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Our trip to Turkey The report of the Austrian students

Thanks to Amy, our English assistant, for correcting the four texts and to Alexander for compiling them.

A big European project, named the Comenius project, enabled participants from Austria, and in particular our school, the BGBRG Leibnitz, to travel to many different countries and to get to know the local sights, culture, food and especially the local people. From October 18th - 26th four of us students, Julia Puntigam, Sophie Lorber, Fabian Polz and Alexander Strauss, and our teachers Prof. Pronegg and Prof. Rindler, had the chance to take a trip to Turkey.

We started very early in the morning October 18th at the Graz airport, and arrived first in Munich. We were in quite a hurry to catch our next flight to Istanbul. When we finally took our first step in Istanbul, we already had to get into the next taxi. With the taxi, we found our hotel,

but only after quite some time In Istanbul, which alone has more than twice as many inhabitants as Austria, we got to see the blue mosque, the Hagia Sophia, which was the former landmark of Constantinople and which is illuminated all night for tourists to see, and the cistern, all of which were stunningly beautiful. The buildings there are very different from what we have in Austria. We also saw the Bosphorus, which separates Turkey from the continent of Asia.





But sightseeing wasn't the only thing we experienced. We were introduced to many traditional Turkish customs and specialties, such as, Turkish tea, which is called çay. We smoked - or as the citizens would say - "drank" nargile, also known as shisha, and we were lucky to see how the Turkish celebrate big ceremonies. There were many musicians that performed, while people were eating in or rather outside of restaurants. The diners clapped and sang together with the performers.

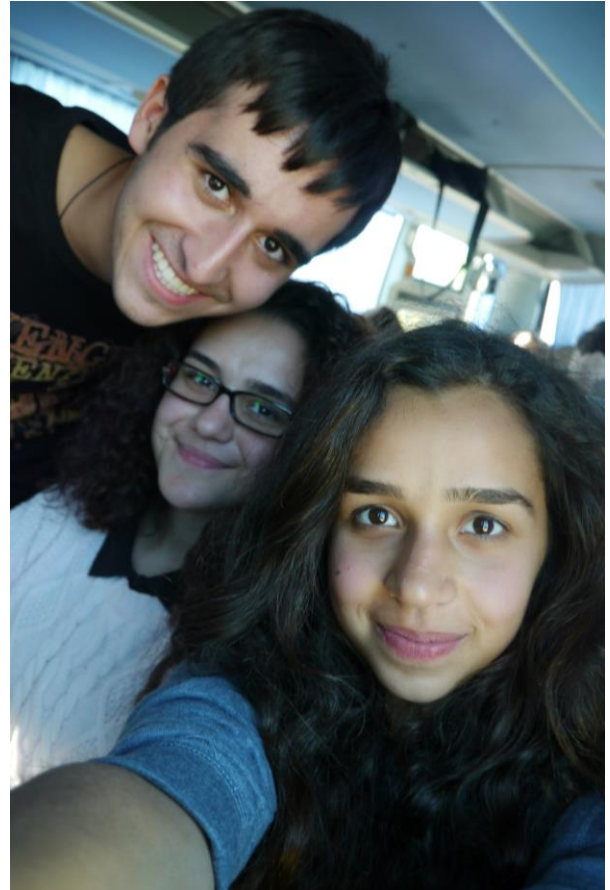


On Sunday evening we arrived in Nazilli, our final destination, and got to meet our hosts for the very first time or at least we finally met them in person, as they had all been writing us days, and some even weeks, before we began our journey.





What was great about about Cem, Tuğçe, Özgün and Illgar (our hosts) was not only that they were extremely nice and caring, but also that they lived very close together. This meant that we got to meet up with each other every evening, and always got an insight into how the teenagers in Turkey live, and how they live or what they have to deal with in comparison to us. We also made another Turkish friend, Ismail, who ended up being somewhat of a substitute host. Every time he had some spare time, he would join our little group. We often talked to our "five" hosts and asked specific things, and got to know a lot about Turkish culture.





