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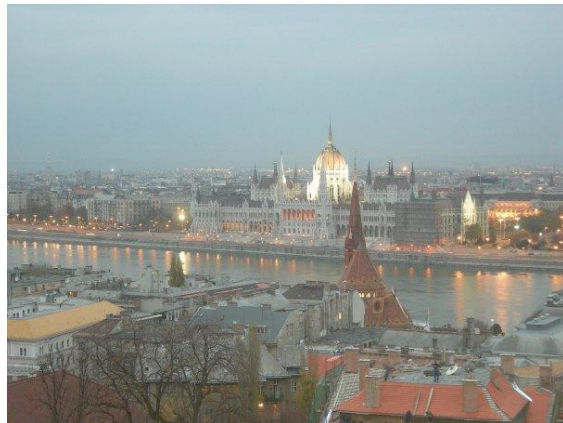
From the Corner of Raday and Kinizsi



“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.” (Mark Twain)

When I entered the study abroad office at Tulane for the first time, I had my heart set on going to Paris, France. I had been taking French since the 6th grade and I felt that Paris was the logical place to spend the fall semester of my junior year. Now, over a year later, I am forever grateful that I decided to do something different, take a chance, and spend a semester in Budapest, Hungary. The four months I spent in Budapest will remain one of the best experiences of my life. Not only did I learn a tremendous amount about myself, but I learned so much about a country and a region very different from my own. By the end, I was also able to see the similarities, the most important realization.

I will never forget my shuttle ride from the airport in Budapest to our first residence, the hostel. To be honest, I was unsure that I had made the right choice. Maybe the missing of my connection in France was a sign. I was not supposed to be in Budapest. As I stared out the window, at the city I would call home for the next four months, I saw countless buildings which were adorned with graffiti and dirt. Many buildings looked to be in less than perfect condition. The shuttle stopped in front of a run down looking building, which had clear communist influences in its construction. All I could think was that the driver had brought me to the wrong place. I dragged my two duffle bags inside and walked up to the front desk. The man behind the desk spoke no English and had, unfortunately, assigned my room to someone else. I had no phone, knew no Hungarian, and did not know what to do. I was in a tough situation and I had two choices, cry or continue to try to communicate. I chose the latter and before I knew it, I had a key. I now had a key to my room and this opened the door to what the next four months would bring.



Although I traveled extensively during my four months abroad, my fondest memories are from the activities that became part of my everyday routine. Walking down *Raday utca*, stopping at the *pekseg* on my way to class for a *kakaos csiga*, an Hungarian pastry, going to Plus on my way home for some groceries for dinner. These are the things that allowed me to immerse myself in the Hungarian culture. I finally learned that the bottled water with the pink caps were the only kind I wanted to drink. I learned that time is not money so expect to wait in line at the grocery store for a very long time. My favorite lesson, a one-way street is actually two-way, as long as you just go in reverse, when going in the wrong direction. I was able to see Budapest through the eyes of a tourist and over time, as a local. I began to understand why people do not smile on the metros and why many people wear clothing that, in the U.S.A., would be considered “trashy.” There are reasons behind every little aspect that is different about Hungarian culture.

Hungarians have been through a lot and the older generations alive today have seen the suffering with their very own eyes. Clothing is expensive and many people simply can not afford

to buy the clothes Americans would consider “classy.” The clothing they wear is the clothing that is most accessible. The more I dove in and was able to understand the meaning behind why Hungarians do what they do, the more I felt at home, in a place quite far from my country of origin.

Before I knew it, my four months had come to an end. A few weeks before I had to leave, every once in a while I would get this terrible feeling in my stomach. I was literally feeling home sick, but not in the way one might think. I was feeling sick over the thought of leaving my new home, Budapest. So many good memories had occurred in this amazing city and I was just not ready to leave. The people, seventeen boys and three other girls, I had spent my four months with had become my closest friends. More importantly, the Hungarians that I had the chance to interact with were people that I might not have the chance to see again. The tears that I was able to hold back on that first day were no longer being held back. On my shuttle ride to the airport in December, I saw the same route, through the constant flow of tears, and it was as if I was looking at a different place. The buildings had meaning, character, and were true to themselves, like the Hungarian people. These are qualities that every culture around the world can learn from. Budapest is proud of who it is and how far it has come. Covering up the graffiti and the dirt would be, in some way, covering up the truth.

As Mark Twain said, “...*Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.*”

Although I feel that I am not the same person I was when I left Newark Airport last August, I feel that the changes have most definitely been for the better. I try to encourage every college aged student, and younger, that I come in contact with, that they *must* study abroad. Although college itself opens ones eyes to different people, cultures, and places, studying abroad can do that and so much more. Being able to see the world through the eyes of another culture, and people very much unlike oneself, will truly change a person.

I am living proof.