

A person with long dark hair, seen from the back, is looking out of a train window. The window shows a scenic landscape with a lake, green hills, and mountains in the distance. The person's hands are resting on the window frame. The overall scene is bright and natural.

EVS

EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE
2018

WHAT IS EVS

Let me introduce what is European Voluntary Service.

MY EXPERIENCE

You have the definitions and you have my reality. Come with me to discover my daily life in Slovakia as an EVS volunteer.

MY BENEFITS

Because after almost 11 months it's time to identify what I gain through this experience.

DON'T DREAM IT BE IT!

A LONG TERM EUROPEAN PROJECT

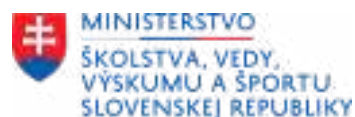
Dates: 01.02.2018 to 31.12.2018

Place: Bratislava, Slovakia

Sending organization: Concordia France

Hosting organization: INEX Slovakia

Maud Herisse



CONTENTS

04 - INTRODUCTION 07

Who am I? What is an EVS?
Why?

08 - ARRIVAL 09

I arrived in Slovakia on 1st
of February....

10 - ACTIVITIES AND 12 TASKS

As an Inex volunteer I had
various tasks and
participate to many
different activities.

13 - WORKCAMPS 15

During the summer, Inex
main activity are the
workcamps. I was leader in
two of them.

16 - FREE TIME 26

Being an EVS volunteer is
not only about work. It's
also about traveling, making
new friends... Find also my
tips and tricks.

27 - OUTCOME 29

What I will leave behind me,
what I gain.

30 THANKS



WHAT IS INEX SLOVAKIA AND WHO AM I?

—
LET'S DO PRESENTATION

Inex Slovakia is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation offering remarkable experiences, personal development and meaningful free time activities for young people through international voluntary activities and non-formal education.

Maud Herisse is a 27 years old French girl. After a master degree in theater she did a Civic Service in France and she decided to go for an EVS. She likes traveling, meeting people, art and nice food... .



Teši ma!

ČO JE TO EVS?



LET'S START WITH THE BEGINNING

EVS (European Voluntary Service) is an international volunteer program funded by the European Commission. It enables all young people legally resident in Europe, aged between 18 and 30 years, to carry out an international volunteer service in an organization or in a public body for a period ranging from 2 to 12 months. It provides the reimbursement of travel expenses and complete coverage of the costs of food and accommodation for the international volunteer.

This is the definition you can find on the internet if you put "EVS definition". But it's only a definition. For sure it's correct but if you only read it you missed the essence of this program, you miss the human part.

I propose you to discover my reality as an EVS volunteer with Inex Slovakia during 11 month.

I don't promise a correct answer to the question: "What is an EVS?", but only my point of view, my experience.

Because I think our outcome should look like us, mine will probably be a bit disorganized and messy...

Enjoy!



WHY?

BEFORE TO MOVE

To find an EVS project can be a long process and to leave your country, your friends and your family for almost one year, is definitely an adventure and you have to think about it before.

When I start to search my motivations were clear;

- I wanted to discover a new country / a new culture

- I knew that I'm really happy when I'm discovering new things, traveling and meeting new people

