

3rd Project Meeting in Hajnówka

Report about the Project Meeting in Hajnówka, Poland, in May 2016
by Anna Lena, Bianca and Hannah

Sunday, May 22nd

This morning we woke in the big bed of a beautiful hotel room and had this amazing view of Warsaw. After getting ready for the day we had breakfast. It was so tasty with eggs, wafers and much more. And then we had time to visit Warsaw. I liked this city because it was so big. But unfortunately many shops were closed and we weren't able to buy anything.

At 12 o'clock we had to be back at the hotel because the bus had arrived to bring us to Hajnówka - the town of our partner school. In the bus we talked with Italian students who were really nice. But when we came closer to Hajnówka we were so excited and a bit afraid that our family wouldn't like us or might be strange. And then the time was coming: We would meet our host families! It was exciting when we went to school and saw all of these students with flags from our country. First, it was a bit strange and I didn't know what to say but because everybody was friendly, we soon relaxed. After saying hello to everyone, everybody drove to their family's home but I had to go to a celebration of my host family.

After two hours we all met at school again and walked through the streets with the other students.

In the evening, I went to my host's home, we ate some sandwiches and finally I fell asleep because I was dog-tired...

Monday, May 23rd

After our first night in Poland we went to school. Because there was some time left until we met the head teacher, some of our hosts showed us around. Their school is very different from ours. First of all, the school in Hajnówka is smaller and older. That's why it was very homely and familiar. Everybody knows everybody and most of them were very nice. Some of the students who learn German at school just came to us to show us their language skills. Gosia, my host, told us that this project is the most exciting thing that has happened there in the whole year. At quarter past nine we met the headmistress. She gave a short speech in Polish and an English teacher, who took care of the project, translated into English. The speech was about their school, Hajnówka and the Erasmus project.

After that we had to present our presentations. The first group was the Polish one, we were the second group and the Italians were the last. We were so excited and nervous before our presentation but afterwards we noticed that it wasn't so difficult and terrible. Before our lunch in the school-cafeteria we had to work on a typical Polish CV and sent it to 'Pronar' which is one of the major employers in the region. Our teachers had a coffee break and the chance to talk to each other about the project in the meantime. At twelve o'clock we had lunch. Hannah got something very strange because she is a vegetarian. Her meal was pasta with strawberries and feta cheese. So she asked everyone to try it. After lunch the students and teachers went to Białowieża by bus to visit the Mammal Research Institute there. There, two men told us something about their work, their career and their goals. They were very kind. After their presentation they showed us the zoological collection of the *Mammal Research Institute* which comprises about 190 000 mammal species. The collection was very impressive.

Then our program for Monday was over. We had some free time in Białowieża for one and a half hours. We bought ice cream and went to a lake where we sat down and enjoyed our ice cream and the sun.

After that we wanted to visit a church but it was closed so we had to leave without seeing it. In the evening we had free time again. That was why we met altogether in a little Pizzeria. It was very nice there and the food was very tasty. We talked to the others like friends. It was a good feeling.

Tuesday, May 24th

Today we had to wake up very early. At 5 o'clock my alarm clock was ringing and I was so tired!

I wanted to lie down in my bed to sleep and dream of the nice time, but I already heard Berenika in the shower, so I thought it would be better to get up and also take a shower. Her mother is so nice, so she also woke up so early to make us nice breakfast: biscuits with hot, melted cheese..mh..that was a nice start for the day!

Berenika's father brought us to school by car, because we were too tired to walk. At school a bus was waiting to bring us to the national park. First we walked through the park with a woman, she showed us: nice trees, special animals and told us the story of the national park. She told us that the bison weren't there, because they were eating much earlier, around 4 o'clock.

After that we drove back to school by bus. Because Berenika had to go to the doctor I went home with Anna and Goshia, where we ate our lunch and had a short break.

In the afternoon our group met for a bus-safari through the area around Hajnowka. First we went to a place, where houses from Jewish people stood. We saw a cemetery, which was destroyed by the Nazis in WWII. Then we visited a place, where many bison lived, we searched for them but we didn't find them. There was something like a little baby bison in front of us, but we didn't exactly know whether it was really a bison.

Our last station of the safari was a big lake, it was so beautiful. Because of the sunset and the small wind, it was a special atmosphere. We took some selfies with our teachers and enjoyed the nice evening. At around 8:30 we came back to school, but we weren't tired so we met with the whole group in the pizzeria "Trio", near the school. We stayed there a bit, ate pizza, played billiard and had fun. But the day was long so we went home and went to bed.

