

The Czech Republic: An International Experience

Volume 1, Issue 1

May 7– 31, 2008

By: Misty Lamb Valdosta State University

Day 1– May 7, 2008

We left Atlanta on a very hot, sunny day on the 8th of May, 2008. The Europeans seem to write the date with the day first, followed by the month then the year. I know this will take some getting used to. I have a feeling there are a lot of things that will take some getting used to. The flight over was miserable to say the least. We flew over with three German/Russian/Czech women in our laps. We were not sure of their country of origin, but as soon as they sat down in their seats they reclined back as far as they could go. Chrissy and I took Benadryl, hoping it would help us go to sleep. It was so uncomfortable. I think Chrissy might be a little claustrophobic.

When we arrived in Prague we had our first adventure. The bus driver who would be taking us to our dorms in Olomouc could not speak English. Chrissy had brought a phrase book with her and I had a book which was given to students last year with

some helpful phrases in it. Between the two of us we managed to introduce ourselves to George, the bus driver, tell him the whole group had not arrived and to wait for Dr. Bauer who was stuck at customs with a ridiculous student who lost his



The bus ride to Olomouc. We had not slept in over 24 hours. That is Rape flower, used for cooking oil.

passport. He was able to tell us the place he had parked would only let him stay there for thirty minutes free. We told him to circle the parking lot when the thirty minutes ran out.

Now, although it may sound like a very coherent conversation it was, in fact, full of broken words, phrases, sounds (more like grunts), and hand gestures. We played, for the first time, the international game of charades! I felt somewhat accomplished to have been able to communicate with someone who did not speak English. It also made me feel good that he was able to communicate with someone who did not speak Czech.

By the time we arrived at the dorms tonight it was very late. Tomorrow is the Czech independence day. They celebrate the day they were liberated by the Germans after WWI. However, the sad part of the story was that it was the Russians who liberated them from the Germans and they did not really get liberated to be their own country.

Inside this issue:

Pribor	2
German Adventure	3
Auschwitz	4
Olomouc Museum of Art	5
Vienna	6
Olomouc Zoo	7
Prague	8

Day 2– May 8, 2008

I haven't even been in country 24 hours and already have had some adventure. We took a walking tour of Olomouc this morning. The history of this country in one word-tumultuous. There hasn't been unity. They could not decide on a ruler and were overtaken by the Germans, the Swedish, the Catholic/Protestant conflict, the Russians. Today is their

independence day- a national holiday and yet it liberated the day the Russians "liberated" them from the Germans only to be run by the Russians until 1989.

The Culture. I notice the people of the younger generation seem proud and industrious. The older generation seems passive- like years of unrest and turmoil has taught them a

quietness of spirit. But not really. I think the quietness is just on the outside. The old tour guide had his was of communicating his political bias. I would assume such biases were forbidden and corporally punished not too long ago. None of his biases seemed to shout praises for his freedom and "independence".



The Wall around Olomouc was built to protect the city from invasion. Ironically, other countries did invade. Many times!

Day 2 (Continued)

There was no mention of the gypsies in the history lesson from the tour guide. It was mentioned 30,000 Jews were reduced to 30 during the times of persecution. Yet they have seemed to recover. What of the Gypsies? Do they celebrate with the Czech liberation? I don't think they have yet been liberated. They do not come out in public from their ghettos.

Critical Whiteness.

We are not aware of our race. We talked today of the professors not instructing us on proper behavior in order for us to experience what it means to be treated as the other. How exciting! To know what the others in

our country face everyday! Assimilation is not easy or quick. I have intentionally packed clothes that would help me not to stand out and to assimilate into the culture.



This was the tower we climbed and could see the whole city and countryside.

Day 3- May 9, 2009

We didn't have class today until 1. We joined the abnormal psychology class and I thought I was going to have to get rowdy when the class started discussing the increased divorce rate, which was currently at 50%. Thank goodness the teacher has a background in Marriage and Family Therapy. Even though she did not put it into these words she cautioned us to consider a person's context before labeling someone abnormal.