- I wanted to take time to understand better what I really want to do

- I wanted to know me better and to win confidence

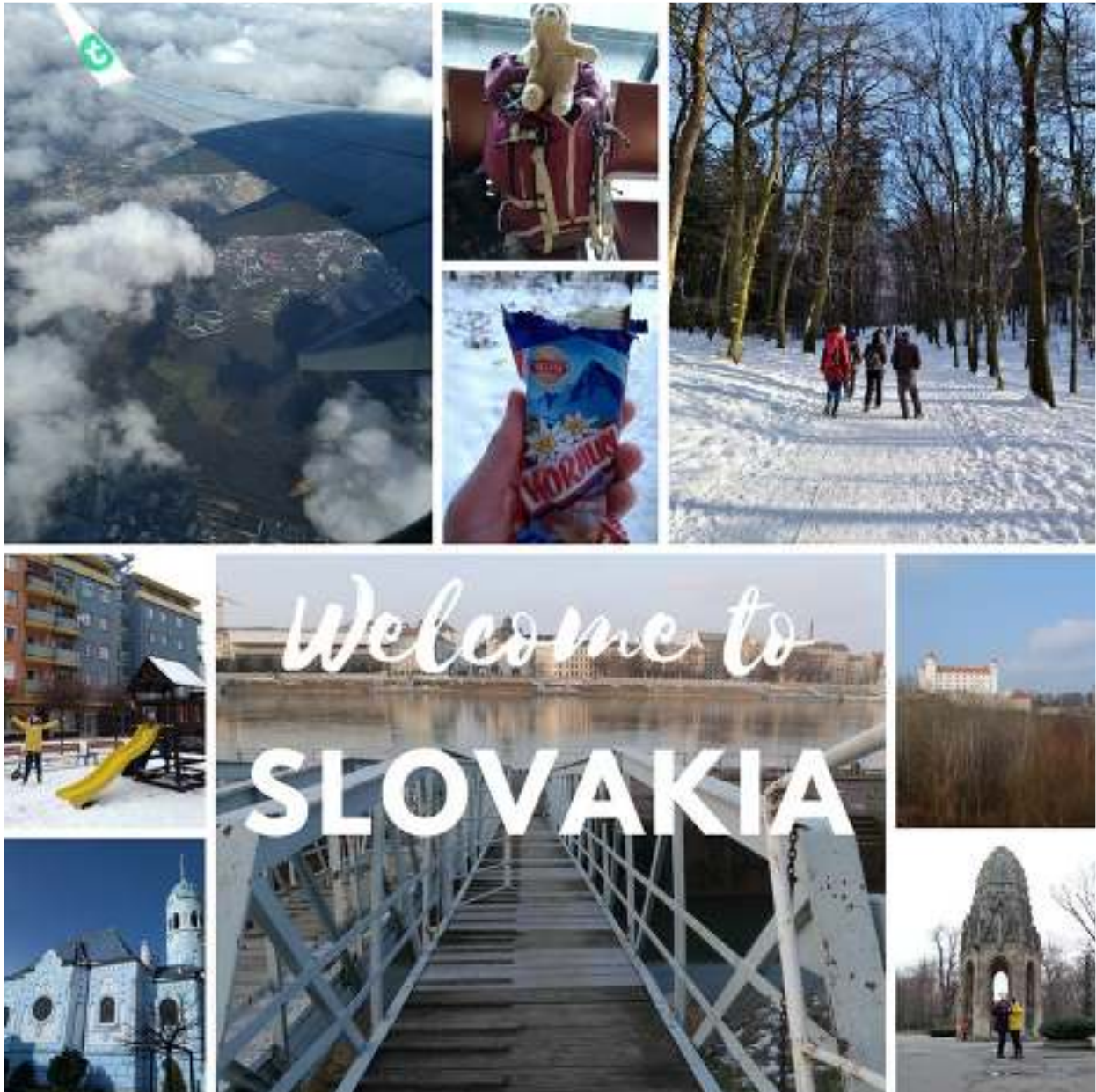
- I wanted to improve my skills and especially my English

- I really loved my experience as a civic service and I wanted to continue to help the community and feel useful



When Inex Slovakia contacted me for this project I was about to give up. I found in this project most of the things I was searching for. And I have to say, I was really curious to know more about Slovakia.

Arrival



CLAC. THE DOOR CLOSES BEHIND ME. NO LOOK BACK. GOODBYE FRANCE.
HELLO SLOVAKIA.

01.02.2018



FIRST MONTH IN SLOVAKIA

FEBRUARY

It wasn't very late when I did my first step on Slovak floor on 1st of February. Svetlana welcomed me and bring me to my new flat. Few hours later we were welcoming Carina. I remember some months later Carina was thinking about this first month and she said: 'At this time we didn't know each other. Can you believe it?'. After so many months sleeping in the same room, working together traveling together, sharing our stories...it's difficult to imagine a time when we didn't know each other.

