, and the complex has some of my favorite architectural styles included.

Grey