



Trip to Our Chalet - 20-28 August 2016

Report

Saturday 20th August 2016

The team met at Birmingham Airport, outside Departures, at 6.00am where the girls said a final farewell to their parents. We checked our baggage in with Swiss Air - boarding passes had automatically been emailed through from Swiss Air the previous afternoon. Everyone made their way through security with no issues and the girls had the opportunity to browse around the shops before we boarded the plane. The plane left after a slight delay but there were no issues during boarding. Free croissants and Swiss chocolate on the flight were a welcome surprise.



We arrived at Zurich Airport and made our way through Passport Control and then collected our luggage. Our first journey was an hour from Zurich to Bern by train. We got onto the train to Bern but it then stopped after approximately fifteen minutes and we realised we had to disembark. A very helpful train attendant said that we had to make our way to another platform to catch a different train to Bern and we had about seven minutes to spare - after running across the station (with our new 76-year old friend Ruby who was in the same predicament as we were), we made our way onto the other train just as the doors were closing. As there were no seats available, we spent the journey sitting on the steps/floor of the train, having a good giggle with Ruby. We said goodbye to Ruby at Bern and made our way to the train to Frutigen, which was another hour away. This journey was completed successfully and we then boarded a bus at Frutigen to travel to Adelboden, a journey of approximately 30 minutes. When we disembarked the bus at Adelboden, it was great to find Nikki Tucker (Our Chalet Deputy Manager for Operations) waiting for us with the mini bus. After explaining what had happened on the train to Bern she informed us that this was a regular occurrence (we thought we'd got onto the wrong train!) As we were such a small group, we were able to travel to Our Chalet on the mini bus with the rucksacks which made everyone very happy as it had been a long, hot day so far. We were welcomed by the staff at Our Chalet when we arrived and were all shown to our rooms with our kit so that we could unpack.



We had our first evening meal at 6.30pm which was delicious and were given the Our Chalet Tour from 8.00pm until 9.30pm. As everyone was very tired from travelling, the group had an early night.

Sunday 21st August 2016

Everyone was up early and showered ready for breakfast at 8.00am.

There was an opening ceremony before the activities starting which gave everyone a chance to welcome visitors to Our Chalet. We discovered that there was a group of Girl Scouts from Boston who were in the dormitory on the floor above us, with four leaders, and a group of "USA Girl Scouts Overseas" who were from across Europe with their leaders from Italy (they were camping rather than sleeping in the Chalet itself). We were also introduced to Becky who was a lone traveller from Girlguiding Leicester and who very quickly became part of our team. The final introduction was to the all the staff and both the summer and autumn volunteers. During the opening ceremony a member from each Country in attendance, including volunteers, put a flag in the log which is then displayed above the fireplace in the dining room.



The first day was an on-site day which included fire lighting and orienteering in the morning, a barbeque lunch (with a Toblerone to follow) and an afternoon spent on environmental activities and a "Free Me" session with badges. While the girls did the activities in the morning there was a leaders meeting for a couple of hours which went through each part of the programme in good detail which was very useful.

After dinner it was an International evening and each group did a presentation about their group. Our girls did a presentation entitled "Warwickshire" and sang "Give me Sunshine" with their own words. We had taken scones and jam for everyone to share.

Monday 22nd March 2016

After breakfast came our first trek to the Adventure Park. Before each of the treks/days out, the volunteers checked with us that we had all the correct kit before we left the Chalet. It was a good first walk with the weather starting to get quite warm - when we arrived at the Park we were kitted out with harnesses and hard hats. The first activity was climbing which was in a higher section of the Park which took another 20 minutes to walk to. All of the girls took part, some of them achieving very high climbs.

We then made our way back down to the lower part of the park and had lunch. Lunch was followed by zip wires, high wires and abseiling which all the girls had a go out. They were all buzzing by the time we left the Adventure Park for the trek back to Our Chalet.





After dinner we had a Swiss night, where a Swiss gentleman played the traditional Swiss horn and we sang along in German. The girls then played a game called Jeopardy to learn more facts about Switzerland. The evening came to a close with a chocolate fondue accompanied by fruit and biscuits.

Tuesday 23rd August 2016

Today we went on a coach trip which took us to the bottom of a mountain called Niesen (also known as the Swiss Pyramid) which we ascended in a funicular, with a change of trains half way. The view both on the funicular and at the top of the mountain were amazing. Some of the group went on a 20-minute trek further across the mountain while the rest of us took in the sights, had a drink or did a bit of souvenir shopping.



We then descended the mountain in the funicular and got back on the coach to head into Spiez. At Spiez we ate lunch and had a delicious ice cream while waiting for the boat to take us to Oberhofen Castle. The boat journey lasted around 20 minutes and we disembarked just beside the castle.