The first week was difficult. I wasn't use to hear so much English. I missed my own language and felt very tired by all this new things. Hopefully at Inex Slovakia everyone was really nice with us.

Our colleagues understood perfectly that we needed time to get to know our new environment and to learn our new work tasks. February was full of new experiences, new job, new language, new people, new city. I was open to discover my new city but I didn't fall in love with Bratislava at the first look. During winter Bratislava is sometimes a bit slow and it took me some walk in different areas to learn how to appreciate my new city.

” Bratislava is this ugly road just in the middle of the old city. Ugly road you're supposed to hate but you finally take a picture of it. Bratislava is this delicious mix between old and new, ugly and beautiful.

Bratislava is this beautiful castle who can make a fairy tale with a highway.

Various activities



MILA PRE MAMU, PROMOTION IN STARA TRIZNICA, DEMO CAMP, INEX BIRTHDAY, NASE MESTO, TRIP TO DEVIN WITH INTEGRA, TEA MEETING...

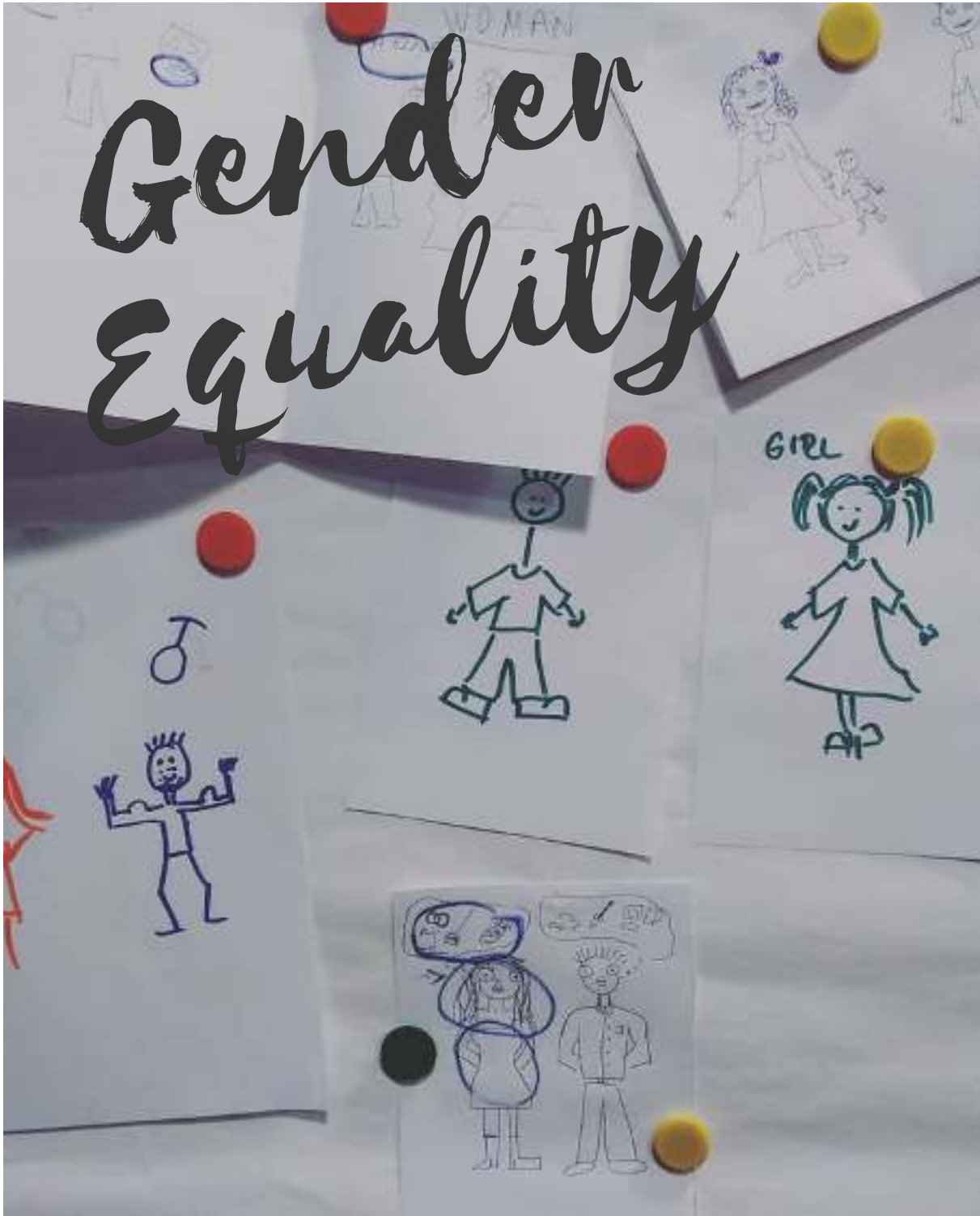


ACTIVITIES AND TASKS

OF AN EVS VOLUNTEER IN INEX
SLOVAKIA

During 11 months Carina, Anthony and I joined INEX Slovakia to do an EVS and be part of the project:
Don't dream it, be it!

- Update Inex website and the social media.
- Assist on different administrative tasks.
- Organize Tea meetings.
- Promote Inex Slovakia and voluntary work on various events.
- Create a workshop: Gender Equality. And give the workshop.
- Participate and help on one day voluntary project (Mila Pre Mamu / Integra/ Nase Metso).
- Take part to training for camp leader. And follow it to become a n Inex camp leader.
- Prepare and lead 2 workcamps.



As a personal project I created a workshop about Gender Equality. The idea was to make this workshop during the workcamps with international volunteers. But I was lucky and I gave also this workshop in different high schools and was invited to gave it during What'EVS (A special events for EVS organized in a cultural center, A4).

I always fell concerned by gender inequalities and I really enjoyed discuss this topic with different people.

Workcamps



THERE IS MOMENT WHEN YOU KNOW YOU ARE EXACTLY AT THE GOOD PLACE



MY SUMMER WITH INEX SLOVAKIA

ONE MONTH IN EAST SLOVAKIA

During the summer the main activity of INEX Slovakia is the workcamps.

