



Poland Diary 2011

Day 5 - Monday, part 1

Dear Parents,

So far I've experienced the biggest emotional, difficult, special few days on this spiritual trip. Today when we went to Majdanek, a concentration camp in Lublin, which was mostly left the way it was making it so real. It hit me strongly, realising our brothers and sisters suffered and died for being Jewish, just like all of us are, and each one of those individuals was a person with a normal life and a family. The truth is I never ever thought I would have to walk into a gas chamber or into a crematorium for a few reasons, one being because most of them have been destroyed by the Nazis. However, today I did and although it was awful, it really gave me an insight to what people, just like us, went through and a part of me is happy I have more clarity. The main thing I realised today was that, overall none of us will ever understand properly, but that you will understand more by coming to see it for yourself. When you hear about 'death camps' you can only imagine, but it is truly so different to seeing it with your own eyes. Another major affect that Majdanek had on me was to appreciate life and my family and not to take them for granted, and it's also made me want to become more in touch with my religion and G-d. I'm also very grateful for being able to come on this trip because I've realised we need to pass down our core beliefs. Thank you Mum, Dad and Immanuel for giving me such an amazing opportunity.

Love,
Natalie Dangoor.

Day 5 - Monday, part 2

Dear Parents,

Today we arrived at a deserted building in Gura near Warsaw, and after our rather depressing morning we were all rather low, so when we got to this old, abandoned building we were rather sceptical. However, Rabbi Rifkin assured us that this was a 'happy' place and as we entered we began singing and dancing in two circles. We were all standing, or jumping in a cold, rather broken building and yet the atmosphere was electric, there was so much *ruach* it was amazing. Just like that we put the depression, sadness and suffering of the Jewish people to the back of our minds and just embraced the beautiful and joyous parts of Judaism and our history. We were then explained that the building had been around for two centuries and had been a central to the Jewish life of thousands of pre-War Chassidim. Therefore, instead of feeling sad for the loss that this building represented we began singing, dancing and enjoying a *tisch* bringing back soul, spirit, and life to a place which so desperately needed it.



We had fun, something we all needed, and all though this trip has been amazing, it's also been life changing and it's something that will stay with all of us for a long time; and not just because of the sadness that has touched us all, but because of the joy we have shared as a year group. This day was an emotional roller coaster but it brought our year group even closer and it also taught us a lot, for example to never forget the suffering and to always remember the joy that was and always will be found in Judaism.

Love,
Olivia Gordon

Day 5 - Monday, part 3

Dear Parents,

We have just arrived back from Warsaw. Here we saw the Warsaw ghetto; well a memorial of their entire lives. This was very inspirational as here we heard a letter from the leader of the ghetto uprising. It is incredible to feel that starving, exhausted and demoralised Jews could attack Nazis successfully. As we sat there as a year group at the sight of such atrocities, we were united and truly empathised with the hardship of our fallen brothers. We all feel that when we visit Treblinka tomorrow will be even more powerful now that we know where the majority of victims began.

Lots of love,
Daniel Grodner & Daniel Davis