The gypsies are called the Romany. They are not given a birth certificate, allowed to work, buy homes, access a bank account, legally leave the country, etc. Basi-

cally they are treated worse- ten times worse- than the lowest class in America. It would seem to me that the lowest class in America share cultural characteristics- reluctance to seek help or trust professionals, stick close together, superstitious in their religious/medical beliefs, fictive kin networks, prone to higher rates of crime and the appearance of "laziness" (as the other classes would call it).

We walked around this morning- Chrissy and I. We found phone cards, learned two fingers does not mean two it means three. When showing one on your hand the American way is to start with

the index finger. However, in this town (maybe even Europe) one starts on the thumb. Therefore, in our culture when we show two with the index and middle finger, that is actually three. We went to purchase pastries, showing the sales clerk two, but she gave us three. Luckily we learned this on something that was really cheap! We also found the Gobles (Czech Wal-Mart/Lowes/Mall of Georgia). We had an altercation with some women on the Tram. The other girls in our group with us got really snotty and indignant that they were asked to move. Its no wonder other countries call us Pompous Americans!



Freud's Birthplace: This was a sex shop when historians found it to turn it into a museum!

Day 4—May 10, 2008

We went to Příbor today- Freud's birthplace. It was quite interesting. It was originally a sex shop- how ironic! When we came back we toured the city of Olomouc. We climbed the tower connected to St. Michael's cathedral- what a hike! But, what a view! We could see the whole city. When the Russians "liberated" the Czech from the Germans after WWII they set up camps around the city then passed a law that no Czech citizen could climb a tower so they couldn't see the camps of Russian soldiers surrounding the city.

We ate at a Czech res-

taurant on the square that serves more traditional Czech food. It was AMAZING! I am really starting to get annoyed with the "I don't like..." people. Everywhere we go something is "ew, I don't like that..." or so abnormal. It's frustrating to be around younger, spoiled college students what haven't learned to try to understand another person's context. I've only been here three days and I already want to scream "We're not in America!!" So stop expecting everything to be like it is at home. I was trying to talk to the waiter in Czech at dinner and one of the girls said, "try to talk

English when you are around us." Mental note to self- don't spend extra time around them. The waiter barely spoke a lick of English. How is it fair to ask him to cater to our needs when he doesn't know the language? It seems this girl is the same kind of person who would say "If you are going to live in our country your need to learn to speak English." AHHHH!!!

Day 5- May 11, 2008

It feels like I've been here a month! We went to Kromeritz today. I got us the train info, talked with non English speaking train workers, learned how to ask "which platform to Olomouc" (which cam out in two words, not a complete sentence) nastupresti (spelling is wrong, phonetically right) and Olomouc. That is platform, Olomouc. It worked. We got there and back without trouble. Tuesday we are going to Germany to see Kari. We have to go through change trains in Prauge and Berlin. I'm nervous and scared. I have been doing all I can do to read maps and train schedules. I'm glad we took an unofficial trip today so I could practice my navigating skills.

When we walked into the train station it was 8 am and trains were coming and going. A lady was squawking something on the loud speaker about train arrival and departure. People were everywhere marching at the same pace, yet lacking the sophisticated organization of Ants. I felt a little more prepared and more confident in myself after today. I got what I needed and kept communicating and trying to communicate until I could get what I wanted. It was hard and I am pooped! But I feel more prepared for my Germany adventure. Can I make it their and back according to schedule and as planned? We'll see Friday.



The Upper Square in Olomouc



Day 6- May 12, 2008

We had a lecture in class today on the Romany. I couldn't help but wonder how much was perception and how much was reality. They Gypsies have always been a traveling people. They kep to themselves, stuck together and refused to assimilate into dominant society. They were feared. Why does it see, the Gypsies were spared as opposed to the Jews? Walls were built, scientific "fact" was produced, people risked their lives all because of one person's hatred. Why the Jews? Why not Catholics, Slavs, Muslims?