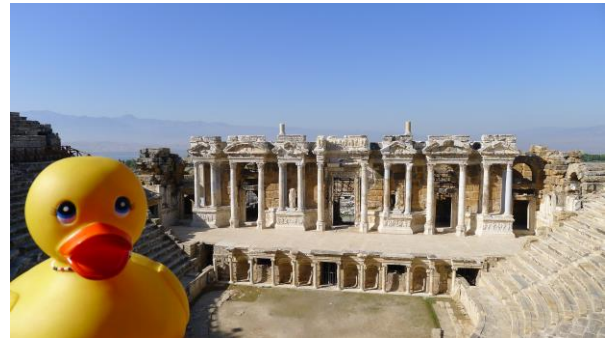
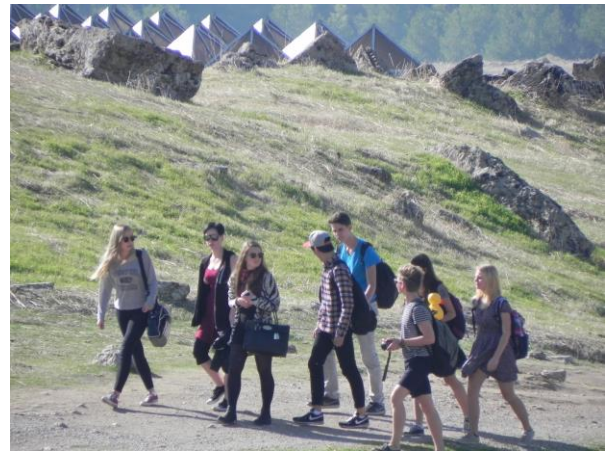
During the next week, we saw a lot of interesting things. We visited a fish factory, but unfortunately we came in the wrong season so they had no actual fish. Nonetheless, our guide showed us how and where they prepare the fish. The guide also spoke German, which was very amusing to us. Then we went to a canning factory, in which we were shown how they preserve food. Our last factory stop was a water bottling factory. This factory is very important in Turkey as their normal pipe water is not drinkable. So the factory was made for purifying water and bottling it.



We also saw various sights:
We went to Ephesus, an ancient city and together with a guide that led us through it, we walked on 2000 year old streets, saw many things that one would usually only see in pictures, and we were overall completely overwhelmed.



Another highlight of this journey was Hierapolis, which was also built by the Greeks. The most outstanding sight there, is definitely the Pamukkale. Here there are sinter terraces which have been used as pools since ancient times. The whole sight has been shaped by nature, and consists of 30° hot springs. It was such a beautiful sight to see and we'll surely never forget it.



Last, but not least, was the temple of Aphrodisia, which consists of a huge area around the actual ruins of the temple and around some other very typical ancient buildings.

They were so huge, but you could still see so many details, it was simply fascinating to see what kind of things mankind accomplished back then. Even now it's hard to understand how they were able to build such things themselves, without having the technical support there is nowadays.



But this wouldn't have been such an amazing project if it wasn't for the other students. We were lucky enough to be there at the same time as some Polish, Spanish, Norwegian and French students, and this only made everything even more fun. It was so great to be able to talk to so many completely different kinds of people, but the funny thing is that in the end, we aren't all that different.

When we went out in the evenings with our Turkish hosts, we talked about religion, their school system

and just about everything you could imagine and found out very interesting things. First of all, an Austrian prejudice, that very many women wear head scarves proved to be wrong. Not many do, and especially not in their free time. The teenagers mostly show resistance to this. Their school system is also very different from ours. While we "only" have to pass a certain test to graduate, they get compared to each other. If you are good enough to get into the top 5000 students or so, you are lucky enough to get some really well paid jobs. But if you don't you will never have the chance to get any of that, so there is a lot of pressure put on students. The Turkish are also very nice to strangers, a lot nicer than we would be in Austria. We really enjoyed that, and we are trying to keep some of that mentality with us. We also had some very cool evenings with the other students, for example when we were at a coffee shop, and our hosts told us our fortune by looking at coffee grounds. Or when Alex had his seventeenth birthday, we also got to learn some Turkish dancing and had a lot of fun.



We also made friends with the other countries' students. Fabian, Sophie and Julia often

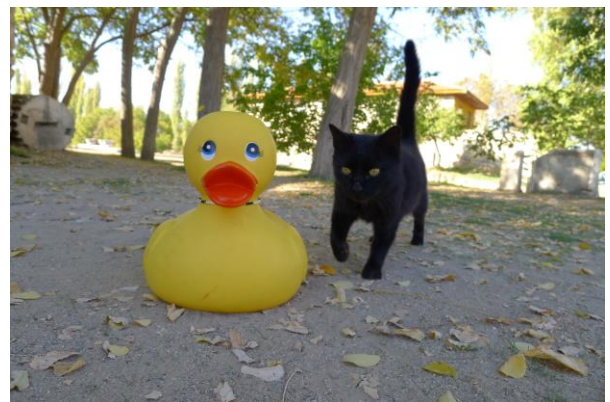
spent their time around the Spanish people, as they were trying to improve their Spanish and wanted to get to know each other. Alex hung out a lot with the Norwegian students, as he seemed to find some similarities in music taste and other things, and he sometimes even stayed with them when we were visiting sights.



But at the end of the day, we were always glad we got to speak in German again, as we spoke English for most of the day. We made a pretty stupid mistake though: We often answered other Austrian people from our group, who were speaking to us in German, in English, as we were so used to it at that moment. But it made for some funny moments. And speaking in English all the

time wasn't as big of a barrier as someone might think at the start. We were always able to say what we wanted to say at the end of the day, either improvising by or using our whole body or environment to explain.

At the end of the week we had to say goodbye to the others, and a lot of tears were shed. If we're lucky we'll be able to see each other again some day.





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