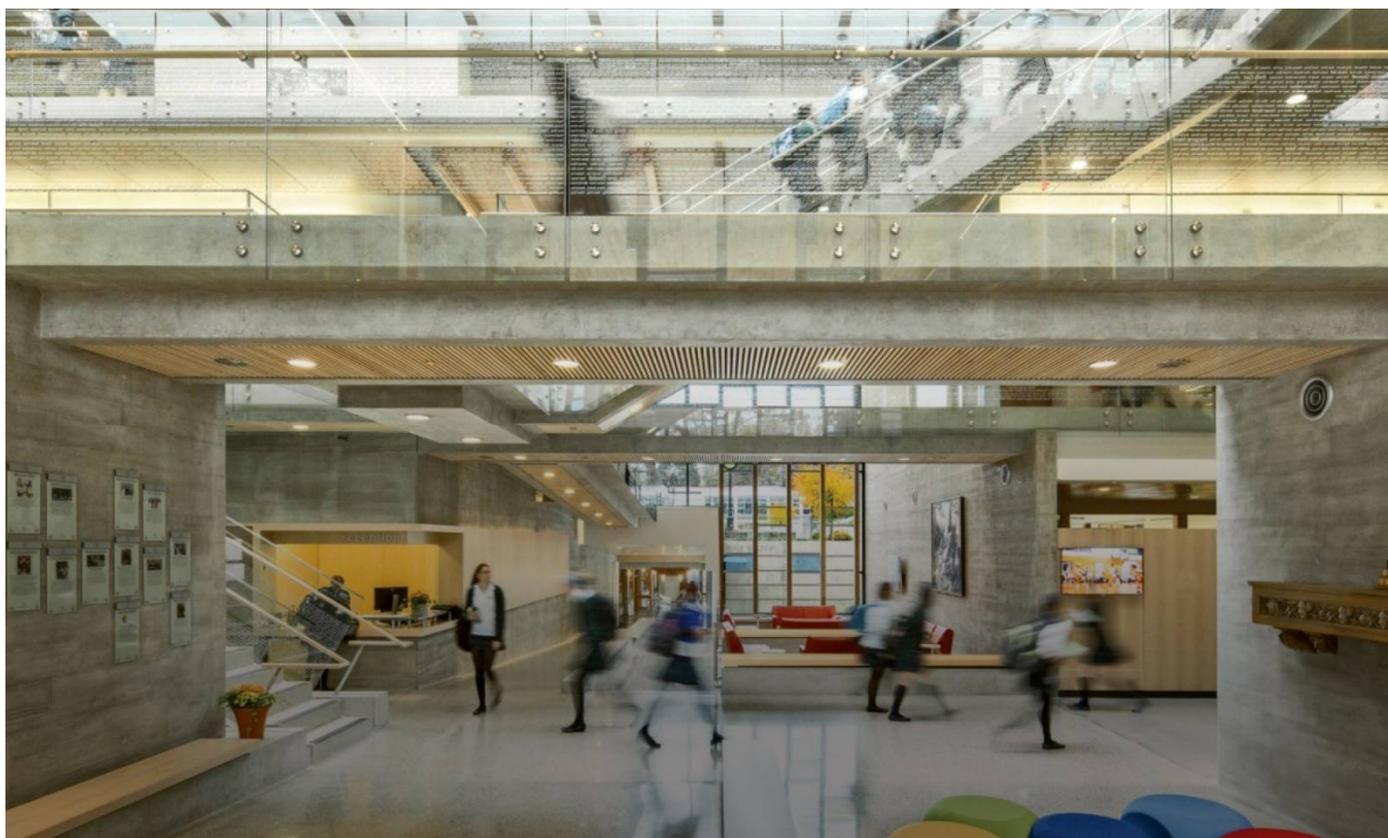


Journey for a Lifetime #63

Extract from The Yorkie....



York House School, Vancouver

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History Trip: Germany & Poland

This spring break, some of our Grade 11 and 12 students visited Germany and Poland. The aim of this excursion was to support student learning of the history of modern Europe. Read the trip blogs below:

DAY ONE

Kathryn, Gr. 11

After three flights, we landed in Berlin! We first stopped at the hotel to check in our bags, then left to sightsee for the day. We saw lots of famous buildings that were incredibly beautiful. Next, we went to the German History Museum and a huge chocolate store. Lastly, we climbed 267 steps to the top of a cathedral and saw an amazing citywide view. Overall, we had a great but busy, first day in Berlin!



DAY TWO

Megan, Gr. 11

The first thing we did in the morning was eat breakfast at the hotel. We had an awesome view over Berlin and the food was delicious! After breakfast, we visited the Holocaust memorial site which was such an incredibly powerful site with amazing architectural choices. The Holocaust memorial museum was full of personal stories and history. We got to read letters of families, reflect on the war, and our personal lives. We had a chance to get lunch after visiting the museum at a small cafe close to the Berlin wall.

After lunch, we walked to the Berlin wall and our teacher taught us a little bit more of the history behind it and how it would have affected our lives depending on which side of the wall we lived. Following the Berlin wall, we walked to Checkpoint Charlie and down to the train station to take a train to the Stasi Museum. There, we got to see the actual headquarters with a guided tour. They taught us about their technology and methods of spying. Our last stop of the day was the Bundestag, which is the German Parliament.



We had a wonderful guided tour of the entire building, including where they do the actual voting. At the end of the tour, we went up to the garden rooftop which had a breathtaking view over the city. Finally, we got back on the train and picked up dinner at the train station and went back to the hotel.

