

GGNWE WAGGGS/Europe 2024

Every year, Girlguiding North West England offers Rangers and Young Leaders the opportunity to be selected for 3 different international trips. In 2024, these options consisted of Cambodia, USA, and Europe. I was selected for the Europe trip, which I have previously written a blog about here:

<https://www.girlguidingnwe.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Blog-post-8-Why-you-should-go-on-an-international.pdf>.

After 19 months of selection events, briefing weekends, meet-ups, fundraising, and Zoom calls, July 2024 was finally here and we were ready to set off on our adventure. This blog features everything from trip highlights to things that didn't go quite well...

GBLeaving for London:



On the 26th July, I set off from my local train station to Preston, where I met half of the participants and leaders. I had a big backpack full of clothes and essentials, a smaller backpack with

snacks and badge swaps, and a close body bag with my phone, passport, money, and Anana the Travelling Pineapple (Sefton County's international mascot). Once we had all arrived at Preston train station, we said goodbye to our families and our region, then boarded the train to Crewe. Once at Crewe, we met up with the other half of the trip participants and took a big group photo. We were now all together and ready to see where the next two weeks would take us!

When we got on the train, we heard an announcement stating that the aircon did not work in the carriage our seats were reserved in. As it was already quite hot, I helped one of our leaders find and claim a bunch of unreserved seats in a cooler carriage. Other than that, the journey to London went smoothly and we arrived at London Euston station in good time. Once at the station, we got off the train and made our way to the underground. Before beginning the trip, we had been assigned travel groups which consisted of 1 leader and 4 young members.

It made it easier for the leaders to keep track of us whilst completing shorter journeys on trains. We split into these groups for the underground and spread out across the train. We all still had our massive backpacks on and I don't think the public would have space to breathe if all 15 of us got in one carriage! The underground took us across to Hampstead, the location of Pax Lodge. This was our first World Centre visit for the trip, as well as our first hostel.



Even though it's in the UK, this was my first time visiting Pax Lodge. We arrived in the evening and left early the next morning, so we valued every second. After settling into our rooms (named after different countries), doing a pinning ceremony to earn our Pax Lodge pins, and then going out to eat at a local Pizza Express, we spent the rest of the evening exploring the centre. I, personally, spent a long time diving into the swaps bucket and exploring what other Girl Guides and Girl Scouts had left. I took a few pins and badges, swapping these with badges of my own. Myself and a few others also decided to take on the Pax Lodge challenge badge, which taught us the history of the World Centre and WAGGGS, interesting facts about London, and more. We got to find out what 'Be Prepared!' was in other languages, learn about different trefoils and neckers from around the world, and even see Olave Baden-Powell's very own guide badges! We claimed our challenge badges right before setting off on our next train journey the following day. It was time to leave London and the UK behind, taking on the continent and experiencing what was to come...

NLAccomplishing Amsterdam:



To get to the Netherlands, we used the Eurostar, an international high-speed rail service across Western Europe. We had to go through security, then sit in the station playing card games until it was time to board the train. Whilst we waited, we met some UK Scouts who were off camping in Rotterdam! The Eurostar took us under the English Channel, then through France and Belgium, before arriving in the Netherlands and dropping us off in the capital city, Amsterdam. This is where we began to figure out the tram system, using it to reach our accommodation.



An evening in Amsterdam

Amsterdam was beautiful. The city was flat and decorated with flowers. The temperature was hotter than the UK, but not unbearable. We were also lucky enough to visit during Pride, so there were so many colours and rainbows everywhere! The first evening in Amsterdam involved exploring a local park next to the hostel, something calm to end our first day of travel. We got to see some of the pride events taking place, as well as just enjoy the scenery. For our evening meal, we ate vegetarian burgers at the hostel. They were delicious! The hostel itself was lovely, with bright decorations, lots of plants, and an eco-friendly vibe.



Our first morning in Amsterdam consisted of exploration and knowledge! We began with a walking tour, hosted by a tour guide. He took us around the city and told us stories and history.