Wednesday, May 25th

The next day we visited a bigger city: Bialystok. But first I had to get up, it was not so early, but anyway hard to get up, but there was a nice smell from downstairs in the kitchen - it smelled like heaven on earth. When I came down into the kitchen I saw them: pancakes! It was so tasty and pancakes are my favorite food...

Berenika's nice daddy brought us to school and we drove to PRONAR by bus. It is a big factory, which offers many workplaces to the people from and around Hajnowka. We sent our CVs to this factory. They produce tractors, tractor supporters, ...

We had a tour around the factory and a meeting about the CV and received some feedback. After that we ate at the canteen of PRONAR. At 1:00 o'clock, we left to Bialystok by bus. When we arrived we had free time the whole afternoon. We had to go into mixed groups of Polish and children from other countries. I was in a group with Anna, Bianca and Anna and their hosts. First we were hungry so we bought ice cream.

After that we went to a shopping center and searched for some sunglasses for Bibi. We found some and then we had to get back to the bus again to drive home.

At 6:00 o'clock we arrived in Hajnowka. Berenika and I went back home with Anna and Goshia. We ate an evening meal and after that we met again with Goshia and Anna, to have a nice evening together. First we went to a playground, sat there and talked. We walked through Hajnowka and it was really funny. We took pictures and laughed together. That was a nice evening. When Berenika and I came home it was late and we fell in our beds.

Thursday, May 26th

On Thursday our program started at 1 o'clock pm. So we were able to sleep as long as we wanted to. The weather was sunny and hot again. That was why we went to a pageant because of Corpus Christi to spend a little of our free time there. Many people went from one Catholic church to another. It was so impressive that I got goose bumps. The pastor was singing and some children threw flowers for this big celebration. It was unbelievable for me that all these people were coming together only because of their religion.

After that we visited an orthodox church. It was very big with lots of gold everywhere. The most important difference to the Catholic Church was that there aren't any benches, so the people have to stand during for example a church service. After that we went back home to have lunch there. On the way our hosts told us that there are a lot of different religions in Hajnowka that exist peacefully next to each other.

At one o'clock we met the others at school to play a game. So we played Frisbee for half an hour.

After that we went to the mini-train station, where we met our teachers at three o'clock. While we were waiting there it started to rain very heavily and we became a little bit wet. Some of our teachers were very late because they didn't feel well. That was why we started our trip with the mini-train through the forest one hour later than it was planned. But in spite of the bad weather and the delay it was a very funny and nice trip. We talked a lot to our teachers.

After this trip we came altogether to have a bonfire. We ate a lot – especially a lot of cake. We talked to the Italian boys for a while. Then Bibi, Hannah and I went to a little playground near the bonfire and had a very intense conversation.

At maybe half past seven we left our teachers and the bonfire with the whole group and went to a little pizzeria where we played billiards, arm-wrestling and talked to each other.

The problem was that the pizzeria closed at nine o'clock, so we had to leave. But because it was our last evening in Poland nobody wanted to go home. That was why we went to a skate park. After all it was a beautiful day and also the end of a great and unforgettable time.

Friday, May 27th

Today I felt a bit sad because it was the last morning in our host families. I'm not sure but I think that my host mum thought that we had to eat something special and that's why she made pudding for breakfast. After the meal, I had to pack all my things because we didn't want to be late for the bus, which would bring us to Warsaw again.

But before we drove to school, I had taken some pictures with my host family to have something that reminds me of them. They also gave me a little present – some typical Polish cake – which I thought was really cute. And unfortunately the time was coming: We had to drive to school and say goodbye to all Polish students. So many pictures and photos were taken and many of us cried a bit. I also had to cry because all students were always so friendly and maybe I might never see them again... The bus trip to Warsaw was over very quickly and soon we arrived in a rainy Warsaw. After checking in the hotel we had free time and went through the streets of the city with the Italian students. We saw many musicians, visited the Culture Palace and bought some presents for our friends at home.

We spent the evening in the spa/wellness area of the hotel to do some sport. After that we met with the Italians again and sat in the lobby and talked until 3 o'clock am. It was so funny and the time was over too fast.

So thank you for this beautiful exchange in Poland! We gained so many experiences, met very nice people and had sooo much fun!!