

Sam Tabor in the European Alps

Along with about 25 students from UT and Alabama, it was an amazing three weeks in the Alps. We stayed in Austria with field trips to Germany, Italy and Switzerland. Austria is amazing! I seriously have not seen anything like it in my entire life. I arrived a few days early to get accustomed to the area and have some time to explore by myself. This was a great decision because some other students did the same thing and it gave me an easy opportunity to make friends. We just finished the first class field trip, which was to the top of the Zugspitze the highest point in Germany. We were fortunate to have amazingly clear weather and got some amazing photos. We even had one of our lectures on top of the mountain about glaciers. I cannot wait to see the rest of Austria!

(view from the top of Zugspitze)



We made it through half of the class. Coming to Austria was a great decision. Every field trip we go on I think to myself "this is the most amazing place I have ever been!" and then the next place is even better! We have traveled all over Austria now including ice caves, Salzburg, Obergurgl, and two castles in Tirol. The class is very informative and we are experiencing a 100 years storm, which is making the class a little more hands on than I thought it would be. I have made some friends with the locals and they invited me over for dinner the other night. They cooked Wiener schnitzel, the local cuisine. I can already feel that I am going to really miss my new

friends once this class is over. The last field trip we went on was a lab for the class in the mountains. We hiked into the mountains and learned about tree rings, and then we cored the trees and took samples to study later. I never knew how important tree rings could be! This class is teaching me about how important the landscape is to understanding the past and helping to prepare for the future.

(tree coring lab)



It is our last day in Austria. I find myself feeling more like a local than a tourist. The knowledge I have gained from taking this class and the places I have visited have been well worth the money, but I have gained so much more than just that. Going to a foreign country with strangers was a challenge that forced me out of my comfort zone. I had to make new friends, learn to communicate with locals, and navigate the cities train and bus system. From this I have gained a new level of self-confidence and maturity. I realize that studying abroad is not only about class and seeing the sites. It also is about putting yourself a little out of your comfort zone and challenging yourself so that you can grow and learn who you really are. Saying goodbye to Austria is not easy, but I am excited about meeting up with my new friends in the States when I get home. I am already planning my next trip to Austria!
(Go VOLS)