The lecture discussed that during communism everybody

worked. The Romany were paid higher wages to do unskilled labor than professionals. They were also banned from all their "gypsy ways". It would seem there is resentment from the professional/educated class toward the Romany. The lecturer made it a point to say "there are what is typical, but you must never generalize. There are always exceptions." But there was also resistance or "them and me" in the speaker's voice. I have not seen Gypsies yet.

Tomorrow Chrissy and I leave for Dusseldorf, Germany. Our adventure was moved up. I am nervous because we have to change

trains. I can't wait to see Kari!

Did I mention the city of Olomouc shuts down on Sunday? Nothing's open. Last night for dinner Chrissy and I hopped on a tram and went to the train station where a grocery store was open. We bought sandwiches and had a bedroom pick-nick! That's making lemonade out of some lemons.

Day 7- May 13, 2008

We are on our way to Germany! We had our first adventure this morning. I thought our train left Olomouc at 5:32. Well it arrives in Prague at 7:32. It left Olomouc at 5:05. We got to the train station at 5:00 and were going to get sandwiches for he 13 hour journey when I checked the train schedule, just to be sure. I looked up at Chrissy and said "oh crap! We go now!" we were running through the tiny, three

platform, train station of Olomouc but we made it! The rains are much like airplanes- the wealthier stretch out in the 1st class cabin and the middle/lower class is crammed together like cattle...MOO! When we got to Praha (Prague) all signs had an English version of what it was saying. Why isn't America this accommodating to international people? It's a little strange to be on this train. I can't help but wonder if

these were the same train lines he Jews rode to the camps on. When I look out my window was this the some of the last things they saw? What there they thinking? Did they know where they were going and how they would be treated? We want to come back to Berlin to see the Wall and Checkpoint Charlie



Chrissy and I changing trains in Berlin.

Day 8– May 14, 2008

We made it safe. We were really tired when we got here last night. We watched Freedom Writer. Such a good movie. The teacher uses the Holocaust to reach the kids! (As an aside: This is me present day. I went and bought the book *The Freedom Writers Diary* and I can only read a couple of pages at a time because it makes me so emotional!)

We are going to Auschwitz this weekend when we get back from Germany so it was a good way to start the week. Also, Dusseldorf was Hitler's favorite city. We went downtown and Kari showed us a hotel where he had a balcony built to make his speeches from when he was in the city. Kari was talking with us about how that one event in his history has left the Germany people



Dusseldorf, Germany

A cement statue representing a many slaying a water monster. The water is gushing from the monster's mouth.

feeling like they can't show pride in their country. She said it's like Germany carry this shame around with them- like they feel responsible for what happened because they couldn't stop it or because they allowed a man like Hitler to rise to power. I am somewhat blown away that the ripple affects of one person's leadership is this far reaching and has had such an impact on the culture. Although I guess I can make sense of it because our country is still experiencing the ripple affects of slavery. Just like America, in Germany and the Czech everything looks fine and pleasant. Commercialism has helped these countries significantly. There doesn't seem to be oppression or harsh feelings of one ethnicity to another.



The Upper Square in Olomouc

Day 9 & 10– May 15–16

Day 9, Thursday we spent the day with a German family that Kari has become close to. We also went to Nord Park, where the German soldiers were trained for war and taught how to be Nazi'. It was amazing to me how the park had been transformed, almost replanted with life a beauty. I hope one day



Nord Park

Dusseldorf, Germany

the people of Germany and those who were impacted but communism can be transformed like this park. Friday, day 10, we spent the day traveling back to Olomouc. Tomorrow we leave, very early in the morning for Auschwitz and Krakow, Poland.

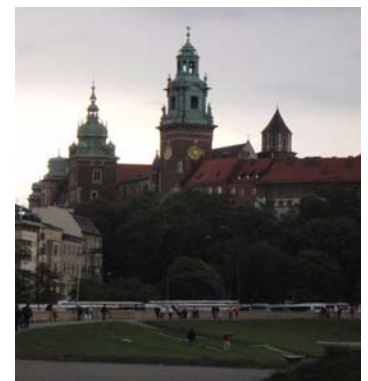
Day 11– May 17, 2008

We left at 6am on our way. There was a thick fog that hung over Olomouc. The morning announcements included various instructions - what to do, where to go. "Try to refrain from laughing. Believe it or not people laugh. Certainly no belly laughing." This week has been surreal. From riding the trains to Germany, the seeing Nord Park- trying so hard to redeem it's dark angry past-, to the hotel balcony in Dusseldorf.

