

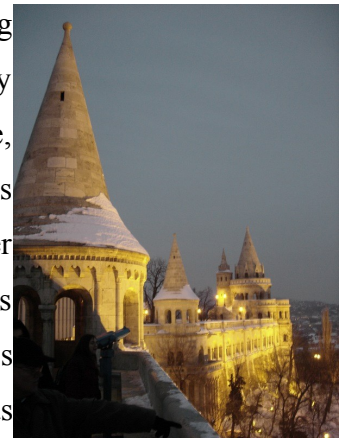
Experience Report

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Thanks to the C&C of MARS international studies program, as well as the great professors at the University of Manitoba and Budapest University of Technology and Economics, I was able to spend five months working on my final year group design project abroad in Budapest, Hungary. There I worked with a fellow University of Manitoba student, Matthew Woelk, on developing a set of high level strategies for a robotic soccer simulation.

I first learned of this program in an email sent out to the engineering mailing list at the University of Manitoba. At first I thought there would be no way my application would be accepted, but it looked like such a good experience, I decided to apply anyway. Low and behold, a couple of weeks later I was told I had been accepted! After discussing the program with the Computer Engineering department heads, we were told that we could use the project as



our Final Year Group Design project. This was the first time anyone had travelled as part of their project, so we were extremely excited.

One year later, I found myself on a plane flying high above the Atlantic Ocean on my way to Central Europe. The weeks leading up to the flight, and even the flight itself, felt like a dream. It did not become a reality until we set foot on Hungarian soil and realized that we now had to find a way to get to our hotel. As my first time living away from home, this was intimidating for the first few days, but I very quickly adapted to my new environment and all of its challenges.

Once we had found a flat and settled in, we set to work on our project. This was my first time working on a project of this kind of scale in a group of just two. It was both extremely challenging and rewarding. I learned a lot about managing large projects (breaking them into smaller sections, researching both broad and specific projects, organizing large collections of work and





research, etc.), working with a single partner on a project (coordinating efforts, data synchronization, compromising on opinions, etc.), and working in a foreign environment where not everyone can speak the same language as I do.

While our work kept us extremely busy, working upwards of 7 hours per day, 5 days a week, our schedule was flexible enough that we were able to take some time to have fun in and around Budapest. There were lots of international students from all over the globe studying in BME's English exchange program. We were invited to join in with them at all of their



events which were a lot of fun. There were many parties, trips to other towns and cities, and activities within Budapest. I



think the most fun party was the international party where all the people from each country got together and made customary dishes from their home country. Since Canada is a fairly new country which is very multicultural, we had a hard time deciding what to bring. In the end the 3 of us living on the one flat made a big batch of poutine while the two guys in the other flat brought pirogi pizza. Having a chance to try some authentic foods from across the world, all in one night, was a real treat.

As for trips, the international students went to many places. All of these trips were great. We went to Eger, Hungary for a “get to you know” event. Eger is known for its wines and we got to take part in a wine tasting. We also went to Bratislava, Slovakia, and Krakow, Poland. In Poland we also went to Auschwitz concentration camp. While I cannot say this was a fun experience, it was definitely a good one. It was very sobering to see real evidence of what happened in WWII.

I think that my favourite activity was when we went caving through the Buda hills. We donned coveralls, hardhats, and headlamps and set out through some old caves. There were some massive rooms, and there were also lots of small passages where you had to contort your body in odd ways to squeeze through. It was lots of fun. We also toured a science and inventions museum featuring all sorts of things that originated in



Hungary. There are lots of amazing things that have and will come out of Hungary.



Following our time working on the project, some family came out to visit us and all of use took a few weeks to travel around Europe. We were able to see Croatia (Zagreb), Austria (Vienna and Salzburg), Germany (Munich and Bamberg), and the Czech Republic (Prague).

All the food I got to try all over Europe was amazing, especially within Hungary. I managed to find many dishes, mostly deserts, that were made from cottage cheese, and I loved every one of them. The Hungarian sausage, lángos, goulash, and pretty much everything else I tried was also very good.



Working on this project abroad was a very rewarding experience. I was able to learn about many topics which I had not previously known, I learned some of the intricacies of organizing large projects in a group dynamic, and most importantly, I was able to interact and connect with people all over the world. The Budapest University of Technology and Economics did a great job involving us in all of the activities for the European exchange students. Having the chance to study in Europe allowed me to truly appreciate things that other cultures just take as the norm. While this alone would have been worth the trip, being away from home for so long and learning as much as I did about these other cultures made me really grateful for the things I take for granted living in Canada.



All in all, I have absolutely no regrets about doing this program. If I had to do it all again, I would ask to do it 10 times more. If anyone has any doubts about doing this program, I highly recommend giving it a try. It truly is a once in a lifetime experience.

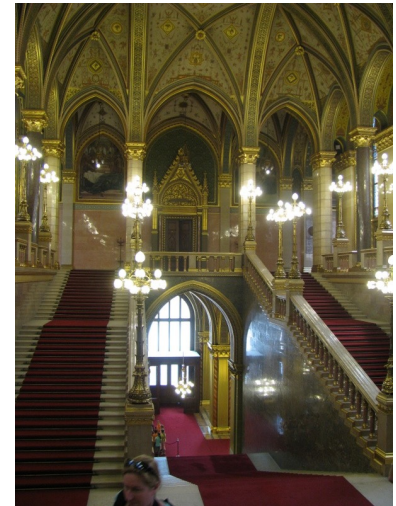




My father, myself, my brother, Matt, and Matt's father, in the courtyard of Neuschwanstein Castle, just outside Munich, Germany



St. Steven's Basilica in the heart of Budapest



Inside the extravagant Hungarian Parliament building



Szechenyi Spa in the centre of City Park, Budapest



"Small" side garden at Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna



Gelért Hill near the Budapest University of Technology and Economics



Horse races around Hero Square during a national festival



One of many beautiful views in the gorgeous town of Bamberg, Germany



One of the many serene lakes in the picturesque Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia