



## Kalgi

### From Brampton to Austria

*“Great, I'm not in Slovenia illegally.”*

Hello all.....I know it's been about four months but the magical season gets quite busy!!!! Hope you all are doing well and everything is going great as usual. It's been really hectic around here and I have so much to tell.

First and foremost, I've seen three different places. I've seen Salzburg, Slovenia (accidently and is next story), Trieste (Italy). All three places were very beautiful in their own way. I saw Salzburg with the other exchange students and that was a very interesting weekend. Before I start my story I have to explain something's so everyone can follow. Austria has two districts (1910 & 1920) in the whole country and one of the districts (District 1910) is shared with another country; Croatia. For the Salzburg weekend, everyone who is in Croatia for their exchange came to meet us in Salzburg. There were 8 Americans, 1 Brazilian, and 1 German from Germany. All of them were extremely nice and I especially fell in love with the Rotarian who takes care of them. Her name is Gordana and she speaks 7-8 different languages! I want to be able to do that too! Anyways back to the story. I mingle with everyone, I don't just stay with one group so I decided to hang with the Croatians and some other Austrian exchange students. I ate the biggest chocolate pretzel filled with lime green marzipan...OH MY GOODNESS IT WAS SOOOOO DELICIOUS!!!! The Christmas Markets are also extremely amazing here as well. Everything is so beautiful. And Salzburg was FILLED with snow. I stepped wrong and my leg went so deep into the snow, PASSED MY KNEES!!!! And the Austrians think we live in igloos...HA!

All in all it was a memorable weekend and now it was time to go home. Salzburg is three hours away from my city, Klagenfurt and it's about eight hours away from Zagreb Croatia. My city is located in the southern most part of Austria and Croatia is below Slovenia and Slovenia is located 10 minutes away from Klagenfurt. So naturally, for the Croatians to get home, they would have to take the same train as the other

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exchange students who live around me and I. Gordana had seen my violin and I offered to play it for her. We didn't have time for me to play it in the hotel so she came up with the idea of me playing it in the train...where everyone can hear me...Oh no. So I left my jacket, my purse and my bag with the other exchange student and I took my violin down four carriages to where the Croatians were. Now, if you all have seen Harry Potter, the compartments are exactly like that, except more modern and everyone leaves their doors open for fresh air. You can sit about six people to a compartment and when there isn't enough space in the whole entire carriage, there are seats that fold down in the hallway for people to sit on. I sat on that, gave my violin case to one of the students to hold and....yes...I played my violin in the hallway with everyone to hear. I played "Ave Maria" since that's a favourite of the Austrians and because it was before Christmas I thought it would suit best. So I played and Gordana was so happy and she said "play more please" so I played a song from a movie that I played with my orchestra back home and then I played an Indian song from the movie Mohabbatein. People would walk by as I was playing and even the conductor waited and listened to Ave Maria and clapped at the end. The compartment next to us was full of Croatian men and I got very creepy applause and looks from them and Gordana noticed and was about to say something to them and I said "Umm, it's okay, I'll just fit myself into this compartment." So I put my violin away and put it on a holding rack for bags and then I, being the seventh person in the six person compartment, squeezed myself in between Gordana and an American girl named Dorothy. We sat there for about 2 and a half hours, talking and joking around until the train stopped for a very long time. It stopped for what felt like 30 minutes but I still sat with the Croatians and thought 'I can leave in about 20 minutes.'

So now it's 20 minutes later and my train is supposed to stop in Klagenfurt in 15 minutes and I wanted to go get my stuff and be ready to hop off the train right away. I said my goodbyes to everyone and I hope to see them again sometime soon. I picked up my violin and headed on back to the front of the train. I turn the little corner towards the door and there I see....nothing. THERE WAS NO TRAIN TO WALK BACK TO! I started panicking and I thought as slowly as possible....okay, go back to the Croatians. So I do. Gordana was so helpful, she went to get the conductor while I tried calling people as fast as I could before the 'out of country' rates apply; luckily the only thing I had was my cell phone. By this point, tears were running out of my eyes as I felt guilty for my parents waiting for me at the train station and I wouldn't be coming out of that train. The conductor only knew how to speak German and that was okay. By this point I knew quite a bit of German. He told me normally there isn't a train that goes back until the next morning but, today and only today in the week one goes an hour later and he said he would take me back home free of charge. He was a really nice gentleman and after I said bye to the Croatians and got off the next stop with him, he just bought me chocolate and an energy drink. I couldn't recognize any of the writing on the signs or the language until I made the connection and said to myself 'Great, I'm not in Slovenia illegally.' He brought me into a room where another conductor was watching t.v. and he also sat with me. I ate and drank the little I was so thankful for and I spoke to them both about

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Canada and India. They both told me I was beautiful and my skin tone was really nice (Austrians are really open and aren't used to seeing darker skinned people in smaller cities) and I thanked them both for their generous compliments. The conductor helping me was also the same conductor who heard me playing the violin and asked me to perform for him and his wife and family at his house on Christmas, I said NO PROBLEM! Just get me home please!

The hour passed and I got the train that I wanted back home. I saw my Dad and my Sister waiting for me and I got off the train and hugged my Dad with tears strolling down my face again. My sister laughed and so did my Dad but, I didn't care. My Dad asked me through his teeth 'Is it because you don't like us so much, that you are trying to escape us?' I said 'Nooohohohoho' through my sobs. I was just so happy that I got back. They told me that all my bags and everything is safe at home and that my mother was making me something substantial to eat because they knew I hadn't eaten anything since breakfast and it was now pushing nine o'clock. I get home and I see my mother and she hugged me and started crying and I started crying and my Dad just laughed harder. It was pretty funny I have to admit looking back at it, but at the time, it wasn't. I'm glad I didn't lose anything and I'm grateful for what I have here. Till this day, my Dad and my Brother tease me about the whole trip.

Other than that! I'm learning German in a university and everyone thinks I'm twenty or older HA! I got placed in what I thought was the second best class out of five classes but it turns out I'm in the best class out of four classes! I can't believe that I did so well in the placement tests and I'm really proud of my progress with the language. I've met so many new people and have so many new connections to new countries that I haven't connected with before. Places like Bosnia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Chile, Slovakia, Portugal and so much more! I'm excited to learn and I can't wait to learn more! I also have a test tomorrow so wish me luck!

I hope everyone is well! I would love to hear from you all! And again, thanks so much for supporting my exchange year!

Liebe

*Kalzi*

Austria