When we first pulled up to the parking lot there were rail lines that ran parallel to the camp. I got off the bus expecting sober

silence and concentration-esk buildings. Not so. The parking lot- well at the far end of the parking lot there were cafés, ice cream shops, souvenir stores. Ellen Wiley told us these were originally administration buildings. I felt a little indignant- almost like what dignity the victims and survivors has was being exploited...like Crispy Crème doughnuts sold on the top of Pike's Peak in Colorado. When I walked onto the property my chest got tight- like a burden or something heavy I was carrying. We went through the museum and to the back of the camp where the last remaining gas

chamber stood. The walls were thick concrete. Even on this hot day it felt cool inside. I walked around a corner and I was in the main chamber room. I was the first one in so I was standing in this room alone. 2000 people were crammed into the room at one time. Men, women, and children were in here together. When women went in alone they were told they would be getting a shower after their long train ride. Gas cyanide canisters were brought into the room. 20-30 minutes later 2000 bodies were piles outside and burned one by one in the incinerator. I did not know these fact when I



When you first enter Krakow this palace is the first thing you see.

Day 11 (Continued)

walked into the room. I found all this out later. All I felt when I walked into that chamber was a mix of fear, anger, and a thickness I cannot explain- like death was still hanging in the air. The lights were low and I tried to imagine what it would have been like to have been brought into that room. Families came with suitcases, personal belongings, toothbrushes, hair brushes. The prisoner's barracks had been converted into museums. We saw a pile of glasses that has been confiscated, then a pile of hair and tooth brushes. When we walked up stairs of one of the barracks we went through a hallway. On both sides, piled from floor to ceiling were shoes. I walked down the hallway and as I walked I stopped halfway when I saw an infants knitted bootie. I started crying. I

couldn't hold it in any longer. I was tired of thinking I'd been seen as strange if I was crying. The truth and power of what I was seeing overwhelmed me at that moment.

Up another flight of stairs and around another corner I came into a room. Behind the glass was human hair0 the women and children's hair. Their hair was shaved as soon as they arrived or after they had been gassed or after they had been beaten and murdered. The hair was sold and se dot make cloth and netting. A familiar voice beside me said, "This is the room that always gets me. Everything else was just heir possessions. This was a part of them." I began to cry again, a little more freely this time.

The camp was only in operation for 5 years from 1949-45

but in that time over 300,000 people were killed at the camp. Those who were not gassed were forced into manual labor. For 11 hours a day they worked on 1500-1700 calories per day. Many died of starvation or sickness from unsanitary conditions. Before work all prisoners were forced to participate in a kind of roll call. Those who were deemed too sick or weak to work were sent to the gas chamber. Crutches, wooden legs, leg braces, wheelchairs, were kept and displayed in the museum. I cried there too.

People were reduced to animals- those who were sentenced and those who carried out the sentencing- the complete termination of the Jewish people from infants to elderly. A person would have to become an animal to treat others like an animal.



Krakow, Poland

Day 12- May 18, 2008

I woke up today needing to be alone for a while. I wanted to journal and spend some time processing all that I had just saw yesterday. I woke up, tried to sneak out and leave Chrissy a note. I didn't know how to tell her I just wanted to be alone for a while. So as I was leaving she woke up and came with me. I was silent. While we were eating breakfast I decided to just get over myself and try to have a good day. I figured I would get alone time some other time. But a bug part of me was really disappointed and on overload after what I saw yesterday. I asked Chrissy what she wanted to do today and she said she wanted to find the Church that we

could see the steeple of but couldn't figure out how to get to. So we finished breakfast and went to find it. When we got there the church was having mass, but I noticed a building right beside it. The building was the Olomouc Museum of Classic Art! AND it was free admission on Sundays! So we spent the day admiring beautiful works of art which were centuries old. It was just what I needed- even though it was not what I wanted. It was refreshing to be reminded that there is still beauty in the world. I think it was Samwise Gamgee in Lord of the Rings who said, "remember Mr. Frodo, there is still some good left in this world and its worth fighting

