

Summer Sister Cities Exchange 2016 - Dierdorf, Germany and Zamość, Poland

My name is Michal Suchanek, and I am a member of the Fountain Hills Sister Cities Corporation. Along with many of my peers from the Fountain Hills High School, we took part in the second portion of our student exchange with Dierdorf, Germany and Zamość, Poland. The first part of our adventure was a flight from Phoenix, U.S.A., to Dierdorf, which is a town in the western part of Germany.

We were warmly welcomed by our friends in Dierdorf. Over the next couple of days, we went to school with our German friends and embraced the German culture. We visited many tourist attractions, including the beautiful Cathedral in Cologne (Kölner Dom), Ehrenbreitstein Castle, The German Corner (Deutsches Eck) as well as the amusement park, Phantasialand. I recall going canoeing down the Lahn river on a sunny day with my German and American friends. We went from restaurant to restaurant, trying all sorts of exquisite German foods, and climbing back into the canoes to go to the next village.

We also attended school every day with our German hosts. While our friends were in their classes, we Americans spent time painting a mural or shadowing in classes and interacting with the people there. I greatly admired my stay in Germany, it was a fun but short few days. Once our exchange in Germany was finished, we were on the plane to Poland.

We were greeted very kindly by our long-missed Polish friends, who came all the way from Zamość to Warsaw by bus to pick us up. We toured all of Zamość, a beautiful city featuring a long history and many old buildings, including a completely restored town square. We were offered a tour of the beautiful town hall, where we were greeted by the mayor of Zamość, Mr. Wnuk. We learned a good amount of history, and we also caught a glimpse of what school in Poland is like. The next day, we were on a bus to the other side of Poland, to visit Kraków and Zakopane.

Our first destination was Kraków, one of the oldest cities in Poland. We were amazed by the stunning architecture of the Kraków market square. The Americans were absolutely astounded by the beautiful architecture and history that was present. We also visited Wieliczka, an old salt mine with a world-famous history. We also toured Zakopane, a city surrounded by beautiful, green mountains, which offered us a beautiful example of European nature.

Unfortunately, all good things must come to a close. After having countless adventures and making many friends, the exchange ended. The Americans (except for me, I stayed for another 2 months) boarded their bus to the Warsaw Chopin airport, and flew to a connecting flight in Frankfurt. Everyone returned home safely and filled with great memories. When I spoke to my American friends, all of them exclaimed how fun and exciting the trip was. This student exchange changed our lives forever, filling us with the beautiful histories, cultures, foods, and people of Germany and Poland. Student exchanges like these offer a great opportunity for people, especially young people to open their eyes and learn more about the great world we live in.

Michal Suchanek