


H+P World Holiday abroad

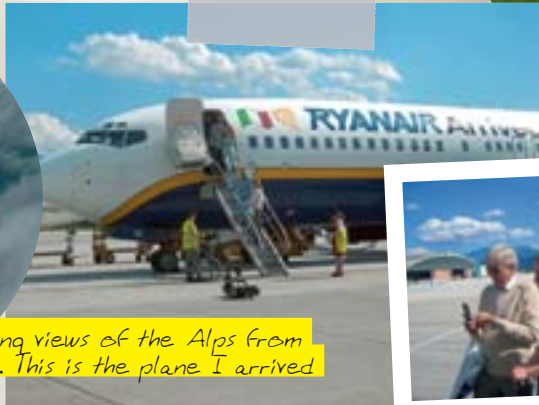
H+P reader Alex Liddle-Foreman reports from her riding hol in Austria.

At the airport

"As I entered the arrival lounge at the airport, I met Kat who had arranged the trip and her daughter Kitty who was only seven. (Kitty already speaks three different languages!) Kitty was also staying at the Dienstl Equestrian Estate for a week too, but they had lived in Austria for five years; they previously lived in England."



There were amazing views of the Alps from the plane window. This is the plane I arrived in Austrian on.



The sound of

"I was lucky enough to go on an International Young Riders' Camp!"

Arriving in Austria

"I have to admit I was a little nervous on the car journey from the airport to the estate as I wasn't sure what to expect, but as soon as I arrived I was welcomed by so many warm faces I felt right at home! The owner Brigitte Kulterer met us and introduced us to everyone including her dog Footsy, who was really sweet.

"My grandparents helped me put my bags into the wooden lodge I was staying in. Each hut has two bunk beds in it. They were only about 40m from the main hotel my grandparents were staying in; so I knew that if I needed to speak to them I could.

"Once I'd unpacked a few things I got to know my hut mates, two girls, Nicole, 13, from Slovakia and Laura, 13, from Slovenia. This really was an International Young Riders' Camp! Kitty was also staying in my hut.

"At dinner I met the other riders on the camp. Most of them spoke either a few words or a lot of English. There were people from all over the world; Slovenia, Slovakia, Miami (USA), Austria, Belgium and Spain. I was the only person from the UK there. It felt strange to start with but once we all got chatting I realised we were all there to enjoy ourselves."



The view from my window, wow!



Brigitte's dog Footsy.



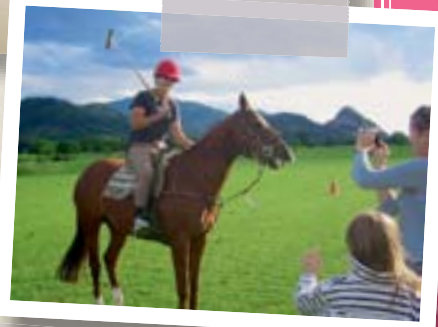
We stopped in wooden huts.



Our first polo lessons were inside the indoor arena. We had to learn loads of new techniques.

Having lessons

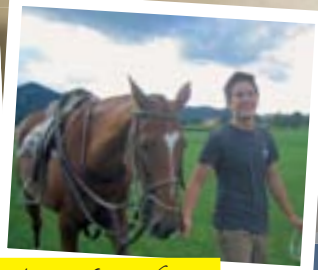
"We had two lessons a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Each one was around an hour long. Some of the lessons were in the indoor arena, in one of the outdoor arenas, the jumping arena or polo pitch; depending on what you were doing. After lunch we had free time until our next lesson. If it was good weather, which it was most days, everyone went swimming in the natural, eco-friendly pool. Being outside it was quite cold, but very refreshing. Everybody messed around and it was good fun! No one wanted to be the first person into the pool so we ended up jumping in together."



hoofbeats



Meeting my polo pony.



Miquel was from Spain.

My lessons

"I had one group lesson on the first day then, for the rest of the week I did mostly polo. I had never played polo before but thoroughly enjoyed it and my instructor was really good. I learnt how to hold the stick, tack up for polo, how to hit the ball and how to ride the polo ponies. We ended up playing mini games with two or three players on each side. From the polo ground you can see the Hochosterwitz castle in the mountains.

Horsey starts!

"We were woken up at 7am every morning, had breakfast at 7.30am and riding lessons started at 8.30am! There weren't going to be any lie-ins; although I didn't have to do any mucking out in Austria!

"If you had one of the first lessons you had to be in the stables at 8am, to groom and tack up. The horses were all very well behaved and good-natured. Most of them were quite big. But they had one or two small ponies, who were very cute! During the holiday I got to ride Cindy, Fletcher, Romance and Ornella.

"The equestrian centre has about 40 different horses, polo ponies and ponies so after you'd been assessed you were matched with a horse to suit your riding ability."



It was exciting going on the polo field for the first time.



The stables.