We learnt how the three Xs on the flag of Amsterdam represented the city's three plagues: fire, water, and illness. We also learnt the history behind the chocolate brand, 'Tony's Chocoloney', and how they want to end exploitation in the cocoa industry. As part of the tour, we got to taste-test some chocolate! Bikes are a popular mode of transport for people living in Amsterdam. There are fewer cars and separate roads and traffic lights for bikes to use, Our tour guide took us to see a 'bike car park', located underneath the canals. There were rows and rows of bikes, stacked up on top of each other, waiting for their owners to return. Even though we weren't technically too far from the UK, the differences between capital cities were clear as day. After the tour, we found a pancake place to eat lunch, trying different savoury and sweet pancakes on the menu.



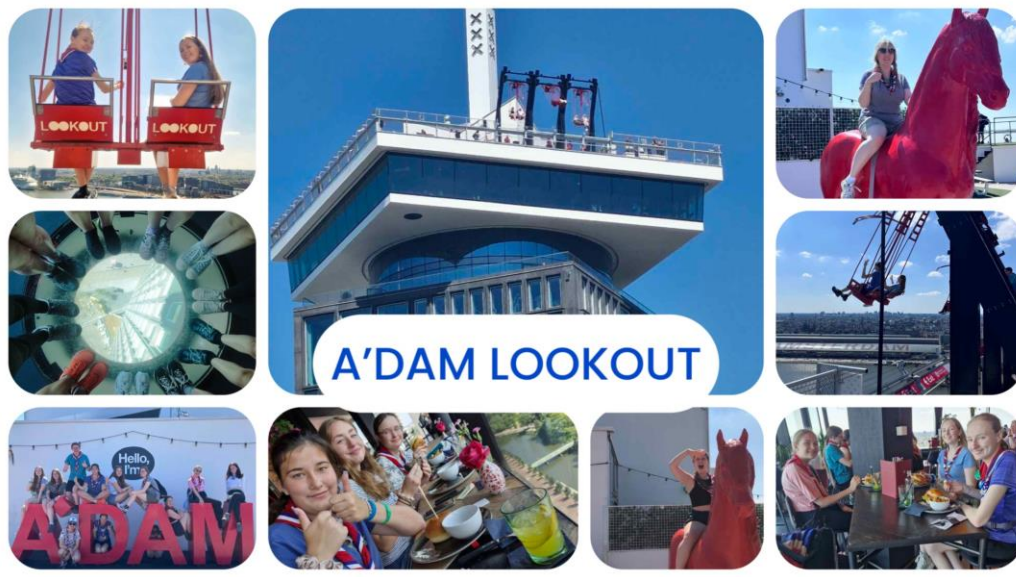
Pizza and Ice Cream Boat Tour

That afternoon, we visited Anne Frank’s House, a museum located where Anne Frank and her family had to go into hiding from the Nazis. As part of this experience, we listened to audio files which told her story and read extracts from her diaries. We then got to walk around the actual rooms she had hidden in for two years before being discovered and moved to a concentration camp. *Out of respect, no photos were taken.* Afterwards, we went back to the hostel for a rest and then over to the canals for a pizza and ice cream boat tour.



Shopping

The second day in Amsterdam was a little more relaxed. We began by heading to the shops, splitting off into little groups to explore. One favourite shop among the group was the duck shop. It sold rubber ducks in hundreds of designs. I brought myself one shaped like a Rockhopper penguin! Another favourite was the stroopwafel bakery on the corner. Stroopwafels are a well-known Dutch treat, consisting of a thin cookie made from two layers of dough held together by syrup. Ours were then half-decorated with chocolate and covered in another topping (like fudge chunks, smarties, and caramel balls).



After our shopping trip, we jumped onto a free boat across the river and headed over to the A'DAM LOOKOUT. The lookout is a massive tower which, as the name suggests, provides a 360 view for visitors to look out over Amsterdam. As well as being a great spot to get a view of the city and surrounding areas, there was also lots to do and interact with! When we first entered, we got to have a mini dance party before entering the lift and witnessing an awesome light show on the way up. Once at the

top (which only took 20 seconds), we queued up for the swings.

Positioned over the edge of the tower, the swings dangled us over the city below as we swung back and forth. The ride didn't last that long, but it was worth it! Once we had all had a turn, we went for a meal inside, then came back out onto the roof to take advantage of the photo opportunities.

We all had a brilliant time in Amsterdam! However, throughout the second day, there was one thing constantly on everybody's minds... *The night train we were taking later that evening.*

Nightmares on the NightJet:

Originally, I wasn't going to have travel as an entire section of the blog, but the night train was an experience I will talk about forever...

