

My trip to Norway began on July 5. A few days before the departure, I received an email from Helle, the manager of the "Imagine Peace" camp, in which she explained that she couldn't find a host family for me and other people. Therefore, Helle herself made her cabin in Sweden, right on the border with Norway, available for us. At first, I have to admit that I was a little scared of the situation. However, I never imagined that the upcoming week would be so amazing.

Helle, as well as her daughter Marielle and her husband Stefan, is a wonderful person. It was like experiencing two camps in a single exchange since there were so many people in the house. During those days we took walks in the woods, swam at the lake, played volleyball, and visited some neighboring towns.



At that point, everything was going great. I was almost scared of moving to another camp because I felt really good at that moment. I must admit, however, that all my expectations were abundantly exceeded.

The camp where I stayed, along with about thirty students from all over the world, was located in Moss (one hour drive from Oslo). The facility was beautiful and my room had a view of the sea. My roommate was Ilmi from Indonesia. We had already spent some time together at Helle's house, and as we became roommates, we hung out even more.

I chose three particular highlights to include in the report.

1) Visiting Utøya.

It was an emotional day spent in Utøya, the island where on July 22, 2011, a man wearing a police uniform opened fire on the participants of a political campus, killing 69 people and injuring 110. It was the most violent act to occur in Norway since the end of World War II. Walking on the island seemed almost unreal. Silence reigned over everything. I visited the victims' memorial and discussed together with my companions what happened and how to prevent such tragedies.



2) Visiting Oslo.

Once in Norway, a stop in the capital was a must. Over the course of the morning, we walked from the Opera House to the Nobel Peace Center. Visiting the latter was an enriching experience. During the afternoon I visited the City Hall and the Munch Museum. I also bought souvenirs in the various shops.



3) Final show.

During the two weeks leading up to the final show, each participant got to prepare a performance. I decided to play the piano and sing together with a girl I met there, Erika from Finland, and then with Nick from the Netherlands. The songs were Bob Dylan's "Make You Feel My Love" and B.o.B.'s "Airplanes," respectively. There were other Lions invited by Helle who brought desserts prepared by them. It was an emotionally intense day because we were all leaving the following morning.



Going back home is never easy. I can't think of a more effective word than "thank you" to Helle and her family, and Maria Martino, the Norway exchange officer in Italy. My message to young people is to get out of their comfort zone and travel, as well as to get to know people from different countries, and be sociable.

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