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## Traveling while Abroad

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Ruby Guyot

Oslo, Norway

May 29, 2017

## Traveling while Abroad



*The Auschwitz II Birkenau camp, in Oświęcim, Poland.*

One of the best things about studying abroad, especially in Europe, is that it's extremely easy and cheap to travel to different countries. Before getting the opportunity to study abroad, I had rarely even left the state of Oregon; my first plane ride was going to San Francisco to get my residence permit to study in Norway. It was liberating to come to Norway and find the opportunities to experience new cultures and historic places right at my fingertips.

Several classmates chose to explore more of what Norway had to offer, which is perfectly wonderful on its own; I had friends who went dog-sledding in Tromsø, who hiked up Preikestollen, and who explored the colorful city of Bergen. I chose personally to travel to as many different countries as possible since I've never had the chance.

In total, this semester I went to 10 different countries and 11 different cities. I went to the Royal Palace in Stockholm, Sweden; rode the Tube in London, U.K.; ate delicious food in Madrid, Spain; went on a two-week long backpacking trip in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland; saw the history of Dublin, Ireland; and my last trip I have planned is a day in Copenhagen, Denmark, where who knows what I'll see.

Most of these experiences have taught me something, both in regards to my studies (I am a history major, and Europe is so rich in history) but also as to who I am. You really have to force yourself out of your comfort zone when you travel. Frequently you'll be in places where you don't speak the language and have to rely on gesturing and a few sparse words, or you'll get lost away from the main roads, or you'll stay in a weird hostel that may not be the most extravagant of living. How you respond to these challenges shows a lot about your character. Even during my worst travel experience in London, where my group had to move hostels since the conditions were so bad and we quickly found out how expensive the public transport is, we wound up laughing it all off, and the trip changed from one of anger to one of humor.

I'd like to end this journal by talking about the most meaningful travel experience I had: while in Krakow, Poland, I went to visit the Auschwitz Birkenau extermination camps of WWII. I had read books and watched films about the camp since I was young, but nothing prepared me for being able to see it in real life. The compound is haunting and everything becomes more vivid—you walk the steps of people who did not survive, and you realize what it is like to exist in someone else's shoes. It was by far my greatest experience I've had abroad, despite its somber nature—and it would not have been possible had I not studied abroad.

Ruby