

Bartłomiej Boryczka

Report from the Polish Summer School at UJ in Kraków

I have visited Poland many times but I discovered Poland the most this summer through my studies. I have visited Krakow at least five times before because my family is from Krakow. However, this is the first year that I was in Krakow by myself and because of this I discovered how to navigate the beautiful city of Krakow at an almost native level. I also discovered the magnificent Jagiellonian University. I learned about the history of the university and that UJ is the oldest university in Poland, the second oldest university in Central Europe and one of the oldest universities in the world.

On the first day of the program, I was very impressed and I learned a lot from the Wiesława Szyborska's secretary professor Michał Rusinek's speech "Lost in Translation". It was very interesting and a very good start to the program. I also got to learn and discover the Polish language at a much deeper level and came to realize that nouns can have three genders (some linguists count five). Each noun and adjective can appear in one of seven cases Verbs conjugate for gender, person, mood and time (depending on how you count, this makes over 25 forms of every verb), Verbs come in two aspects and that Polish is truly one of the hardest languages, however in my opinion also the most beautiful. At the end of the course, I believe that I learned a lot and met most of my goals. Although the program also made me realize, that I still have a lot to learn and inspired me to continue my knowledge of the Polish language, culture and History.

I also became more aware of the differences and similarities between the Polish and American cultures. First of all, Polish people like most Europeans do not have the same relationship as Americans do to their cars. Americans need to have a car in most parts of the country especially where I am from. Where as in Poland, there is a much better public transportation system and people walk a lot more because everything is much closer. I also noticed that Polish people are not as “optimistic” as Americans are. In America especially in the Midwest you always smile and say hello when you see someone, if this would be done in Poland, people would think one is weird. In addition, in the U.S.A. the question/greeting “how are you doing?” is always answered with a positive “great, fantastic, good” even if that is not really the case. Where as in Poland the question “how are you” is usually met with an honest and sometimes long response about how one is actually doing. One similarity that has been brought over from the U.S.A. is that in Poland fast food is also incredibly popular, in shopping malls and in the city center the line is always longest for MacDonald’s and KFC.

The program also really helped and prepared me for college. It was the first time I lived in a college like dorm and was completely independent. I also met many new and interesting people from all around the world and made some lifelong friends. The program also gave me the exposure of studying in a different country and in a different language and made me realize how great studying abroad actually is even if just for a month. Studying in Poland made me get out of my comfort zone and be fully exposed to a new culture and way of living. This program was one of the best experiences if not the best experience in my life. I am extremely grateful that I was one of the recipients of the Wisconsin study in Poland scholarship.

Dziękuję! (Thank You), Bartłomiej Boryczka