for." That was what I saw in the beautiful artwork. I saw the good when it would be tempting to despair. Not to mention- so many of the works of art captured the deeper side of life. That side is not always pleasant- sometime it is our sorrow that can bring forth the kind of beauty someone would call art. But later on today I did get to sneak away and I journal in my personal journal on the relationship of sorrow and art. Auschwitz made me feel mentally full and emotionally empty all at the same time. Today I was finally able to be mentally emptied and emotionally filled back up again. I will never forget what I saw or how it impacted me.

Day 13- May 19, 2008

Today we attended a lecture specifically about the Romany minority and the history of Czech literature. We were told this story of a Water Goblin. It seems that the Czech people don't mind being really graphic with their children as long as it gets the point across. This is not a Mickey Mouse, Lassie, The Brady Bunch kind of country! The Water Goblin is a story about a young girl who wants to go down to the river to play. Her mother tells her not to but she goes anyway. At

the river she meets the Water Goblin who kidnaps her, takes her to his water home, and gets her pregnant. She gives birth to a half-human, half-goblin baby. One day she begs and begs her husband to see her mother one last time. He agrees to let her go under two conditions- she leaves the baby and does not touch her mother while she is there. She agree, goes to see her mother and sure enough hugs her and doesn't want to go back. She wants to go back for her baby, the mother does-

n't want her to go back and in the midst of their fighting they hear the sound of her baby crying then a loud thump on the door. The girl opens the door and finds her baby's head ripped from its body, lying in two pieces. The moral of the story- children listen to your parents. That's a children's story!!! WOW! They aren't raising pansies in this country!



This was the church we could only see the steeples of. When we go there we discovered the Olomouc Museum of Art was to the left.

Day 14-16- May 20-22, 2008

These past few days it has been raining all day. We saw two movies- *What Happens in Vegas* and *Indian Jones*. It was interesting to be watching American movies with Czech subtitles! We thought they were great movies but we couldn't help but wonder if the Czech people got American humor or if it is not culturally acceptable to laugh out loud. I also couldn't help but think about if



In a coffee shop, getting out of the rain.

celebrities and movies impact other countries' perception of Americans. I mean, we watched MTV in Germany. Do Germans think Americans are like *The Hills*?



We went to find this church on the hill in the rain. When we go there it was closed. This is me trying to be happy!!

Day 17- May 23, 2008

Today we visited with a Clinical Psychologist and visited a public Psychiatric hospital. I had even more confirmation Marriage and Family Therapy was the right choice. The Psychologist showed us the living conditions of some of the patients. The Czech does not have HIPPA or any rights to confidenti-

ality for that matter. One of the rooms had a soft cage bed. It was like a net that the nurses could raise to keep a patient in the bed at night if they were detoxing. The psychologist discussed that this is a really heated debate in all of Europe as to the humanity (whether these beds are humane) of the use

of these kinds of beds. He told us the woman who wrote the *Harry Potter* books was a major advocate for the removal of these beds from hospitals. It makes me wonder how privacy and confidentiality is not as big of an issue.

Day 18- May 24, 2008

We left for Vienna, Austria today. Can it get anymore beautiful? I was not too impressed with Krakow. I feel overwhelmed by the beauty of every building, every castle, cathedral, and painting. I feel smaller and smaller. Its almost like I realize how many people have come before and will be after me.

There is a thought that has continued ever since I saw the first cathedral. It became more pronounced at the Archbishop's art collection (Olomouc Museum of Art). I thought about the class structure at the time of the Bishops. He had a palace here in Vienna too.