'Nightjet' is a brand name given by the Austrian Federal Railways for its overnight train services. They pick passengers up in the evening, providing them with a room and beds to stay the night, then drop them off at their desired destination. We were boarding the train in Amsterdam and hoping to take it to Munich. With this being the first night train any of us had taken, excitement levels were high! One of our leaders described it as if we were going to explode! It was a wonderful break from the hostels we would be staying in for the majority of the trip, as well as a unique experience overall. It also would provide us with an extra day to explore Munich.

We arrived at the station to board the night train in good time.

As we walked in, we spotted a large group of UK guiding members and went over to say hello! They were Guides from Newcastle-Under-Lyme Division. We stopped and chatted with them for a bit before parting ways and continuing our adventures. When we made it to the platform for our train, we found out it was delayed by 35 minutes. In Girlguiding fashion, we made a big pile of bags, sat down in a circle, and began to entertain ourselves with classic games like *21*, *Chinese Whispers*, and *Down in the Jungle*. Once the train finally arrived, we jumped up, put our bags on, and went on a long walk down the lengthy platform. We didn't realise it at the time but were *very lucky* to be in the first carriage, right next to the engine and the train's front.



Nobody could contain the excitement any longer once we got on the train! We were looking around at everything we could! We split into two groups and entered our two bedrooms. Each room contained a top bunk and a sofa (which apparently folded into

two separate beds) on either side of the room, as well as a ladder to access higher bunks and a tiny table with some free water bottles. It was a tight squish with six of us, including giant bags, but we made it work. A woman came round and took our breakfast orders from us, then we got out some food, packed our bags into the storage areas, and settled into the train journey.



It was at this time that we had a brilliant idea: *Let's get all twelve of us into a six-person room.* Another girl and I had to climb onto the top bunks as that was the only way we could all fit, and we took a picture from the roof (which ended up being the most iconic and, in my opinion, important picture from the trip) then all told life stories and bonded a bit. The train had visited a few other stations on its journey, but had stopped at one station in particular. This was when we heard the announcement stating that the train's engine had broken down... They turned off all the power to the train and asked us to be patient whilst they fixed it. Soon after, it began to get hot... This is when we realised we may have messed up with putting all twelve of us in one carriage,

especially now the air conditioning wasn't powered on.

Thankfully, the team running the train announced again that due to the rising temperatures we were allowed to all stand on the platform and get fresh air whilst the engine was still being looked at. We were on the platform for around half an hour, using the opportunity to take some photos, before a massive horn blew stating we could re-enter the train and continue the journey. The air-conditioning was back on, and we were set to
make it to Munich!

Of course, not learning from last time, we all decided to get back into the same carriage. This is when, less than ten minutes after the previous breakdown, the train suddenly halted. I, being on the top bunk again, hadn't put the safety bar back up. I had to grab hold of whatever I could quickly before I was flung off and landed on around seven of the girls below me! The leaders checked we were okay as the train came to a stop on a bridge. We awaited the announcements, then attempted to understand Dutch whilst waiting for the English translation. This time, we were informed there was an issue with the wiring overhead of the train and we would be evacuated 'some point this evening'. The power was off, the heat rising once again, and we had no
idea what was going to happen...



The next three hours were the strangest hours of my life. We had nothing we could do but sit. Thankfully, we all had the common sense to abandon the idea of sitting in one room, instead spreading ourselves out along our two rooms and the slim corridor. Staff brought us fresh, cold water to help with the rising heat, but the supplies soon ran out. They had to call for emergency supplies, which we watched them bring onto the train from the windows. Speaking of the windows, there wasn't a single one on our carriage which could be opened. There was no platform or safe space to leave either, so we received no relief from the sweltering heat. The toilets stopped working, which not only smelt awful but clashed with the solution we had to the heat, *drinking lots of water*. My phone was almost dead and the lack of power meant I couldn't charge it, so I had no way of distracting myself from the situation. I wasn't really aware of how long we had been on the train either. Time didn't seem like a concept to me anymore. The sun was setting fast out the window and it was getting darker and darker on board...



