

STUDENT REPORT: MY JOURNEY TO SCOTLAND

Flipping through these pictures to remember specific events, have brought back so many cherished memories and I just want to thank the RPI, for organizing this event each and every year, giving hundreds of students the opportunity to experience this beautiful country, culture, cuisine, landmarks and I saved the best for last: people. I met many Scots, who proved the Hungarian genre of jokes way wrong, and made friends with my companions, all of them remaining my close friends to this day. Although I must not get ahead of myself...



Without further ado, let me break down day by day, everything I got the chance to do in SCOTLAND.

DAY 1 - JUN 22

We departed in the morning. Ew, I know, but it was well worth it. After everyone arrived, and we got through security, we sat down in the waiting area, and everyone kind of got along instantly. I was afraid of being the only boy in the group, but the girls took great care of me time after time.

After a short flight (which I completely snoozed through), we arrived in Not-So-Sunny Scotland. Glasgow, to be more specific. After we figured out which bus we needed, we hopped on and headed to the city center. From there, we walked to our hotel, which was difficult with the luggage, but the streets made it a lot more welcoming. I was instantly mesmerized by Glasgow, the way the streets signal a sort of authentic authority. Truly a majestic sight.

After catching our breath at our cute, but stair-filled hotel, we headed out for some scran. I found and recommended (without a way to oppose said recommendation) a bar to the group that had a burger, which if you could finish, would get your name a spot on their hall of fame. I was sold. Right until I saw the price tag. I decided to settle for a Haggis burger, which was delightful. To my great sorrow, I wasn't able to eat any real, authentic haggis so fortunately I have a reason to go back.



After fueling up, we visited a park, where the group got to know each other better, and we also got a great view of the city. Glasgow truly felt like a Metropolis with a sky clear, and unobscured by skyscrapers. No matter where you looked, it was there.



After becoming marathon walkers in the greens of Glasgow, we decided to hit the hay and go back to our residence.

This is where the first mishap/adventure occurred. My true specialties in a way. As I mentioned before, I was the only boy in the group, so I shared a room with our guide, Gergő. He said he wanted to sleep, but my eyes weren't about to close just yet, so I went down to the girl's room, to chit chat and maybe even dilly dally. Well, I gravely miscalculated how much time I'd spend there, because by the time I went back up to my room, Gergő was sleeping like a log. That was the moment I realized I left my keys inside. Not wanting to rudely disturb our leader, I decided to make the sacrifice to sleep on the floor of the girl's room. It was uncomfortable, but the laughs made it bearable.

DAY 2 - JUN 22

I woke up a little sleep deprived, and yet still motivated, knowing what the day had in store for us. A real 2 for 1 deal. First of all, we had a visit planned to a local Christian community, which held close ties to Ms. Haining. Second of all, we had a road trip ahead of us to Edinburgh and back.

Let me tell you about them in order.



As a deeply religious person, I must say that visiting Queens park Govanhill church was one of the highlights of my stay in Scotland, for many reasons. We were received with the warmest of welcomes, and the tastiest of cookies and tea. Then we had the pleasure to sing to the community, which they quite enjoyed. We were lucky enough to join them for Sunday service. The minister (who I learned wasn't the church's own, but a guest sent by the district), held a service which has stuck with me. It was structured very clearly, littered with songs, praying segments and segments where you had to turn to those sitting closest to you and discuss a question. At this point in the ceremony, I stood up and walked towards members of the congregation, for a chance to get to know them better. During these few minutes and after the service, I was able to learn a lot from these folk, who may be the kindest I ever met. I told the minister I will take home to my congregation what I've seen from her, and she said she couldn't resist but give me a hug. It was a very heartwarming moment and I had a sense of true connection to these group of people I met through the first time. I guess the Lord really is there where 2 or more gather in his name...



But enough of my beginner level theology thoughts. Let's move on to the big one. Edinburgh. In the Church they told me a saying, common in Glasgow. It goes something like this:

"The best thing in Edinburgh is the road to Glasgow."

Don't get any ideas, this is just banter. They say the same thing reserved in Edinburgh.

Shows the rivalry between the two cities quite well. I am on team Glasgow though.

