



The world Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow & Sochi 11th-23rd October 2017

Elizabeth Does, 23, Sherborne, Douzelage Youth President, Manager at Busy Lizzie's

I was lucky enough to be selected to represent the United Kingdom and the Douzelage at the World festival of Youth and students in Russia; this year's biggest youth event, consisting of 20,000 participants from 185 countries.

Kelly McBride (Edinburgh), and I were selected to attend the opening Parade in Moscow, with about 100 other youth delegates from around the world.

We were collected by volunteers on the 11th of October at the airport and taken to our accommodation in Moscow; a hotel located outside the ministry of foreign affairs.

We spent the next few days on walking and bus tours all around Moscow, visiting the Red Square, The Kremlin, The seven sisters; the Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, Hotels, and Administrative Buildings.



This included being taken on a River Cruise along Moscow River where we enjoyed an incredible Lunch that lasted hours, alongside copious amounts of dancing and entertainment on board, including traditional dancing from various regions.



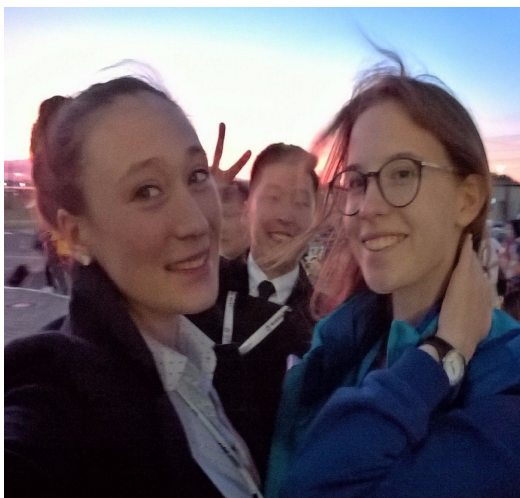


On the 14th we all gathered in Red Square, where we waited, along with the world ambassadors, to lead the parade over an 8km stretch.

The parade was broadcast all over the world, and I was lucky enough to be interviewed; speaking about Sherborne, the Douzelage, and why I was here. After a buffet dinner with the world ambassadors, we headed to the airport to catch our flight to the main festival in Sochi, and overnight charter flight organised by the festival.



After arriving at our accommodation, there were long waits as thousands of participants tried to check in. We were met there by 71 other UK participants, alongside others from around the world. Eventually we got to bed, and rested for the beginning of the festival to start the following day.



On the 15th of October my incredible volunteer Mary, from Moscow knocked on my door; waking me up to register for my passes and uniforms, which were waiting for us at the accreditation area. She familiarised my group and I as to where the food halls, media centre, various events, stages, and other activities were.

In the evening Mary took all of us to the opening Ceremony at the Bolshoy Ice Palace. The capacity was about 10,0000 people. The ceremony was phenomenal, Russia really delivered; there was various performances,

inspirational videos, interactive ways to participate in the 'show', stunts, and even a speech by President Vladimir Putin, topped off with a performance by Onerepublic.

Just in case that wasn't enough, participants left the ceremony to be mesmerized by a fireworks display. Off to bed for tonight, although there was plenty of entertainment and a disco late into the night!



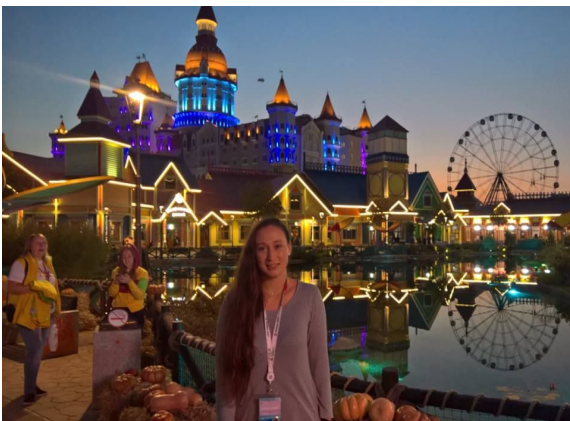
Monday 16th to Tuesday 17th I attended a few seminars; there were hundreds a day to choose from. I dipped in and out of a few. I enjoyed 'Society and World Politics' with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and 'The refugee crisis as a result of the imperialist aggressiveness. The power of solidarity for the constitution of peace' Then 'The struggle against the rise of fascism and against anti communism, racism and xenophobia' This was alongside interactive workshops, visits to the cultural tables and integration and networking with other participants and volunteers.



Wednesday 18th to Friday 20th; there were so many options to choose from; an interesting, thought provoking and fun activity for every participant here. I tried my best to see all the festival had to offer, but I felt like I needed a month, not a week!



