Erasmus+ 2018, Austria

1st day

So much excitement! Everyone's still a little tired, we had to leave quite early in the morning. Saying bye to your parents for the first time isn't that easy as you think. The airplane flies at 10:00, we arrive in Milan, and have a snack.

Shopping pause and then back to the gates: we have the flight with Austrian Airlines. There the atmosphere suddenly changes, same as we were no more in Italy. We land and we quickly reach our first train. Here the landscapes are gorgeous, so unusual compared to what Shopping pause and then back to the gates: we have the flight with Austrian Airlines.
There the atmosphere suddenly changes, same as we were no more in Italy. We land and we quickly reach our first train. Here the landscapes are gorgeous, so unusual compared to what we're used to see in Italy, it's almost surreal.

Another train, we've got to wait a bit but then we finally arrive, and here is the magic: it's snowing. We find our host families waiting for us, some hellos and hugs and then we go to our temporary houses. I'm so tired I fall asleep straight away.

2nd day

First actual day. Wake up early, take a train and here we are in Judenburg. It's such a lovely city, it's been snowing through the whole night so the atmosphere is just enchanting.
So nervous today! At first we play some name games, just to break the ice and get to know each other a little. We make a circle, and say our name, then we have to pass a ball to someone and say his name out loud. It's so complicated, also because everyone's names are difficult to pronounce because they contain sounds that don't exist, for example, in Italian. After that we play another game, turning around until the music stops and then ask a question to the closest person.

Then we get to work, Marta and I have to present task 3, the PowerPoint about Environmental problems and how we're solving them in Italy.

After that, we're divided into groups. Each of them has to create a mind map summing up our ecological problems and how we recycle. We go to the Startower afterwards, we have a quick lunch with the mayor of Judenburg and then we have some free time. In the evening we go back to school and have the welcome party, there we play games, like Twister and Activity, also card games such as Uno. A day full of activities, a day full of new friends, I mean, a full day in every sense, but such an amazing day!

3rd day

Get up, go to school and again we have some task presentations about food waste and recycling. A lot of statistics, even though we Italians did kind of think out of the box, picturing our way of recycling food at home. Then we have to make a booklet saying what families can do to avoid food loss, what you can do about shopping, and what companies could do to save more food.
Another presentation - task 5 - and then we are offered some fresh milk from MADL, which is a biological farm placed in Seckau.
Eventually we have a workshop in a restaurant called 'Pressler', and then we go and visit an organic farm with alpacas. Now we have some spare time, so we go and visit an organic farm with alpacas. Now we have some spare time, so we go to play Bowling at ‘A1 Bowlingcenter’. In the end we get home and have dinner, we're so tired, it's been a long but absolutely amusing day.

4th day

Some people find taking the train every day for school - or schule, as Austrians call it - a little boring. I love it though.
I mean, waking up every day and seeing such beautiful landscapes, trees, grass, houses which look all the same yet one different than the other, all covered with snow. So many colors, yet so much gray and white. I adore it.

The train goes fast, but not too much, so that I manage to catch every detail of what's outside.

We arrive at school at about 8.00 and have to work on the Earth hour. That is a hour during which you have to turn all your electricity stuff off, to save energy all over the world. So after a short introduction video we start working: we have to do a test to find out our carbon footprint - mine is 59% - then we're all divided into small groups that have to answer some questions and create a flipchart, then another one, after finding some links between the Earth Hour and school subjects and way to promote it.
After we finish school, we go to Winterleiten, to sledge. We have to reach the top of the mount on foot, exhausting but fun. When we reach it we can take something hot to drink, like hot chocolate, then we go sledging all the way down the mountain. It's so frightening! We all go down in couples, so we can share the fun. It's so fast, we have to be careful, watch out dangerous turnings and low our speed otherwise we can really hurt ourselves.
I wish I could do it again. The sun goes down fast and we have something to eat at the bottom of the mountain, then we play a game with the snow to call it a day.
5th day

We change air today, from the fresh and solitary surrounding of Judenburg to the huge city of Graz, a picturesque but really modern location. First of all a guide takes as through the large old-fashioned streets, exploring the two high clock towers, its monuments and palaces, the modern art museum and some splendid Baroque and Renaissance styled churches, designed by Italian architects. I can say we literally jump into the culture and the History of the city.

And what's culture apart from monuments?

Food, of course. So we are taken to a local restaurant to eat some hot food, having to choose from a wide variety of soups, meet, salads, veggies, etc...

Then it's time for some fun! We have to play a game in which we are divided into groups of six people and have to get some selfies all together all around the city, following a list of special places. After a lot of running we get to the meeting point and have some spare time.

Time passes always too fast, and it's already time to go back home.
6th day

Last actual day, still 24 hours to our departure and everyone misses already everyone. Everyone giving away their numbers, Instagram and Snapchat contacts. Everyone so nervous to plan to see each other again. Today we start in groups, watching each the task 2 done by one Country. We answer a couple of questions about the video and then we have a quite hard job: create the model of the ‘perfect environmentalist’. My group wanted to make it most appealing as possible, because, you know, environmentalism has to be appealing, especially to youngsters.
Now we’re moving on to something different, the introduction to a special project: the Earth Hour. It consists of turning off everything which uses electricity for one hour, to save energy and precious resources all over the world. Then everyone does a test to find out their Carbon Footprint. I have to say that we Italians and also the Greeks are quite good, because we tend not to pollute as much as other nations. After that we get on with a project, suggesting how to drop energy waste and how to encourage using more eco-friendly types of energy, such as solar and hydroelectric. A lot of great ideas come out. Then we have to find some tips to promote as much as possible the Earth Hour.

The morning goes quick, so it's time to go swimming at the Thermes. We have lunch there, then we can to the slide and then to hot baths outside. What a view! We spend the whole afternoon there, surrounded by waves and fountains, buzzing and having a few laughs.
It's 5 pm, it's time to get back to school. There the Austrians organize a little show for us, with typical foods and dances, giving us some quick lessons in the end. But it's not over yet.
It's 9 pm now, and, most important, it's Saturday. And what to do on Saturday? Disco!
We go to a small club, where we can dance, shake all the stress off until 1.30 am, and it's time to say goodbye to everyone.

I must confess that I cried a lot, we all did it, so bad.

The day after it's time to get back to our Italy. The last goodbye to everyone and we have to go on the train. We arrive in Lamezia at about 9.30 pm. Sad, but happy to see our families. It was such a great experience, I'll never forget it.

-Vincenzo Mazzitelli
-Mattia Pietropaolo
-Marta Porcelli
-Elena Lorenzo