Everyone then split into smaller groups to wander round the Castle and its grounds which were stunning.

In the evening we went on a twilight hike to a waterfall wearing our new head torches. Some of the group made it all the way and some only part of the way but everyone thoroughly enjoyed the hike.

Wednesday 24th August 2016

This was our “free” day and we had decided we would like to take a look at Bern. Nikki and Byron Tucker also accompanied us on this trip. We travelled to Bern by bus and train and after going to the Bear Park together, we split up and the girls went to McDonalds and had a couple of hours shopping while the leaders had lunch with Nikki and Byron and then slowly meandered back to the meeting place. We travelled back to Our Chalet on the train and bus meeting up on the way with the Boston Girl Scouts and their leaders. After a climb up the hill to the Chalet it was a free evening for everyone to chill.





Thursday 25th August 2016

This day consisted of a hike to the Woodcarvers and abseiling in Choleren Gorge. Our group did the day in reverse - we trekked to the Gorge first, taking in the beautiful views and the girls were then kitted out for the abseiling by the same instructors from the Adventure Park. The girls had a practice on a very small drop and then moved down to the Gorge itself. The leaders went down to the Gorge via some steps in order to take some photos of the girls descending. The abseil consisted of two drops - the first one was onto a ledge, the second one was a much longer drop directly over fast flowing water. One of the volunteers was at the bottom of the drop ready to pull the girls onto the platform to unharness them.



All the girls managed to do both drops.

After the abseiling, we walked to the river for lunch where the other group met us as they'd been to the Woodcarvers first. After lunch we they trekked to the Woodcarvers where we were able to have a drink and cake and spend some money in the Woodcarvers shop.

We then trekked back to Our Chalet but the volunteers decided we should take the easier route back as the weather was so hot, around 30°C. It was a struggle for everyone to make the final ascent to the Chalet in such extreme temperatures but everyone made it.



This was the night that "bed bugs" were found in one of our rooms and so three of the girls had to move and had their clothes either frozen or boiled in the washers! The situation was very well handled by Our Chalet staff.

The evening was a WAGGS session on Stop the Violence.

Friday 26th August 2016

The day began with a coach trip to Interlaken to the Chocolatiers. We were given a demonstration on how to make small chocolate mountain sweets and stiletto shoes out of the chocolate. There was a tasting session where plenty of chocolate was consumed!



Two of our girls were then whisked off to do White Water Rafting while the rest of us were taken on the coach to Trummelback Falls where we had lunch and we then went up inside the mountain on a lift so that we could view the falls.

After coming back down the mountain, we were then taken back to Interlaken where we had some time to shop/sight see before we met back at the coach with the girls who had been rafting ready for the trip back to Our Chalet.

In the evening the girls took part in a wide game organised by the volunteers and had fun running around the Chalet grounds.

Saturday 27th August 2016

This was the day of the big trek to Elsigenalp. There were three groups - the group that took the high road up to the mountain (our girls went in this group under the supervision of Becky from Leicestershire). There were then two groups who took the low road (The Speedy Sisters and the Leisurely Ladies). The groups who took the low road went up to the mountain by gondola where they were eventually joined by the group who had taken the high road. Everyone had the opportunity to swim in the man-made lake and some of the group went to the glacial lake which was nearly empty because of the very hot weather. Becky was the only visitor to Our Chalet who did the hike to the peak with two of the Our Chalet staff. Everyone else chilled on the mountain or swam in the lake until she came down. We all then descended the mountain either by gondola or on foot.



There was a bus at the bottom of the mountain to take everyone back to Our Chalet.

The closing ceremony finished off the night with a campfire lead by the volunteers which was moved inside to the dining room due to the thunder and lightning over the valley.

This was a lovely end to an exhausting day!



Sunday 28th August 2016



A very sad morning as the groups started to depart from Our Chalet with lots of hugs, kisses and tears. We were the last group to leave with Becky who was travelling back to Gatwick on a flight only about forty-five minutes before our flight. We travelled from Adelboden to Frutigen by bus and then took trains to Bern and to Zurich Airport. The bags were checked in and a long awaited pizza was enjoyed by everyone for lunch. It was then through security into the departure lounge where everyone either shopped or sat and waited for the flight.

We said goodbye to Becky as she went through for her flight and then our flight boarded shortly afterwards. The flight left on time and we arrived back in Birmingham on time. There was a slight delay as one of the girls had packed her passport in her main rucksack which had gone into the hold but the staff at Birmingham Airport were brilliant and came through with us to get her rucksack while she waited with one of the leaders at passport control. All the parents were waiting for us in arrivals where there were lots of hugs and kisses before everyone departed. Our reunion evening is planned for Thursday 15th September at Frankie & Benny's in Walsgrave Triangle.