

TY Trip to Poland by Ben Gogarty (Rang Leahy)

On the 4th of February 2020 my classmates and I spent 3 nights and 4 days abroad in Kraków, Poland. We left from the community centre in Kingscourt at around 2 and arrived in terminal 1 of Dublin airport at 3:15. Our flight departed at 6:35pm and we arrived in Kraków at 10:30 local time. We then met our tour guide for the stay, and she was a nice person as she took our questions and told us all about the history of the city and the country. On the first night we went for a bite to eat at a restaurant near the hotel and the food was, well strange to say the least and there were plenty of students who went to sleep that night with an empty stomach, luckily I had brought my own food so I was able to eat that to keep me going.

On the first morning we received a comprehensive tour of the city and all its history. We visited the local university where Nicolas Copernicus studied many years ago. We also visited an ancient cathedral where all the former kings of Poland were buried, and it was very interesting as it was connected to the royal palace. We then visited the Schindlers Factory Museum where we got a tour of the Munition's factory and a documentation of the Nazi occupation of Poland. That evening we then went shopping in the city's main shopping centre where there were



a mind boggling 270 shops and café's. It's safe to say plenty of us didn't come home empty handed after that excursion.

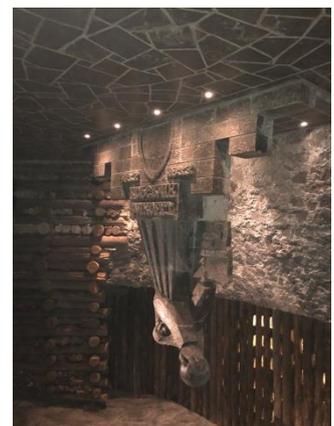
On day two, the 6th of February we went on a chilling trip to Auschwitz concentration camp. It was an eerie place and you could see that horrible things took place here not that long ago. There were different viewing rooms where you could see different things but the part that hit home with me the most was when I saw a young child's shoe. It moved me as I have 2 young siblings and it made me realise that in a different time that could have easily been me in my family going into the camp. There were other parts like execution wall and gallows, where it is reported multiple innocent Jews were hung for all to see. We then entered the gas chamber and it was horrific as you could see scratches on the wall from where people tried to escape but it was a wasted effort as they all died. The commander of the camp Rudolph Höss situated his house just 400 metres from the fence of the camp and he had young children who often visited the camp which I found disturbing because god only knows what they saw in there. We then went to Birkenau which is another camp located just a few kilometres from Auschwitz and it is where the film "The



Boy in Striped Pyjamas” was filmed. It was a very expansive complex and there were multiple buildings for housing the Jews. In one building the ratio of people to a bed was 8:1 which is just horrible because there wasn’t even much floor space in it to sleep on either. Another part of this trip that hit home with me was how cold I was. I had 7 layers on and thick layers at that and I was still freezing so I can only imagine what it was like to be there in the thin layers of clothing that were given to the persecuted.

That evening we lightened the mood a bit when we visited the local jump park which was like Air Bound in Dundalk. It was an enjoyable evening and it was what I considered to be the best part of the trip as we had great fun although we were so tired after it that some of us just went straight to bed, myself included.

On the last day of the trip we visited the Wieliczka salt mine located about 40 minutes from the city. It too was an enjoyable experience as we ventured down through the tunnels of the mine where we saw lots of statues of old kings and mine workers and we also got an example of how some of their contraptions worked. The deepest we went was 121 metres below the surface where there was a souvenir shop and a place to buy some food. Remember I said I went straight to sleep the night before? Well I came to regret that as I had to



get up extra early the next morning to pack all my clothes away into my suitcase as it was time to head home after our visit to the mines. We arrived in Kraków airport at around 11:30 and our flight was at 3:30. We arrived in Dublin airport at roughly 6pm and got a bus back to Kingscourt. I enjoyed our trip, but I was glad to be home all the same.

I would like to thank Ms Farrelly and Ms McCabe for organising our trip and I would also like to thank all the other students who went as without you all my experience wouldn't have been the same

Ben Gogarty