The clergy were the wealthy ruling class. Peasants and lay people would never attain that kind of wealth or education, as "the church" also controlled who was educated. If these bishops and priests were supposed to be "representatives" of God, did the peasants and lay people also feel relational communion with God was possible? Did they see God as the God of the wealthy and educated? And if so, how did the commoners make sense of who God is, what it religion was, and how it impacted the way they lived their life. Did this system

make them resentful of Christianity and Catholicism? Did they live in fear of God, the bishops and priests? Anyway, it seems to me the religious leaders misrepresented the original intent of the message they were charged the teaching the people. I want to be impressed with the cathedrals, but I'm finding it hard. Most of the cathedrals seem like a shrine to a famous man, not a loving God.

In Vienna we saw so many things- cathedrals, art museums, Mozart's statue, the Imperial Palace. I think Chrissy went to see some famous horses.

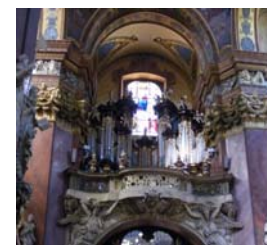


*The Imperial Palace
Vienna, Palace*

Day 19- May 25, 2008

We went to the Olomouc Zoo today. I know, I know- we could have gone to Zoo back home. This Zoo was different. First of all there was this Giraffe that ate corn out of our hands! Well, it wasn't out hands, but the man standing beside us. Then there were animals we had never seen before. Not to mention most of the animals liked being seen by people. It was like they were all perform

ing and saying, "look at me!" It was interesting to see parents with their children at the zoo. I saw no difference in the way parents interacted with their kids in this country and ours. I guess some things are universal!



When we finally made it into the Church on the Hill, this was the organ and part of the beauty we saw.

Day 20- May 26, 2008

Today we went to a Marital and Counseling Center. It was so cool! The center was set up a lot like Moore Street Clinic. There was a one-way mirror for reflective team therapy. The therapist was familiar with Watzlawick, Minuchin, and Satir. We got to sit down and chat with the therapist (through an interpreter of course) and he told us of the first time he met Virginia Satir. He was speaking in Czech but moving his arms around as if he was demonstrating how to move people around. Because Satir is known for her use of moving people around in the therapy room Chrissy and I started laughing. But

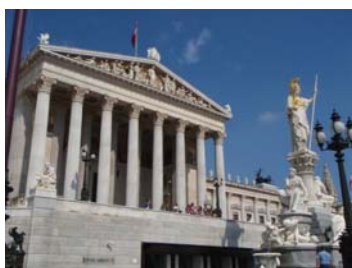
when the translator started talking she told us he was talking about when they went out to dinner together she would move people, plate, food, all things on the table around to make things more to her liking. I found this rather funny that sometimes when a context is understood, a person doesn't need words to be able to communicate what they are trying to say. The day was awesome for us. The therapist said he found it a very strange and foreign concept that we separate the psychological model from the marriage and family therapy model in our country. Maybe they are not separate. But it seems like acade-

mia and professional organizations and agencies have separated the fields of thought.

Also, the therapist told us that while the country was still under communist rule Virginia Satir and his other colleagues smuggled her books into the country, translated them, and disseminated them throughout illegally. They were engaged in covert operations and willing to go to prison if caught- all for the sake of new ideas.

Day 21- May 27, 2008

Today we visited with a Clinical Psychologist and visited a public Psychiatric hospital. I had even more confirmation Marriage and Family Therapy was the right choice. The Psychologist showed us the living conditions of some of the patients. The Czech does not have HIPPA or any rights to confidentiality for that matter. One of the rooms had a soft cage bed. It was like a net that the nurses could raise to keep a patient in the bed at night if they were detoxing. The psy-



*Parliament
Vienna, Austria*

chologist discussed that this is a really heated debate in all of Europe as to the humanity (whether these beds are humane) of the use of these kinds of beds. He told us the woman who wrote the *Harry Potter* books was a major advocate for the removal of these beds from hospitals. It makes me wonder how privacy and confidentiality is not as big of an issue.



*Astronomical Clock
Olomouc*

Day 22- May 28, 2008

Today we left for Prague. I am excited to see the city and have a few days with Kari. However, I already know we are going to have challenges. I told Kari to meet us in Old Town Square- right in the center of the city and easy to get to. However, I just learned we are not going there first, we are going to the castle on the hill, the slowly making our way down to the square. I hope I'll be able to get in touch with her when we get to Prague.