Edinburgh was beautiful in its own right, but it didn't quite sweep me off my feet the way

Glasgow did. Edinburgh is prettier, but Glasgow feels more alive and livable. I can consider myself very lucky to have been able to see them both in such a short timeframe.

The castle was beautiful and I learned a lot about the Highlanders in the war museum.



Oh and how could I forget. Congratulations to all the football historians reading this, who caught the date. This was the date of the football game between Hungary and Scotland.



I was behind enemy lines, but I came prepared. I had brought my Hungarian football jersey and face paint to go along with it. Geri and I walked across the street to a pub, where we proceeded to grind our teeth for 98 minutes, while getting disapproving looks from the locals. When we finally scored, the pub was loud. From the cries of the Scottish, and the cheer of the 2 Hungarians present. A surprising account of sportsmanship occurred to me as well, when a Scottish fan came over and shook my hand after the final whistle. What a lad. We got quite tired from all the screaming, so we went home, but I just couldn't sleep. What I did to help myself was, I got into a conversation with the receptionist at 3:00 AM. She told me her life story, and I even acquired some new pieces of Scottish slang from her. Straight from the source.

DAY 3 - JUN 24

What a day. Where do I even begin?

After two straight days of poor sleep, I was very keen to catch up on some sleep on the train. What a mistake I almost committed by doing so. When I woke up we were around $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way there. I opened my eyes, and looked out the window. My jaw dropped. I cannot put it into words, how breathtakingly gorgeous the Scottish countryside is. Hills cuddling next to each other, with green until the edge of the horizon, with some wildlife and stonewalls for decoration. I will live there one day.

People say that the journey is more important than the destination. In this case, that was NOT the case.

When we arrived in Dumfries, Pam and her husband Colin took us under their wings, and became our chauffeurs and guides for the day. They showed us around at the school where Miss Jane Haining was a top student. Her name is still written on the wall.



Then we went down to Dunscore for some lunch. The local church community prepared us lunch, but my Hungarian stomach didn't quite get used to the idea of a non-substantial lunch, such as the one we were served. No complaints from my part in the end because combinations of these biscuits and snacks filled me up, and were quite tasty too. I had a great moment here in my opinion. I became the spokesperson of the group when it came to presenting our gifts to them. When it was the paprika's turn to be around, I exclaimed: "Some spices, so you can actually make good food". Thankfully the locals were in great spirits and just laughed. They didn't even know that my banter did contain a nugget of truth.



During lunch I also had a great discussion with the church's minister, Mark, about the creation of the universe. He is an exceptionally intelligent and articulate fellow. After lunch, Colin took us to the church, where we looked around. I asked Minister Mark to give us a blessing on our journey and we prayed together. It was a wonderful moment. Not as wonderful as when we finished the mission, and delivered our wreath, to the Jane Haining memorial. Pam told us many things about that virtuous lassie, who carried the fates of so many Hungarians on her sleeve. Our final stop in Dunscore was the very house where Pam and Colin live. They served us tea, and biscuits, and it was a delightful time. Fun fact: Colin had put the Hungarian flag up to commemorate our arrival



When the train pulled into the station in Glasgow, I took advantage of my freetime and strolled around the downtown area. I cannot emphasize how much I fell in love with the city

DAY 4 - JUN 25

So the final day has arrived. We checked out of the hotel. I said my goodbyes to the receptionist who kept me company when I needed her most. We caught the bus going downtown. There we had some more freetime. I visited a record store, and brought my music savvy friend some CD-s.

As my final act of teenage wonder, I spent a few hours laying down by the river Clyde, using my suitcase as a pillow. It reminded me of home a bit, but the scenery still had something new to offer.

I think I can speak for the group when I say that we left Scotland tired. We did many things in a short amount of time. A sense of melancholy was still present on the plane, knowing that this vacation is the type you tell your wee kids about.

THANK YOU so much to everyone who made it possible for me to contend. From my teachers, to the judges in the competition, to Jane Austin who wrote me a piece of fiction I could quote.

THANK YOU to everyone who helped organize the trip, and to Gergő, for taking such good care of us.

THANK YOU to all the lassies and lads in Scotland, who made me feel welcome in a country I've been meaning to visit for so long.

And last but definitely not least

THANK YOU, to MISS JANE HAINING, for being an inspiration we can look up to everyday, even decades after her passing.