"I had one jumping lesson and also went on two hacks up the mountains: the scenery was so lovely! There were obviously a lot of mountains, but loads of trees and hardly any buildings.

"There were three instructors – one took the group lessons, one worked with the beginners and one taught polo and jumping. They all spoke some English and were very friendly and helpful.

"There was one day when the polo ponies had a day off. So we did pottery painting! Our work was then glazed, fired and given to us at the end of the week."



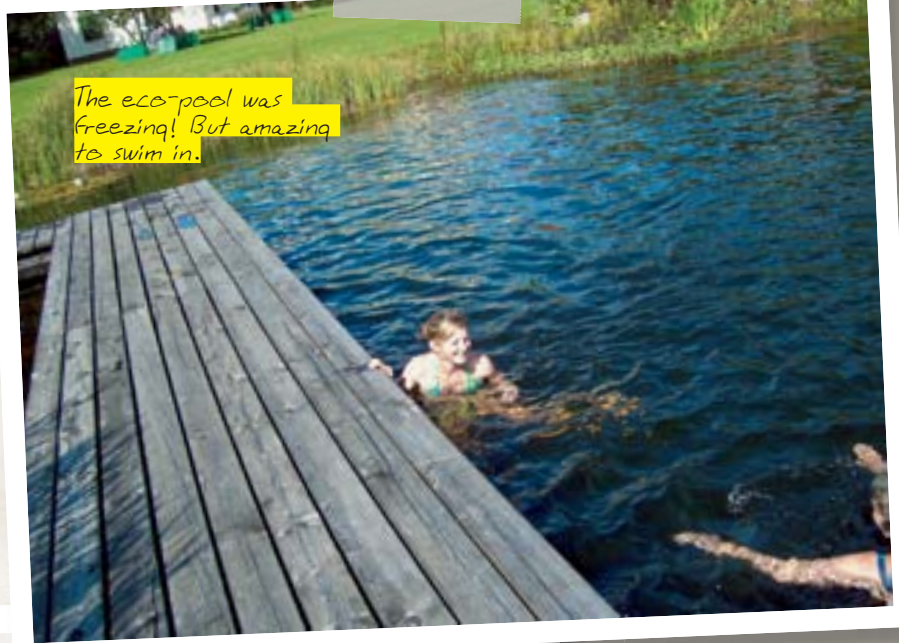
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The all-important stuff

"The food was good and all the staff were so relaxed and helpful. You felt like you were really part of the family straightaway. The weather was sunny most days apart from one evening when there was this massive thunderstorm. We ran to the hotel from our hut, which was only 40m away, and ended up absolutely soaked. It was awesome.

"I could see my grandparents every day if I wanted to. They had a fantastic time lying in the sun and relaxing. They said it was the most stress-free holiday they've ever been on.

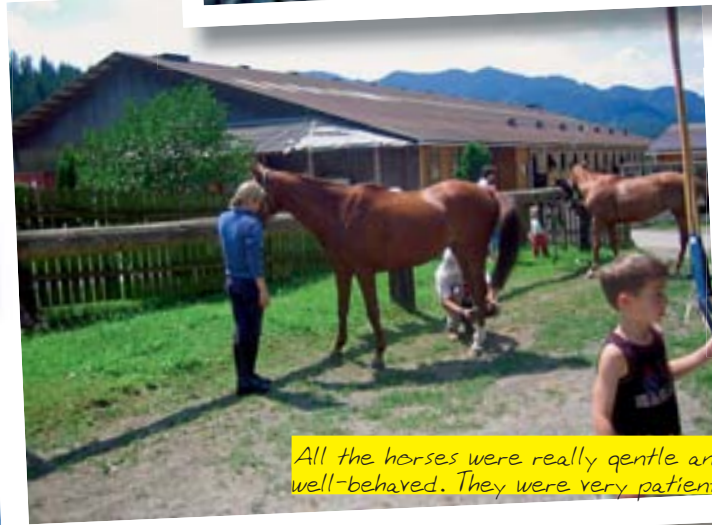
"In the evenings we played games outside in the camp because it stayed light until late, listened to music and generally messed around. One day we held a horse beauty pageant and every one dressed up."



The eco-pool was freezing! But amazing to swim in.



We played games when we weren't riding.



All the horses were really gentle and well-behaved. They were very patient.



The Dienstl estate is really beautiful.



Coming home

"After only one week I had made so many good friends I didn't really want to come home. We had a leaving party in the camp. We all got dressed up, lit the camp fire, played some music and danced late into the evening.

"There were lots of hugs and email and phone numbers exchanged the day I left. I must have come away with a dozen email addresses. It was a very different, but excellent new experience!" (According to Alex's grandparents Alex wants to move to Austria - she rode through such a pretty village while she was out hacking.)

Find out more:

For more info about the International Young Riders Camp Alex went on, log onto www.theridingcompany.com and click on the area about the Dienstl Equestrian Estate, or call 020 7846 0033.