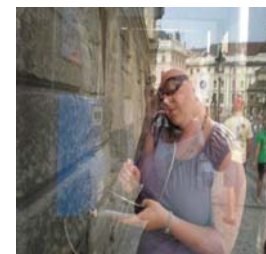
Actually the whole day was me trying to get to her to tell her we were not at the square. There were not computers in the dorms at Prague. I didn't write down her cell phone number. I tried calling her home, no one was there. I was going to go and get her when we got to the Castle,

there was this worker's strike going on in the city somewhere close to where we were. When we got to the castle Dr. Wiley tried and tried to call with both his cell phone, non of them worked. We were on a walking tour and had to keep up. I finally found a pay phone and called the roommate. This was just a day of madness! Finally we made it to the square about four hours after I told Kari we'd be there.

After I finally got in touch with her I was able to relax and enjoy the castle and cathedral. When we went into the cathedral there was this painting of a priest being thrown off the Charles Bridge. The old story goes that the King wanted the Priest to tell him what the Queen had confessed in privacy. The priest refused. He was tortured and thrown off the bridge.

The said that if his body floated, the priest did the right thing but if his body sank, the king did the right thing by killing him. Well his body not only floated, five stars appeared around his head in the water. Now, if you touch the places on the bridge where his hand last touched, make a wish, and keep it a secret your wish will come true in one year. I made the wish and so far it's not looking like it will come true! I may have wished for the impossible.

I love this city. There is more history and more to see. The Astronomical clock is a sight. There has been so much persecution because of religious differences. Also, I learned that Prague was the only city in WWII that was not bombed. Their architecture and buildings are original. I think that is really cool.



I had finally found the pay phone and was trying to call Kari! The Castle is reflected in the glass of the phone booth.

Day 23- May 29, 2008

Oh, today was exhausting. We took a train ride to the Church of Bones- a Church that did not have enough room in their graveyard for the bones of the victims of plague and war so their bones were used to decorate the church. So many people thought it was morbid to see skulls and bones hanging all over this church. The brochure said the church did think of death as our final resting place.



On our way to see the Church of Bones

Not did the church think of our bodies representing who we are when we die. The church believed that the dead would be raised one day and death would be eliminated. This church was paying honor (maybe thumbing it's nose) to death and that it is not finite. Most people with us could only see it from the perspective that bones are creepy. Well, hopefully depth of mind is not finite either.



The Charles Bridge

Day 24- May 30, 2008

Our last day in Europe...tear! I am really going to miss this place. I would like to go home, do some laundry and then come back. That would be ideal. It has been rush,rush, rush ever since we have arrived, but I haven't minded. We have had to prioritize because there are just too many things to do and see. While there is so much history in Prague there is also a lot of commercialism, catering to tourists, and jacking up prices on items just because people have to pay it. It is hard to get a sense of the culture. Even the shop owners do not seem like locals.

Most people speak some English here- that should make the people in our group happy.

We went to see the Lennon Wall today. Apparently while Prague was under communist rule the Czech people really found hope in the lyrics of Lennon's songs. When he died a graffiti artists painted a memorial to him on a cement wall. Every night the police would paint over it and every morning it would be right back up there. The wall drew the attention of many in the city. The artist was never caught and over time his paintings would get bigger and bigger. I think maybe it was more than a tribute to Lennon. I think it may have

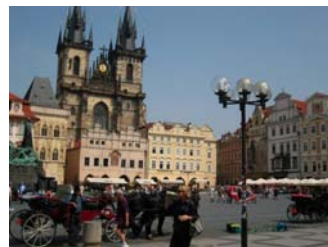
represented the idea that some things- no matter how a person or government may try- cannot be squashed, killed or held back.



One small part of the Lennon Wall

This is my day-by-day account of all the wonderful, new and exciting things I experienced in the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, and Austria.

Favorites from Prague



This trip was incredible. I will never forget all that I saw and can't wait to go back!!!