

Activity Report: Educational Trip to Poland (March 28–30)

As planned, our trip to Poland began on Friday, March 28. Shortly before 10 a.m., we arrived in Oświęcim at the International Youth Meeting Centre, where we were warmly welcomed by the team. Shortly after our arrival, Elżbieta Pasternak, an educator at the centre, introduced the group to the history and mission of the institution. She also distributed a list of useful Polish phrases, which we practised together.

The centre had arranged a guided tour of Oświęcim led by a volunteer. Starting at 11 a.m., the students explored the town's history, with a particular focus on traces of Jewish life that had been almost completely destroyed under Nazi occupation.

After the tour, students enjoyed some free time and visited the local market on the town's main square, where they discovered various Polish specialties.

Following lunch, the same volunteer accompanied us on foot to the Auschwitz Memorial and Museum. There, our group was divided and guided through the site by two professional guides. This first visit was marked by several deeply moving moments, including exhibitions of prisoners' belongings (hair, shoes, personal items), the Book of Names listing victims of the Shoah, Crematorium I and the gas chamber, as well as Block 11 and its standing cells.

After this three-hour visit, we returned to the Youth Meeting Centre to conclude the first day.

The next morning, we left by bus around 8:30 a.m. to visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. The same guides as the previous day led the tour and helped students grasp the full scale of the atrocities committed there through their detailed explanations.

After another three-hour visit, we returned to the centre in Oświęcim. Following a lunch break, the students took part in a workshop led by Ms. Pasternak. In small groups, they reflected on questions such as: *Which part of the visit impacted you most? How do you feel after visiting the memorial? What questions remain in your mind?*

Each group recorded their thoughts on posters and presented them to the larger group. Ms. Pasternak then added further context and concluded the session with the screening of a survivor's testimony, in which a former prisoner described how she found a way to live on after her traumatic experience in Auschwitz.

In the evening, to prepare for our upcoming visit to Kraków and the Oskar Schindler Factory, the group watched the film *Schindler's List*. This marked the end of our second and final day at the Youth Meeting Centre.

The next morning, we continued our journey to Kraków. After transferring by bus and checking into our hotel, the students took part in a guided tour of the Oskar Schindler Factory Museum. The visit provided deeper insight into the city's history under Nazi occupation and the harsh conditions faced by Jewish citizens during that time.

(Ms. Kathy Henriques)

Auschwitz - Reflektion

Der Ausflug nach Auschwitz war sehr bewegend und traurig. Schon beim Ankommen habe ich gemerkt, dass dieser Ort anders ist. Alles war still, und man hat gespürt, dass hier etwas Schlimmes passiert ist. Die endlosen Reihen von Baracken, die Bilder, die Gaskammern und die persönlichen Gegenstände der Opfer ließen das Leid greifbar werden. Besonders bewegend war der Anblick der Koffer mit Namen darauf, die für ein ausgelöschtes Leben standen und da wurde mir klar, hinter jedem Gegenstand steckt ein Mensch, ein Schicksal und auch viele Kinder, die nie eine Zukunft hatten. Ich war sehr schockiert, als ich alles vor mir sah und was den Menschen in Auschwitz angetan wurde. Es ist schwer zu verstehen, wie Menschen so etwas planen und anderen antun konnten. Ich habe lange darüber nachgedacht, wie wichtig es ist, dass wir uns an diese schreckliche Zeit erinnern. Wir dürfen nicht vergessen, was passiert ist, damit so etwas nie wieder geschieht. Der Besuch war sehr schwer und emotional, aber auch wichtig. Ich habe viel gelernt, nicht nur über die Geschichte, sondern auch darüber, wie wichtig Menschlichkeit, Respekt und Mitgefühl sind. Ich bin sehr dankbar, dass ich diese Erfahrung, die mich tief bewegt hat, machen durfte.

Zoé Almeida 3CG1

ENGLISH VERSION:

The trip to Auschwitz was very moving and sad. From the moment I arrived, I could feel that this place was different. Everything was silent, and it was clear that something terrible had happened here. The endless rows of barracks, the photos, the gas chambers, and the victims' personal belongings made the suffering tangible. What moved me most was seeing the suitcases with names on them, each representing a life that had been wiped out. That's when I realized that behind every item there was a person, a fate, and many children who never had a future. I was deeply shocked when I saw it all in front of me and understood what had been done to people in Auschwitz. It's hard to comprehend how human beings could plan and carry out something like this. I spent a long time thinking about how important it is that we remember this horrific time. We must not forget what happened, so that something like this never happens again. The visit was very difficult and emotional, but also important. I learned a lot—not only about history, but also about how important humanity, respect, and compassion are. I am very grateful that I was able to have this experience, which touched me deeply.