There was seminars on the Industry of the Future, Young professionals and Entrepreneurs, Ecology and health, Ted talks, Inspirational talks conferences on Sustainable development, Obesity, health threats for people and the planet, Youths struggle for peace and international solidarity, International journalism in the modern world, Youth Symphony Orchestra auditions Theatre castings, Dance academies, Art and drawing masterclasses, Poetry and Literature Jazz festivals, Film screenings, Art exhibitions, Hockey Masterclasses, Tabletop Games Ice skating, Street basketball zone, Martial arts demonstrations, Mini football tournaments Skateboarding and a Skatepark. Oh and I forgot to mention a THEME PARK!



<--- Sochi Park (Theme Park)

Saturday 21st came along, and the festival organised free busses for participants who wanted to visit the Sochi Mountains, so I jumped at the chance.

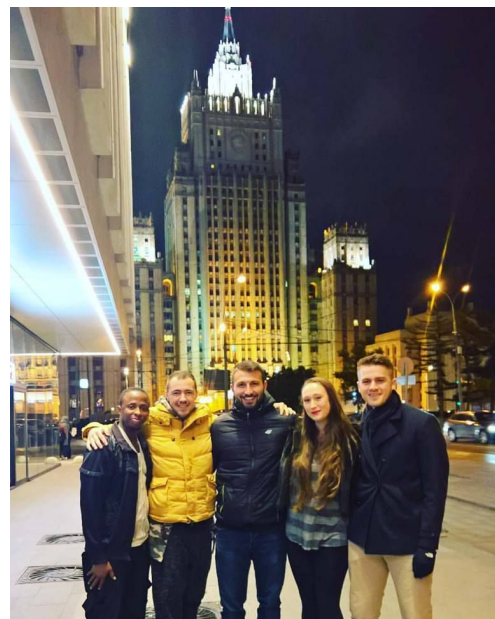


My newly great friends Michelle from Malta, Aditi from India and I decided to ride the gondolas to the top, have a fantastic lunch, with picturesque views, Meditate on the mountain and Paraglide off for good Measure!

What a great way end our last day in Sochi!

Closing Ceremony; apparently as wonderful as the opening ceremony, however the organisers had booked our flights back to Moscow for the evening so we needed to pack!

Sunday 22nd, and we were back in Moscow with participants, and now very good friends, from India, Macedonia, and Malta. We spent the day looking around Moscow, and purchasing gifts, after having rented an apartment together, before we went our separate ways the next morning!



My favourite part:

The people; it was just incredible to be around so many driven, motivated, talented, inspiring young people who, you know are already on their way to making the world a better place.

Over the whole festival 20,000 participants, plus incredible volunteers, speakers, World Ambassadors became one voice. Everyone you met were warm, welcoming, and happy to see you and happy to be there.

There was no discrimination of race, religion, age, disability, or hierarchy; everyone worked together, enjoyed the celebrations together, and were grateful for the experience.

There must be special thanks to the United Nations, World Federation of Democratic Youth, and Russia.



Since returning from the festival, the experience has inspired me, along with many others start up various groups and projects.

Firstly, an environmental project and exchange; showing a lot of interest from delegates and representatives from Sri Lanka, Liberia, Russia, and India.

Secondly, a Young British and Balkan Business group, which I set up shortly after returning, already with 30 members!

It has also given me confidence to set up a local group, Mind The Step Sherborne, an informal group for people with mental health issues in Sherborne and the surrounding area, following the shutdown of Zest Cafe. It will be running from January 2018, on Wednesdays, at Busy Lizzie's.

I am also really looking forward to working with my Vice President, Ryan Portelli from our twinning town Marsaskala, Malta and another DouzYouth Committee member Luka Nunar from Skofja Loka, Slovenia. We are currently in the process of setting up an Anti Bullying campaign, with the final result being a video, to be shared across Europe.

Next week, I'll be heading to Ljubljana, Slovenia to participate in an erasmus funded three day conference 'Raise your voice for tomorrow's Europe' with participants from 17 countries. Before I leave Slovenia, I'll head to a meeting in our partner town Skofja Loka, with their Mayor Miha Jese, and students from the local school.

In February I will be heading to the DouzYouth meeting in Marsaskala, Malta to discuss the Youth program for the Douzelage AGM in Oxelsund, Sweden next year. This will be as well as discussing the refugee and migration crisis program, and Anti Bullying campaign.

I would like to especially like to thank the WFYS2017 Committee, World Federation of Democratic Youth, Russia, and the Volunteers for making it all happen. Especially including all my expenses, accommodation and domestic flights. Thank you also to the Douzelage for funding my return tickets to Moscow.