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Living as a student in a foreign country

Thursday, August 04, 2016

DH and I like to travel, but this trip is a very different experience.

Our usual plan is to research countries and travel on our own or with children and grandchildren. We also enjoy river cruises where our floating hotel takes us to major cities and interesting towns without any effort on our part.

This, however, is very different. For 3 weeks we are students at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Slovakia is the eastern half of the old Czechoslovakia which peacefully divided in 1993 after the breakup of the Soviet Union. The western half is the Czech Republic.

This is the main building where the opening and closing ceremonies are held.



This is the building where our classes are held





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The sign translates as "Teachers want a better future for your children"

Maybe you can see one of my classmates in the window. Frank is from Canada. His parents escaped to Canada when the Soviets crushed the 1968 revolution ("Prague Spring").

The students in our program (Slovak Language and Culture) are divided into 13 levels according to their language proficiency based on a placement test.

I am in level 6. DH is in level 1. My class is taught completely in Slovak which is a real stretch for me. The teacher is excellent. If we have a question, he explains with different Slovak words. Only as a last resort will be explain in English.

I am 2 generations older than the rest of my class. Yes, I have grandchldren almost as old as they are. We have 3 Italians, 2 Russians, 1 German, 1 Austrian, 4 Romanians, 1 Bulgarian and the Canadian guy. Everyone speaks more than 1 language.

Class sessions include grammar instruction. Slovak is the 3rd most difficult language in the world because of its complicated grammar - too convoluted to explain quickly. Conversational Slovak is stressed through assorted activities. One time we each had to make up a multiple choice quiz about our own country and present it orally to the class. Very enlightening! Think, how much do YOU know about Bulgaria?

As I explained in my last blog, we rented an apartment in "Old Town" to save time traveling from the dorm on the outskirts of the city. Also we wanted air conditioning just in case there is a heat wave.

I begin each day with a 5K (3.1 mile) run along the Danube - a 5 minute walk from our apartment. Breakfast in our own kitchen also saves time and money.

It is a 10 minute walk to the University which is also located next to the Danube.

There are 2 morning classes (1 1/2 hours each)

1 hour for lunch which we eat in the school cafeteria. There is always a choice of main course along with soup and salad and a huge roll. Water and lemonade are the drink options. Fine with me. I only drink water all day anyway.

Then one more 1 1/2 hour afternoon class session

This is followed by optional lectures on a variety of topics. These are offered in Slovak and English. There are concerts and films in the evening. These are optional also. Alternatively there are the cultural events of "Summer in Bratislava"

Weekends bring excursions in and around the city as well as one 3 day trip around the country. These include visits to castles, caves, mountain lakes and traditional village crafts.

I must not forget that I have homework every night. I hope this explains my reduced presence on SP. I am logging in every day and eating healthy. It's fairly easy to eat healthy here. Mostly everyone does. There doesn't seem to be a problem with obesity although carbs are a staple of the diet. The supermarket's largest sections are fresh baked goods, fruits and vegetables.

Tap water is fine to drink, but everyone seems to prefer bottled sparkling water or "with gas" as I was told. They buy it in huge bottles.

If you have read this far, thank you. I'm happy to at least be able to keep in touch with my spark friends.

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CD411401 You lean s

You lean such and interesting lige! You and dH are blessed indeed....thanks for sharing so we





DR1939

I spent 2 weeks in Hyderabad on a course for faculty from the US. We spent the mornings learning about India from speakers from all disciplines and governmental areas. Afternoons were

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culture, e.g., museums, temples, mosques, factories, research facilities. On the weekend we drove further south to get a better sense of the country lifestyle. We spent another week on our own doing tourist things. It was a mind blowing experience. Even better, my university paid for everything but the week of touring.

1770 days ago



CD15641307

That sounds awesome! 1770 days ago





SMILINGEYES2

It is amazing you are fluent enough to keep up in the class.

Enjoyed dinner with a friend in graduate school. Her grandmother immigrated as a young adult but the only English she spoke was Eat More.

1770 days ago



CD15665102

Lovely! Thanks for the update.

1770 days ago





SPEDED2

How very exciting for you. We were stationed overseas in the late 70s and early 80s. What an experience! The people we met were so similar to us, just spoke another language.



Looking forward to future posts. 1770 days ago





GINIEMIE

Sounds so cool. I hope you and DH enjoy every minute. I'd love to participate in something like



that. Maybe in German or Dutch.



1770 days ago



JEANKNEE

How incredibly wonderful! What an amazing experience this must be. Thanks for checking in





and letting us know what you're doing.

1770 days ago



DOVESEYES

Thanks so much for the blog how wonderful to be able to do it. I'll "watch this space" for more

1770 days ago



NUMD97

B B, no one would expect you to check in, when you have homework to do, young lady!

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These are well-planned, months-in-advance planning events (yes, I follow your preparatory blogs) and we can wait till you return to give us the "Reader's Digest" version of your trip.

Having said that, it sounds amazing to have a class as diverse as you do, wanting to learn more about Slovakia. I'd gamble and say each one has a story.

Enjoy your workman's holiday. You deserve it to be as successful as you can make it. SP will keep and we'll save a seat for ya when you come home.

Best,

1770 days ago



POINDEXTRA

I wonder if there's similar course in Italy. I'd love to do that one day. 1770 days ago

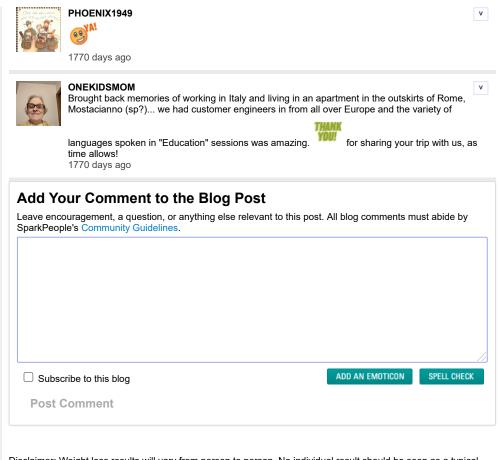


LIVEDAILY

This is amazing!! It must be so interesting!! 1770 days ago

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Disclaimer: Weight loss results will vary from person to person. No individual result should be seen as a typical result of following the SparkPeople program.