Then we saw them. The emergency services. They were building lights and ladders, creating a passageway for us to evacuate. This is where being the very first rooms in the very first carriage became lucky! We gathered all our things, a tortuous task in the heat, and got ready to be the first to escape. Despite everything, we were filled with excitement as we climbed down one by one with our massive backpacks and walked into the darkness. We had to cross the train tracks, guided by emergency services, who we constantly greeted and thanked along the way. We could see lines and lines of coaches in the distance and hear the sounds of crickets echoing into the darkness. Our path was blinded by police cars, guiding us down slopes. We were in the middle of nowhere in the Netherlands, and we had no idea where we were or where we were going. It was a proper adventure!

We loaded up our bags into the first coach and claimed all the seats at the back. After around an hour, the coach set off. It then drove for another hour until it dropped us off at a random

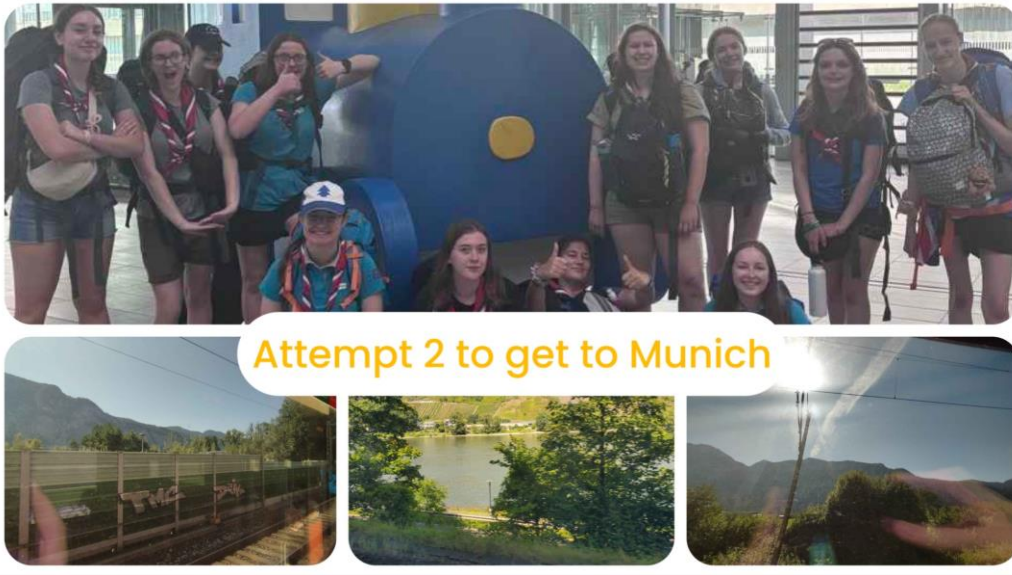
location. We were informed that we were back at the train station where the coach first broke down. Scrambling off the coach, we gathered our things and headed with everybody else to ask for help. When we made it to the people who were providing rooms for people to stay, they informed us our group was too big for their assistance. Luckily, we overheard that the hotel nearby had enough empty rooms, and the leaders were fast to book us in. It took yet another hour for us to actually receive the keycards for the rooms, and by now it was 2am. We split into 2s and headed up to gain 4/5 hours of sleep, before waking early to see if the leaders had created a new plan.



Lying in that bed was when things kind of hit me... Our room for two was the size of our room of six in the previous hostel. There was no breathing from people around me, no clutter from dumped backpacks all over the floor, it was just sleep-deprived me and Anana the Travelling Pineapple... *and the girl I was sharing with who quite quickly went to sleep, seemingly unfazed by the whole ordeal.* When we woke up and went to breakfast, we were greeted by a fancy buffet! There were toast, cereal, and

hot drinks machines. There was lots of fruit and cakes and pancakes. We wasted no time tucking in and enjoying the feast. It was very clear we were out of place, however. Everybody else was in nice clothing, enjoying a peaceful breakfast, and then we were a random group of teenagers in the corner with red neckers and baggy eyes. After breakfast, we grabbed our bags, met the leaders in the lobby, and prepared for the new plan to get us to Munich.

DEManaging Munich:



The leaders had booked us two new trains to get to Munich. They were long journeys, taking up the entire day (which was to be expected, as we had barely travelled from Amsterdam). This is when we discovered another blessing the night train had provided us, the beautiful views we'd otherwise missed out on!



Once we made it to Munich, we went to a nearby Pizza Hut for some food (where Anana had a bit of a traumatic experience seeing 'ananas' on the menu). Then, it was time to turn in for a good night's rest...

