

**Annie Patterson**

**2013 IFYE to Austria**

**Report #2**

Upon entering the second half of my IFYE experience in Austria, I could not believe how quickly time was passing! Having spent a month in Austria I felt like I was getting accustomed to the new country, culture, and language. However, I had spent the first month in only one federal state and I would soon be moving to a new area of the country. Despite Austria's small geographical territory (relative to the United States) there are many different nuances and dialects between regions.

To meet my third host family I left Lower Austria (Niederösterreich) and traveled to the federal state of Upper Austria (Oberösterreich). The Holzinger family operated a dairy farm in the small village of Pöndorf. Dairies were common in this area. The Holzingers milked about 30 cows twice a day. Their cows were Fleckvieh (a more traditional form of the Simmental breed) which is a very common breed in Austria because they are a dual purpose breed, meaning they can be utilized for milk and meat. Since most of the farms are relatively small it benefits the farmers to be able to produce beef and milk from the same herd. I really had a good time learning about their farming operation and getting to participate on the farm, especially since I didn't have much previous experience in dairy. I got to help milk the cows, toured the cheese processing facility their milk was sent to, learned about their computerized information system, and learned some differences in production methods. The Holzingers produced a premium milk called "heumilch" (hay milk), which meant the cattle were fed only hay rather than silage, and for about half the year the cows would also be fed fresh-cut grass twice a day. It was really interesting to get a firsthand look at some of the differences in production agriculture.

Although the Holzingers lived in Upper Austria (Oberösterreich), we were very close to the border of the federal state of Salzburg. This is a very popular area because that was where much of the movie "The Sound of Music" was filmed. In actuality, the movie is not very popular in Austria; some people have never even heard of it. Nevertheless, the scenery was magnificent. It was fun to visit the nearby cities of Salzburg and Linz; we were even able to meet up with another American IFYE in Austria. Klaire is from Montana and was staying with another family nearby. This area is also very popular for its lakes and hiking trails and I was fortunate enough to get to spend time at both. I also had the opportunity to experience some very Austrian traditions at a local celebration which involved a small parade, marching bands, a short church service, and food, drinks, and fellowship in a large tent. It was a traditional festival so most people were dressed in tracht, traditional Austrian clothing. I was even able to find my own dirndl, a traditional dress, to wear for the festival. Staying with this family was interesting as my host sister, Daniela, had actually participated in the IFYE program the previous summer and had stayed in Kansas, so it was neat to get to share experiences with one another.



Holzinger Family: Christine (mom), Daniela (sister), Me, Stefan (brother), Manfred (dad)



Hiking in the Alps: Daniela, Sylvia, Me



Me learning to milk!



Me feeding fresh -cut grass to the cows.



Klaire & I in Linz!



Daniela & I walking in the festival parade!

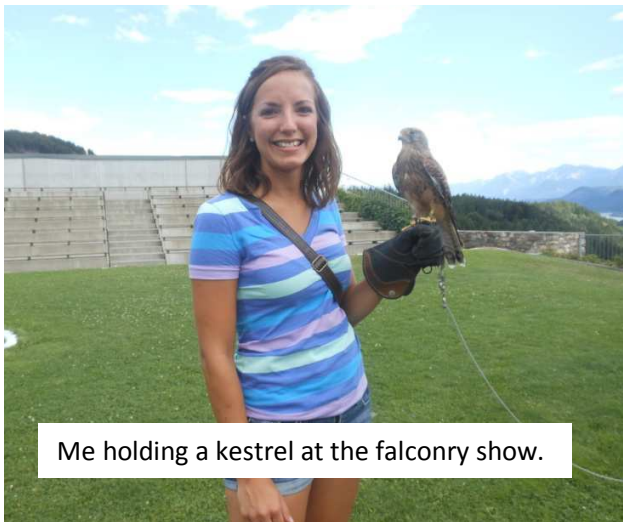
My final host family, the Smoles, lived in Carinthia (Kärnten), the southern-most state in Austria. They lived on the outskirts of the state's capital city of Klagenfurt. The Smoles were not farmers (my host dad worked in telecommunications and my host mom was a biologist), but they were a very active family keeping up with my host siblings Viktoria and Matteo. My time with the Smole family was quite busy as well. I had the opportunity to see several sights, like the local viewing tower, a refuge for Japanese monkeys, a falconry show, castle ruins, a beautiful cave with fantastic stalactites and stalagmites, the "old city" of Klagenfurt, and the opening day of the European Beach Volleyball Championship tournament. Carinthia is also famous for its beautiful lakes and wonderful mountain scenery. Some of my favorite activities while in Austria were getting to swim in the pristine mountain lakes and hiking in the Alps.