DAY THREE

Julianne, Gr. 12

Good morning! We woke up still in Berlin and headed off to the Pergamon Museum, where we saw elegant antiquities, beautiful Islamic art, and fascinating historical objects from the Middle East. After that, we had a quick (but yummy) lunch near the train station and boarded at around 2:30 pm for our ride to Poznan. It was a very relaxing few hours on board the train, and most of us were able to catch up on a few hours of sleep or stayed awake to socialize or play games.

Once we arrived in Poland, we were introduced to Conrad, Chris, and Veronica (who will help us on our visits to the children later in the week) and were welcomed to Poznan with a warm dinner and a leisurely stroll through the magical town. After checking into our new hotel, we finished off the day by splitting off into two groups according to the children we would be visiting the next day, and wrapped their presents.



DAY FOUR

Jadyn, Gr. 11

After waking up early in Poznań, Poland, we split into two groups taking our luggage and presents with us to visit the kids. Our group visited Damian, Rafał, and Martyna, and we had a lot of fun playing games, getting to know each other, and drawing. We ate dinner pizza for dinner and celebrated Talia's 17th birthday with cake in Bydgoszcz after wrapping presents.



DAY FIVE

Saphren, Gr. 11

After long car rides filled with scenic views from our window, we spent an excellent day visiting children and delivering presents. Although we had enjoyed our time with all three kids, we had an especially fun time with a 16-year-old boy, where we got to tour around his small town. After visiting the beautiful lake, which was just a five-minute walk from his home, we then walked to their local school, where we met many of his friends and other community members. At the school, the Yorkies spent over an hour playing in a fairly competitive, but incredibly fun match of volleyball against a few of their students. At the end of the day, we met up with the other group of girls who were visiting another group of children to have a tasty pizza dinner. We then settled at our local hotel in Gdansk, Poland and got ready for the next day.



DAY SIX

Taylor T., Gr. 12

Today we are in Gdansk and Malbork. We had breakfast in the hotel and headed out to Malbork Castle. This fortified monastery is a UNESCO world heritage site and the largest castle surviving castle in the world, used by the Teutonic Knights. Following this, we went to Westerplatte, the peninsula site of the first battle in the Polish invasion during WWII. After, we went to the Museum of the Second World War, where we were given a thorough and in-depth examination of WWII from its beginnings to its conclusion, and lasting its impacts. After this, we went to dinner which was attended by one of the wish children and her family who we had visited the day before and really connected with. Then we went for a brief walk in the dark around the Gdansk Old Town area and went back to the hotel to wrap presents for the next day's visits.



DAY SEVEN

Hannah, Gr. 11

Today we began our day in Gdansk and drove to three different children's homes, making our way to Warsaw. Each of these children have varying terminal illnesses, making visiting them both emotional and rewarding. The first young boy was very shy at first, but was extremely excited by the gifts and warmed up by playing games with us. The next little girl constantly had a smile on her face. She gasped each time she opened a present and was overjoyed to solve a puzzle with us after. Finally, the last little boy we visited was a checkers champ and beat Mr. Cropley in a hard-fought game. All of these visits were so unique and really immersed me into the Polish culture. We have now arrived in Warsaw and are excited for the days ahead!



DAY EIGHT

Taylor S., Gr. 11

We all slept in a bit today which was nice, and our first stop was a military cemetery. While we were there we learned a bit about the Katyn Massacre and details about the people that were buried at this cemetery. Next, we went to the Warsaw Uprising Museum where there was a guided tour. The museum was really nice and there were a lot of authentic props that helped our learning. For lunch, we went to a big mall and also got a bit of free-time to shop as well. Our final destination was this Invisible Exhibition where it was pitch black, and we had to use our listening skills along with our sense of touch to move around which was an incredible experience. Our guide was also blind, so we experienced (almost) the same thing as her. For dinner, we went to a really fancy Italian restaurant where there was a lot of pizza and pasta, then went back to the hotel for an early night.



DAY TEN

Talia, Gr.12

We woke up and ate an incredible breakfast at the Radisson Blu Hotel. We then went for a nice morning walk down through the Jewish quarter of Krakow to the old synagogue where we explored the gothic architecture of an old Jewish worshipping sight. A guide then took us on a tour of old Krakow where we learned of the Nazis use of the old castle as well as the prevention of the destruction of the ancient city. We then broke off into groups for some individual exploration and lunch. We visited the beautiful church in the centre of the old town square which was extravagantly decorated with colourful stained glass and gold. We ended the day with a warm dinner together and retired to our rooms after a long day of walking.



DAY ELEVEN

Matteya, Gr. 11

We woke up early to pack our suitcases and depart from the hotel, but not before a wonderful breakfast. We'd booked a coach bus for our long drives to Auschwitz and Wieliczka, which we loaded our luggage into before boarding. We drove for about two hours and arrived at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

There, we walked through the camp with an English-speaking tour guide. This was very emotional and every one of us learned much about the suffering of the prisoners, all of it shocking and terribly impactful. I dare say it is something we will never forget. From there, we drove to another section of the camp, much of which had been destroyed, before a quick lunch at a nearby restaurant. We drove to Wieliczka, where we went on an underground tour through some incredible salt mines, something very important to Poland's heritage and full of interesting tales and information. The Salt Mines are on the UNESCO World Heritage list. From there, we turned back into the city and had some free time in a mall connected to the train station for some shopping, rest, and bonding time. It was there we boarded a sleeper train with six to a room, which while a bit cramped, once sorted, became cozy and a fun experience.



DAYS TWELVE & THIRTEEN

We arrived in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic just after 6am the next morning and we spent two glorious days sightseeing this amazing city before heading home to Vancouver. Our journey to Germany, Poland & Czech Republic has truly been a Journey for a Lifetime.