I decided to search for the night train incident online that night. Just out of curiosity, to see if there were any news articles. Sure enough, there were. But I was quite shocked by what I read. It was a short article, but it stated **'The evacuation went smoothly, and everyone was off the broken train by around 10:00 p.m'**. We were the very first people off the train, and we didn't get off until 11pm! It was quite scary to think about how inaccurate news can be when you don't see the full story...



The next (and only day) in Munich went slowly. We began by eating breakfast at the hostel (which was less glamorous than the previous day) and then heading up the tower at the New Town Hall to get a good view of the city. After that, we sat for a while inside the hall to recover from the heat. At the time we were visiting, Munich was in the middle of a roasting heatwave, causing us to need to stop for breaks constantly. After a quick cool down, we jumped on a sightseeing bus and rode it to German Lidl. Here, we gathered some lunch and snacks, then returned to the bus and travelled to the English Garden, Munich's largest park. We had our picnic lunch here, consisting of sandwiches, crisps, and grapes. We also played our favourite game, *'Mafid'*. It's a roleplay murder-mystery game, where everybody in the group lives in a pretend village. When night falls, two members of the village take on the role of being a secret Mafia who eliminate others. In the morning, everybody votes as to who they think the mafia are. Of course, we got creative and changed the village to the night train, using our experience as ideas for new ways people were eliminated.



After lunch, we began the small trek through the park in the melting temperatures. On the way, we stopped twice. One time was to get ice cream and the other time was to look at the river.

The extreme heat had encouraged people to ignore the 'no swimming signs' and instead leap into the waters. It was awesome to see people flying down the stream! Along certain patches of the river, there were also professional surfers. Unlike swimming, signs nearby actually encouraged surfing for those with professional experience. After marvelling at the sights, we figured out Munich's tram system and made our way back to the hostel for a rest. We finished the day with a mini shopping trip and German McDonalds, then it was time to rest before hopping on trains to Venice early the next morning.

πVenturing into Venice:

Our first train to Venice consisted of seats in little rooms of six, giving us all night train flashbacks. Other than that, the journey went smoothly. To get to Italy from Germany, we passed through Austria, adding another country to our growing list.

Upon arrival into the city, we saw big electronic billboards with heatwave warnings displayed on them. It was going to be unbearably hot yet again... After unpacking our things at the hostel, we went out to eat at a local restaurant. The majority of evening meals we had during the trip so far featured pizza, but it was kind of refreshing to eat it in a country heavily known for it! A lot of us also tried the classic Italian pasta dishes as well.

Throughout that evening, I had been in contact with a Girlguiding member from London and South East England region. They were currently taking part in 'Explore Europe 2024', a trip run by Girlguiding LaSER which involves two groups of Rangers/Young Leaders travelling around Europe and doing a similar-style trip to us. I had been in contact with a member from the 'Train Tracks and Backpacks' group and had found out previously that they were in Venice at the same time as us. I also discovered that evening that they were heading towards our direction! After our meal, we headed over to the train station entrance to meet up with them.



Whilst waiting for them to arrive, we got to witness the beginning of a thunderstorm. The skies were pretty shades of purple, and the bolts struck out in several directions. It was awesome to see, and the excitement only grew when TT&BPs arrived! We spent the next hour playing games and singing songs. They taught us a song called *'Edelweiss'*, which took us a little while to figure out the hand movements. We also played *'Down in the Jungle'* again, as well as *'Splat'*. Turns out, we weren't the best at games and were unfortunately beaten both times by TT&BPs. After this, we swapped a couple of badges and got a massive group photo before parting ways and wishing our LaSER sisters well on their travels. Everybody returned to the hostel excitedly, it was a brilliant meetup!



The next day in Venice was another slow one due to the heat. We got a Vaporetto (water taxi) to help us travel further into the city, then explored for a while. We looked around glass shops, saw famous bridges and important buildings, and kept our eyes out for patches at souvenir stands. We had lunch at a small cafe, then made our way over to a department store. After

looking around for a while, we went up to the roof of the building and saw a great view of Venice! Afterwards, we began to walk back to the hostel, stopping for a much-needed ice cream on the way. That evening, we had another classic Italian meal of pizza and pasta, gave our waiter a trip badge, and then packed our things and prepared for the next long day of travel.

