

*Greetings from Austria*  
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*Saint Mary's College, 2010*

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Austria is so BEAUTIFUL! Flowers everywhere, the mountains surrounding us, the little kids babbling in German as they play, the amazing old buildings! I was worried about fitting in with all the ND students, but I've made fast friends, which is completely comforting as we all work on our German. We went grocery shopping the other day, which is always a little scary due to the ultra fast pace of the checkout counters, but I hope to get into the swing of it soon. At least Frau Hahn warned me!



At night, we went into the Altstadt, which looks like a page out of a fairy tale. Salzburg is completely amazing! Granted everything being in German is overwhelming at times, to say the least, but it is worth every minute. I can't wait for the day when I can have a fluent conversation with someone for longer than "Hi. How are you? (Guten Tag! Wie geht's?)" I know it takes time, but I just want to know everything faster. Patience is a complicated thing. Everyone in the group, the Geurtlers included, have been so helpful though, gently correcting my pronunciations and helping put my words into German. I can't wait to understand the words of the mass in German too! I can get the "easy" ones, like the Alleluias, Hosannas, and when everything is happening, but I want to understand the readings. Speaking of mass, we went to Salzburg's Dom and it was so amazing. We got lost on the way, but it was worth it. What an amazing church! Parts were rebuilt after World War II due to damages. It was so beautiful though. We went on a tour of the city with Herr Geurtler as well. He showed us all the historical places within Salzburg, like the Mirabell Garden, which you would recognize from the Sound of Music. Sadly, the Guertlers have not seen this movie...yet. Well, I'm off to get ready for the placement test for our classes. Wish me luck!

*September 13th*

I'm trying so hard and having an awesome time. Everyone is so nice and helpful and the mountains take my breath away. We went to see the pope but it was kind of hard to see with tall guys in front. However, singing hymns in German was definitely a fun experience as well. I talked a little bit of German to a little girl, too! All the little ones were so cute, waving their flags from their dad's shoulders or dancing around. Even though I didn't know a lot of the words, I just felt so much a part of things.



*September 21<sup>st</sup>*

I visited Budapest and the Hungarian students made us a welcome sign, which made us all smile! Right off the bat the kids were so friendly. The girl I sat next to on the bus was Polish, so I introduced her to Monika (also Polish). We saw the huge bridge to Slovakia, so we crossed it on foot and now I can say that I have been in Slovakia! It was hard to say goodbye to all of our new friends in Hungary. They were all so nice, even when we were like little kids in the fact that we couldn't read anything. What awesome people! So if you are thinking of ever going to Hungary...you should!

### ***September 28<sup>th</sup>***

So, when German class began I had no clue of what was going on most of the time, which made me just a bit sad, but by the end, I totally understood...most of the time. We visited the Festung, a huge fortress that was built to protect Salzburg. We learned why it was rarely taken on as we climbed to it, very tall and steep. We had to be more serious in learning things than the other class as we had so much ground to cover before school, but we still had fun, tossing the baby ball back and forth as we asked questions. I don't know how I did grade wise, but I know my German is much better, and that means a lot to me.

Salzburg was amazing: the mountains, the cute happy fest the last week we were there, the bus system, the flowers all over, the happy little park where we played, Kinderdeutsch, everything. I will definitely miss it but now I am in Innsbruck, which will be my home until June.



### ***October 9<sup>th</sup>***

I was researching Girl Scouting around the world for this scholarship proposal I had to write, and I found online the websites for the four Girl Scout World Centers, where scouts can stay, meet, and all kinds of amazing fun stuff. Keep in mind I've been a scout all my life, so I was, needless to say, super excited, especially when I realized one was in Switzerland! I could volunteer for a week to work there. Not only do they provide room and board, but I'd be giving back to Girl Scouting, and have super cool stories to tell. Young women from all over the world work in these centers, so I'd get to meet girls my own age from other places, making friendships! I'm thinking this sounds like an amazing thing to do during that month long break in February plus it is a great way to get to see and know another country. I just have to send in the application, and wait to hear. With luck, I'll get accepted. Classes start tomorrow, so today is our last day of no classes, but I don't mind too much. I am actually looking forward to school again.

### ***October 16<sup>th</sup>***

I met my host family who live on a mountain. I took flowers for my host mother, who sent me with them to the grandma for decorating the church. I helped her and the little ones put all the flowers in jar vases and place them around the chapel. I was able to hang out with everyone, from hiking with the kids to just chilling with Claudia (my host mom). Giuseppe, my host dad, is trying to teach me a bit of Italian, which made me laugh hysterically.

### ***October 28<sup>th</sup>***

Our Halloween party was last Friday. We had lots of fun introducing our friends from Sweden and Singapore to Halloween traditions like pumpkin carving and caramel apples. I brought Lilo and Stitch in English for my host sibs to practice their English with and they loved it. I got to read again at church. This time I think I did a bit better. I went slower and worked on phonetics a lot more, but the best part: I understood which reading it was! I was beyond excited.

### ***November 4<sup>th</sup>***

There was this amazing Lutheran church we went into. It was originally built as a Catholic church but then...surprise: Reformation. So, they ended up having this Catholic decorated Lutheran church. The Catholic Church was so cool too. The inside was totally destroyed during the bombing of World War II, but the carvings they saved were so wonderful! There was one of the last supper that took my breath away!



On day two in Nuernberg we headed out to the Nazi Documentation Center. It was so interesting but so scary at the same time that it had really happened and not just happened, but happened where we were standing not that long ago. We walked through the museum which was very informational; simply this is what happened, no bias or trying to make Germany look better. It just gave it as it was. We checked out the Zeppelin field where Hitler gave speeches among other places in that area specifically built for Nazi purposes. It was really terrifying. These structures, now in decay, are huge.

### *December 27<sup>th</sup>*



I've gotten a basic rhythm down to life here, which makes me happy. It's nice to have things figured out too, like where to get books, where to get cheap food, what to eat that's healthy, and even how to survive classes in a foreign country. My German is really coming along too. I can now hold pretty decent conversations with native speakers! It was nice as our group gathered all the other groups from our schools together for Christmas in Austria! It was so nice. We had such a good time and went on a horse drawn sleigh ride. We had this crazy big dinner on Christmas Eve after which we went to Midnight mass at the one church in town, which was absolutely wonderful. It was a wonderful way to spend Christmas, even with being away from home. I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas, and an AMAZING New Year!