

MY TRAVEL DIARY

1st STEP

All my life, I've been listening about how dangerous the world is. My parents told me that we cannot travel because we don't know the language or because people don't understand our culture. Well, I have to admit that there were other times. Nevertheless, it sounds to me as just simple excuses. To top it all off, our country did not respect our religion and they made it very difficult to practice it. My parents were really scared about this. But life have changed and also the country, but not me though. I still want to travel, and discover the world! This year I will fulfil my dream because... I will travel abroad! I don't really know witch country to start with, but I'm sure that I'll choose somewhere interesting, there are so many places to go! I'm really excited, I've started to buy a lot of things that I need for my trip. So, there's no way back!!

2nd STEP

This morning when I got up, I came to my last day at work. I'm going to recive my salary. I'm so excited, I've planning everything and I have got nearly everything ready. I cannot believe it, all my life waiting for this moment and now here it is. Sorry but I can't continue writing, my boss is here!! He is so tough and demanding that makes me feel nervous when he is around. I'll get back as soon as possible.

3rd STEP

Ok, now I'm ready to continue my story. I received my pay, and finally I have decided European Union. I had heard about this but I had never stopped to think about what it is. So I started to read about it and I discovered how important it is. While I was collecting information about the European Union and its advantages I saw a picture of a beautiful castle and at this moment I fell in love with that place. Immediately, I started surfing the internet, to find the country this castle belonged to and where it was. I found out that the castle was in Austria and then I saw it clearly, I said to myself: I will go to Austria. where I'm going I'm going to... Austria! Do you know how I discover this country? Simple, yesterday I was looking for different places. At that moment I thought about goig to Switzerland , as my cousin lives there, but while I was looking for this country I read about the

As well as some travellers, I started to collect information, like the history of the country, its history, its language, its coin, places to visit....

The more I searched and I got information, the more I fell in love with this mysterious country.

In the last hours, I have done different changes in my original plans. Instead of travelling by plane, I'm going to travel by car and caravan like my cousins do. I can do this because, thanks to the European Union laws, we have freedom of transit. But I am not going to go alone, I will be traveling with three friends. We are going to rent a caravan and we are going to use my big car. It will be a real adventure.

We need, to buy food and we have to pack our personal things. Of course, I will pack my camera, it is essential.

I can't wait!!

4th STEP

We have prepared the route to Austria. Our starting point is obviously Reszel, our small village in the north of Poland. From there we will drive to Prague (Czech Republic) which is 886 km away from Reszel.

During this period of time we are going to do driving turns, between my friends Lukasz and Adael, we will visit the city as we have only one day in Prague.

Our next step will be Munich because Lukasz want to visit the "Bayern of Munich's stadium" because he is a real fan of this team. I know that is a little bit strange that a polish gay likes a follows a German team, but Lukasz's mother was German and his father polish. His mother's family came to Poland in the middle of the Second World War because they were protecting a Jewish family from the Nazi. They escaped from Munich to protect them in a little village at the North of Poland. He says that it was not the original plan of the family to settle in Reszel, but they couldn't leave Poland after they arrived. But don't worry, they saved the Jewish family and managed to live happily there.

Our 3th step will be Austria, at last!

First, we will go to Linz, after this to Salzburg and Innsbruck and at the end to Wien. I'm so excited! I can't wait!

We are going to stay in Austria for two weeks. After this two weeks, we will return to Poland but we'll do it driving through Hungary. In Hungary we are going to visit

Budapest (only for one day) and afterwards we are going to drive through Slovakia before we return to Poland. If we have time, we will also visit its capital city Bratislava, but we'll see if we can make it in just one. It might be too much.

I know that it sounds improbable and like a fantasy but we have been saving money for a year, so we could do this incredible trip.

I also have to say that this is only possible thanks to the freedom of transit. Many years this would have been simply impossible due to all the borders controls and visa requirements.

5th STEP

I cannot believe it!! Today is the day! I'm so nervous, now is 5:30 a.m., I have to go to Lukasz's house to start the trip. I am walking through Reszels's streets, now I am a little bit scared. I have always listened to my parents saying how dangerous Europe is to us as Jewish people and, in special, how dangerous Austria and Germany are. They told me that everybody is going to look to me like a strange person and they used to say that people don't respect my religion. I know that now is different, but I have to admit that I'm a little bit scared. All my life I've been listening stories of how terrible some Europeans are and now I'm going to meet those "monsters", and I am going to really know if the equity that the European Union defends and the freedom of worship they claim is as real as they say.

We started our journey at 6:00 a.m Lukasz was driving while my best friend Krysta, my other friend Adael and me were planning our first day in Prague. We had time to play games, to sing, to sleep, to get bored... and finally after a journey of eight hours we arrived to Czech Republic. I have never got out of Poland so I have never saw a country border. In my imagination, in a frontier you will find a giant wall or a gate with a single entry, with a lot of policemen controlling you, looking for your passport or your nationality. But the first real border I encountered was absolutely different, there were a giant sign post that said Czech Republic and that's it, no walls, no gates, no policemen stopping us... I couldn't have imagined that the freedom of transit was, in fact, so free.