Although the Smoles did not live on a farm, they did have a large garden and grew many of their own fruits, herbs, and vegetables. If we were not out seeing local attractions we would often be harvesting or processing the produce from the garden. And although it was in passing, I saw Austrian agriculture also experiences its ups and downs. Austria's climate is generally mild summers with adequate rainfall. This summer was atypical for Carinthia with record-breaking temperatures and a drought that was quite severe for the area. It reminded me that despite a variety of differences we often have experiences that we can relate to one another. And despite Austria's general beauty, there is nowhere that is without its trials and tribulations.

Unfortunately, due to family matters, I was only able to stay one week with the Smole family and had to cut my exchange short by a week. Despite this regrettable change of plans, the Smoles squeezed in time to make a flying trip to Italy to surprise me. It had been a goal of mine to at least cross the border, but we made the 3 hour trip to spend the day in Venice before I had to leave for home. The time I spent with the Smoles was jam-packed, but it was a fantastic chance to see more of Austria's landscape and culture.



Smole Family: Karina (mom), Matteo (brother), Viktoria (sister), Me, Helmut (dad)



Me holding a kestrel at the falconry show.





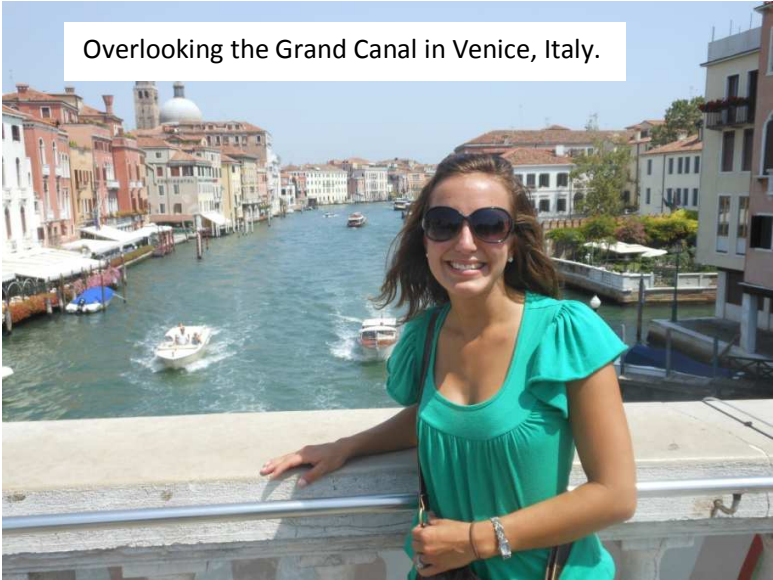
A drought-ridden corn field in early August.



Me pitting plums from the garden.



Me getting a drink from a mountain waterfall.



Overlooking the Grand Canal in Venice, Italy.

I am so grateful for the wonderful experience I had this summer! Austria is an absolutely beautiful place and I cannot thank my host families the Kührers, the Königs, the Holzingers, and the Smoles enough for taking me in this summer and providing this Kansas girl with such wonderful opportunities! I made so many fantastic friends and memories this summer! Thank you to the Kansas 4-H organization, the National IFYE Foundation, Austria's Landjugend program, my hometown sponsors, and my host families for making this exchange possible! I learned tremendous amount this summer about culture, language (even though my German still awful), and global agriculture. Most importantly I gained new perspective.

So for now, so long Austria! I had an amazing time and I hope to come visit you again! Auf Wiedersehen!