CH Ambling around Aldeboden:

To get to our next destination, we had to take five different trains. These took us across Italy, so, whilst it was mainly train stations, we got to see quite a bit! At one station, we all squished into a lift with our bags to try and fit. At another, the train was crammed full and we barely made it on, then couldn't get a seat and had to stand in the heat with our bags. We had also missed one of our connections due to one train being late, so the leaders had to change our route mid-travel. Travel days were chaotic, but it was all worth it to see those beautiful Swiss mountains out the window! The train even took us close to Kandersteg International Scout Centre, providing us with a view of hundreds of international Scouts dragging their camping gear around the site.

Instead of a hostel, we stayed in a chalet. The building had three floors, split into four apartments (three of which we occupied). The bottom floor was the biggest, becoming our main room for the duration of our stay. The leaders moved into one of the rooms on the middle floor, whilst I and four others stayed at the very top. We had two bedrooms, a shower room, a bathroom, a

living room and a kitchen area. Two girls stayed in one bedroom, two took over the sofa bed in the living room, and I got to have my very own room! It was nice to have a private space away from others after a week, but I also found it quite lonely at times... Still, it was great for all of us to finally have a private space just to ourselves, where we could all relax and spend time together in the evenings.



We spent two full days in Switzerland. The first day began with a long trek up the mountain to Our Chalet, the oldest WAGGGS World Centre. We had a picnic and then took part in a pinning ceremony, earning Our Chalet pins. At the end of the pinning ceremony, I completed my Leader promise and another girl was awarded her Young Leader qualification. It was truly a special occasion! We then continued our visit with a talk about the centre, getting to see different rooms and pieces of history. We listened to a talk, then took a pin and pinned where we came from on a big map. We also took turns to pin both a trip badge and our own personal county badges onto a board. I was very surprised to see a Division Standard Badge from my Division

pinned to the edge! After spending some time marvelling at all the badges, we continued with a tour.

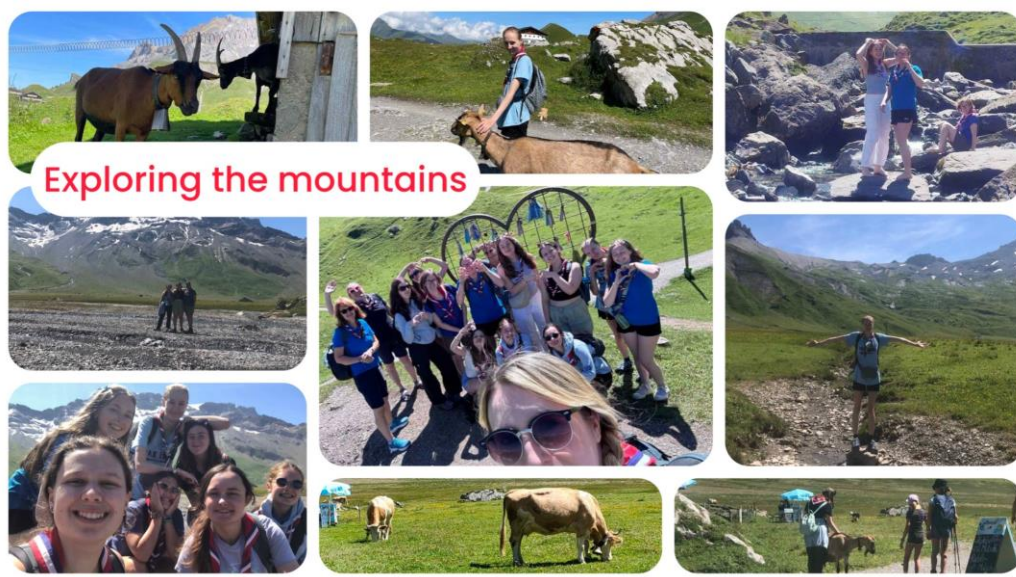


At Our Chalet, it feels like every atom of the area has an important meaning behind it. For example, the door handles on some of the doors are shaped like fish, because Baden-Powell's star sign is Pisces. These door handles also led to the swaps table, with piles and piles of badges and pins from across the world for us to discover and swap with our own badges. I, once again, spend a fair bit of time digging through these boxes, obsessed with everything I could find! I had a mini hyperfixation on Girl Scout *'Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere'* at the time, so seeing actual SWAPS made by real Girl Scouts was awesome to me! Around this time, we met some UK Girlguiding members from Ulster region, swapping badges with them as well. And just before leaving, we took the opportunity to take some photos.