After this we had to buy a vignette to allow us to drive through the country because they don't have tolls. After many hours of driving we finally arrived in Prague. We visited a lot of different places and we really enjoy the day. Prague was incredible, it was so beautiful.

6th STEP

We continue our trip. You can follow us by reading this diary, we arrived in Munich. We were looking the Bayern Munich's stadium, Lukasz was so excited, after all this time being in his born country, we went to the fan shop, because Lukasz wanted a t-shirt, we didn't know the language but, it wasn't a problem because we could read the prices so we knew how we had to pay and if it was expensive or not. That was all thanks to the EU, the currency is the same in all the countries of the European Union. This way, nobody could cheat us and its much easier. After this, we went to the Munich city centre, it was a little bit taught because, as everyone knows, Germany persecuted the Jews, and Adael and I are jews.

7th STEP

Finally we arrived into Austria, first we bought the "Vienna Pass" an special wallet that permit you to see all the museums and interesting places of Wien for free. Well, I mean not really for free because the wallet for a week costed us 140 euros but is cheaper than paying museums one by one. We saw the Elisabeth or Sisi's empress palace, Mozart, Strauss and Bach's houses, the cathedral, the Belvedere castle, the natural and history museums.... and I found the castle of my dreams ! Schönbrunn palace. We ride on the wheel of Wien. It was so funny! We did a lot of things.

We also visited two art museums, the Albertina's museum and Belvedere's art museum. At the beginning, we were looking for the pictures of Gustave Klimt but during the visit I found another artist that left me impressed, his name was Egon Schile, and I got totally in love of his pictures, because he represented women, so free and natural, that I came to desire that he would have been painting my life and the lines of my body to be as free as this women.

That week in Austria, there was a demonstration. We didn't know why, but we have a problem with the demosnrators because we have to crossed to the other side of the road, and to do this, we had to get through the demonstration. Nevertheless, we decided to cross, and while we were doing so, Lukasz and Krysta mixed in the crowd and got lost. But Adael and I found them later, and we went to have a Tea with Sacher Torte, Austria's typical cake.

8th STEP

Our trip in Austria ended, but not our adventure. I'm am so tired, today has been so tough and full of emotions. We move to Budapest in Hungary. First we saw all the old part of Buda and we ate in front of Saint Matia's church. We try Hungary's typical food: the gulash soup, a soup made with veal, potatoes and other things. After this, we visited Pest part of the city, wich have the parlament, the Heroes' square...

Near the end of the afternoon, my friends were very tired and they wanted to have dinner and to relaxed a little bit, but I wanted to saw a war museum, so I decided to go alone, when I entered a charming girl attend me, I started to saw the museum, As I was going through the different showcases and information points, unpleasant images passed before my eyes, I saw images of barracks, weapons used to kill those who were just like me, the land strewn with corpses, fascist flags waving in the air, countries united by a continent but confronted by tyranny of a dictator...

I saw how he had condemned people, Jews, Germans, Polish.... anyone only because of thinking different of their dictator, I saw pe0ple that can not raise a pray for their god for fear of dying. People that didn't have freedom. But not only freedom of expression, or freedom of religion... People who didn't have freedom to live. At that moment, I finally understood my parents' fear of going out of their way. Without realizing it I had let my feelings come to light and I started to cry.

I ran desperately to the nearest synagogue at the Dohány Street, when I entered, I got in shock, it was the biggest synagogue that I had ever seen, there were different people tourist, believers...but I did not care about anything. I moved discretely to a corner and raised a prayer and, in that moment, I felt in contact with my God without any fear.

CONCLUSION

This is the story of my first and great journey, after reflecting on what I had found along the trip, I had lived all my life in a small village, feeling like a bird in a cage not allowing it freedom to go flying. I had listened how dangerous the world was but still preferred to see it with my own eyes, and look into the eyes of danger. But as my trip progressed, I realized that I was not facing danger but that I had found a treasure had been disguised for too long. I had called it in so many different ways except for its proper name, FREEDOM.

But this freedom that resides in the countries I have gone through has not been established alone, but it has been raised with courageous citizens, Jews, Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, French, Spaniards ... before us, they fought to establish an egalitarian freedom thus forming a set of countries that grew to what we now called the European Union.

I had never realized before how important the group of countries was. We are part of this, and that is that, when you live in a place and have never left it, you think that what you know is the reality of the whole world and you convert less than a tenth of the world into the only truth. That precisely was what happened to me. That is why I would

love to create a project that would allow young people and adults to live the experience that I have lived, that allows them to expand their horizons, open their minds, and definitively “open their cages” and fly. A project that brings them close to freedom. From the freedom of transit, freedom of commerce, freedom of religion, freedom of expression. To feel that all of them are accepted and allowed in Europe and not only in the small world that they know. Written in this way, the truth is that it sounds very good, maybe we should consider it seriously... Maybe one day, my project will become real, and children from all over Europe will be able to share and enjoy the privileges of the European Union. I will continue thinking about it and I will keep you informed.

Erasmus+ project

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