Zoé Almeida 3CG1

Voyage scolaire à Auschwitz

Je peux dire avec certitude que le voyage à Auschwitz m'a beaucoup touché. Voir un endroit construit par des hommes pour en tuer d'autres simplement parce qu'ils étaient différents de la « race » prétendument supérieure m'a profondément choqué. En arrivant à Auschwitz I et en voyant les tonnes de cheveux et de chaussures d'enfants et d'adultes, j'ai pris conscience de l'ampleur et du nombre de personnes qui ont été tuées dans ce camp de concentration. Voir les bâtiments et les panneaux comme « Arbeit macht frei » était très émouvant, car on les connaît par les photos, mais les voir en réalité provoque un sentiment que l'on ne peut pas exprimer avec des mots. Auschwitz-Birkenau, avec son immensité incroyable, nous a aussi marqués : il était impossible pour nous, les élèves, de nous imaginer le massacre immense qui s'était déroulé à cet endroit.

En seulement deux jours, j'ai beaucoup appris – non seulement des faits historiques, mais aussi à quel point j'ai de la chance de vivre à notre époque et de bénéficier des droits humains. Il est très important que les gens continuent à visiter les camps de concentration pour se rappeler ce qui s'est passé il y a 80 ans, afin que cela ne se reproduise jamais.

Claire KLEIN-SCHLENTZ 3CLG1

ENGLISH VERSION

I can say with certainty that the trip to Auschwitz moved me deeply. What shocked me most was seeing a place built by humans to murder other humans simply because they were considered different from the so-called “superior race.” When we arrived at Auschwitz I and saw the tons of hair and the shoes of children and adults, I became aware of the sheer number of people who were killed in this concentration camp. Seeing the buildings and signs like “*Arbeit macht frei*” was very emotional—one knows them from photos, but seeing them in real life creates a feeling that words cannot describe. The same goes for Auschwitz-Birkenau, which was incredibly vast. It was impossible for us students to imagine the immense massacre that took place there.

In just two days, I learned a lot—not only historical facts, but also how fortunate I am to live today and to have human rights. It is very important that people continue to visit concentration camps to remember what happened 80 years ago—and to ensure that it never happens again.

Claire KLEIN-SCHLENTZ 3CLG1

Réflexion personnelle sur le voyage éducatif à Auschwitz et à Cracovie, du 28 mars au 31 mars 2025.

Ce voyage à Auschwitz était pour moi une expérience inoubliable qui représente beaucoup. En effet, nous apprenons à l'école, sur les réseaux sociaux ou de la part de nos grands-parents ce qui s'est passé durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Cependant, je pense que nous ne réalisons pas l'ampleur des faits ainsi que des événements atroces qui y ont eu lieu. Les visites guidées à travers Auschwitz et Birkenau étaient très éprouvantes et les explications nous ont réellement ouvert les yeux. En effet, je suis d'avis que la plupart des personnes n'arrivent pas à s'imaginer ce que les prisonniers ont dû subir et traverser. J'ai également appris beaucoup de nouvelles choses que j'ignorais avant ou dont on ne nous parle pas.

Le fait de marcher sur un tel lieu et de voir les vêtements d'enfants ou encore les cheveux des victimes était impressionnant et donnait froid au dos.

Pour conclure, je peux dire que je suis extrêmement reconnaissante d'avoir eu l'opportunité de visiter l'un des plus grands camps de concentration et cela en compagnie de guides qui ont réussi à nous faire ressentir des fortes émotions à travers leurs explications explicites et élaborées.

Laura Tommasini 3CLG

ENGLISH VERSION

Personal reflection on the educational trip to Auschwitz and Krakow, from March 28 to March 31, 2025.

This trip to Auschwitz was an unforgettable experience for me and one that means a lot. Indeed, we learn at school, on social media, or from our grandparents about what happened during the Second World War. However, I think we don't truly grasp the scale of the events and the atrocities that took place there.

The guided tours through Auschwitz and Birkenau were very moving, and the explanations really opened our eyes. I believe that most people cannot imagine what the prisoners had to endure and go through. I also learned a lot of new things that I didn't know before or that we are not usually told about.

Walking on such a site and seeing children's clothes and even victims' hair was overwhelming and sent chills down my spine.

To conclude, I can say that I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to visit one of the largest concentration camps, and to do so accompanied by guides who managed to make us feel strong emotions through their detailed and vivid explanations.

School Trip to Auschwitz

Without any doubt, the camp of Auschwitz left a massive impression on me. Whether it is the fact that there were thousands of people murdered in a camp where previously a small village had been standing or whether it is the fact that there were people capable of doing such horrible and inhuman actions to other human beings in these camps. The tour guides' explanations left me speechless over and over again when she told us about the brutality and the sadism which occurred in this place. I also admire the brave people who tried to stand up against the Nazis in any possible way because it takes a lot of courage to go against someone bigger and more powerful than you.

Lastly, the most important things which I have learned, were far more important than just historic insights on the life in the camp: I learned to appreciate my life much more because in comparison to the prisoners of Auschwitz, we have everything we need. I also learned how fast radicalism can spread and that it can get dangerous very fast when no one is there to stop it or criticize it openly, which we sadly see more and more often in today's world.

It is very important to never ever forget this massacre and to pass on the knowledge to the younger generations, so history does not repeat itself.

Liza THURMES 3CC1