Engstligen Falls

Our second day began with a cable car journey up the mountain to see Switzerland's second-largest waterfall! Known as Engstligen Falls, it has been under preservation since 1948 and falls into the Engstligen River. The waterfall itself is created from snow melting on the mountaintops, and the water travels downwards around 600 meters. At the top of the mountain, there is a viewing platform for the waterfall (which we took full advantage of) and a large area of land to walk around. We ate lunch here, then separated into little groups to explore.



Exploring the mountains

The area was beautiful! We could explore anywhere we wanted up there, and it felt so free! We could jump about the rocks, climb up hills, and see tons of wildlife and nature. I enjoyed standing in the streams, as it was interesting to me how some of the water was warm, but other streams were ice cold. The main highlight for everybody, however, was the animals. There were fluffy cows, goats, chickens, and rabbits all just wandering the land. The best part? We could interact with them! The animals were very gentle, approaching us themselves and posing nicely for our photos. There was also a clatter of cowbells everywhere we went. I could have stayed up there for hours!

After making our way down in a cable car again, we went back into the town centre and split into smaller groups again to go on a shopping spree for a few hours. We went into supermarkets to buy Swiss chocolate (the best-tasting chocolate I've ever had) then went around souvenir shops to grow our patch collection for our blankets. My group ended the spree in a local cafe before returning to the bus stop and taking a bus to our accommodation for the evening.

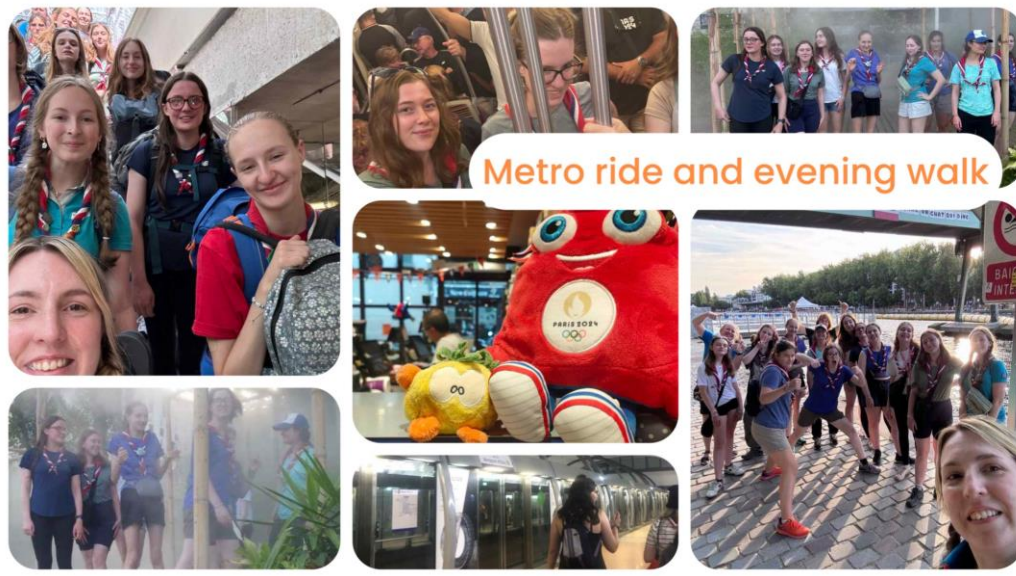


During the evenings, we played card games in the downstairs living room. Our favourite game soon became '*Spoons*'. To play, everybody has four cards, and an extra card is passed from person to person. The aim is to swap this card with one of your own to try and get a matching set of either numbers or kings/queens/jacks/aces. Once you do, you shout 'SPOONS'. In the middle of the table, there are spoons for all but one of the number of players playing. Everybody needs to grab a spoon as fast as they can when the word is called, and the player who doesn't grab one in time is out. The game then continues until there are two people left, then whoever grabs the last spoon wins! To be honest, I feel like we all got a bit too eager at times and I often left the table at night covered in scrapes and bruises after catching my arm constantly on spoons, people, and the table itself. When it began to get late, we would split and go upstairs to our apartment. Here, we held our private 'cheese, cake, and wine' nights. It wasn't real alcohol, just a mixture of juice and sparkling water, but it was still a great laugh! On our last night in Switzerland, we sat on our balcony for our cheese,

cake, and wine night to enjoy the dark, enchanting mountain views surrounding the valley Adelboden resides in.

FRPassing into Paris:

For some people, the trip felt like it had lasted months and months. For others, it didn't even feel like a week. None of us could believe, however, that we were on our way to our last country and our time together was coming to an end. Before we could say goodbye, however, we had a day planned out at the Olympics!



We arrived in sunny Paris in the afternoon, taking three trains and bumping into some French Scouts and Guides along the way. At the Paris train station, we overheard a family behind us point out to their daughter, a Brownie in the UK, that we were Girlguiding members. We paused our journey to give her a trip badge, then boarded the metro to our hostel. I was surprised to see how similar the metro was to the London underground! That evening, we had a meal at the hostel and then went for a walk around the local area, picking up some snacks along the way at

a nearby supermarket. On this walk, we discovered the sweet relief of cooling stations, placed around Paris to combat the heat.



In the morning, we went on a boat tour along the Seine. It's a famous river running through Paris, as well as the location of both the opening ceremony and five swimming events for the 2024 Olympics. The boat took us past the Eiffel Tower, where we got a clear view of the Olympic rings the city had attached for the duration of the games, alongside lots of the other decorations put up around the area.



Around lunchtime, we got off the boat and headed to *Place de la Concorde*, a collection of arenas and stalls where Urban sports (such as skateboarding, BMX, and basketball) were taking place. Our tickets got us through the gates but unfortunately didn't let us into any arenas where there was live sport taking place. We could watch reruns and sports taking place at other locations on the big scenes, however. We got to walk around and take in the atmosphere, with plenty of food and merchandise stalls to visit along the way. I was really impressed with the amount of vegetarian options people could access. I tried some vegan cookie dough ice cream and it was delicious! The temperatures were increasing again whilst on our visit so there were plenty of cooling mist stations we could stand near when it got a bit much. We even got to see The Phryge, the official Paris 2024 Olympic mascot. Near the end of our time, we all lined up for some group pictures with the rings. As we were leaving, we got a good view of the Olympic torch. It was a great afternoon!

In the evening, we went to an outdoor restaurant near the hostel and had our last meal together as a group. We reminisced on our time together, remembered all our favourite moments, and laughed at the jokes we made along the way. Everybody had great memories to share and it was such a sweet moment!



The next morning, we woke up, ate breakfast at the hostel, loaded our bags into two taxis, and made it to Paris Airport. After making it through security and spending some time exploring the shops, we all came together to sign each other's trip uniform whilst waiting to board. After boarding the plane, flying over the English Channel, and arriving at Manchester Airport, we were greeted by our parents and departed in different directions. After two weeks, eight different countries, two world centres, twenty-four trains, and a traumatic experience on a night train, our adventure was over. We had made it home to North West England.

Overview

It's strange to think that this part of my life is over. From not being selected in 2022 and trying again in 2023, then fundraising for months and attending briefing weekends, finally going on the trip, and now awaiting our debrief in October, so much has happened. We had laughs, there were tears shed, and we've experienced everything from high up in the mountains and below sea level. We've seen similarities and differences to Britain, and we've heard so many different languages. Not many people talk about what happens after an international trip.

Nobody really mentions the post-trip depression, or the loneliness after saying goodbye to those you've just spent 14 days straight with. It's hard coming back to regular life and settling back in, still expecting to move entire countries in a day or so. Would I change it for the world, however? Absolutely not!

Some people argue that family is blood-related, others say it's the people you choose. I think family are the people selected alongside you for these trips, and the ones you take on the world with. Whether that's interrailing around Europe, caring for elephants in Cambodia, meeting Girl Scouts in America, previously taking showers with lemurs in Madagascar, or preparing to hug a sloth in Costa Rica. The people beside you create the majority of the experience, and you leave with these people being the most memorable part...



To all the members of Girlguiding North West England WAGGS/Europe 2024, thank you for making these memories with me. You mean more of the world to me than Europe itself could ever provide. All of you are more than just participants, you are the family we became together. Remember to *pay attention*, and always keep *one foot in front of the other*!