This year 8 workcamps were happening in Slovakia. The camps were about ecology, people with disability and castle renovation. As Carina and Anthony I led two of them. I chose camps about castle renovation:

Brekov - 23.07 to 04.08.2018

Obišovce - 05.08 to 18.08.2018

The camps were one after each other, so basically I was out of Bratislava for an entire month.

They were very different, in the first one I had just 4 volunteers and was the only leader. And in the second one I had 10 volunteers and hopefully a co-leader, Kika, to help me.

Both were amazing experiences. I spent a wonderful time and discover very nice people and beautiful landscape or city of East Slovakia. I also gained confidence, communication skills, leader skills...

Brekov

Brekov was my first camp. I remember me leaving the house with 3 big bags. The entire trip was a kind of first challenge and I was as stressed as excited.

My first challenge was to deal with the local partner. Stano was a really kind man but he was busy and at the beginning I was a bit shy and didn't know how to communicate correctly with him. I had to find my way during the 2 weeks.

My second challenge was that one of my volunteers didn't speak English. Hopefully, it was the French one, so I can translate easily. I remember I was worried that he would not make friends and not enjoyed the camp. But I was surprised how quick we become friends... We were like a family and we shared a lot of laugh during the camp and language was finally not a big deal.

One of the best things in this camp was probably the exchange with the Slovak workers in the castle. Some of them were Roma people and they shared with us they're culture and were really happy to discover ours

My volunteers were history and nature lovers and they loved hiking. So it was pretty easy to please them. We went on several hike, it was a good way to get to know each other and spend time together.

Obišovce

When I leave Brekov I was tired, sad but also really excited to discover my new volunteers and to meet again with my co-leader, Kika. I enjoyed the time with my volunteers in Brekov but sometimes I missed a partner to share about my worries.

I was excited to discover how it will be with a biggest group of volunteers. But despite of my enthusiasm and my wish to develop a good relationship with all the volunteers it was more complicated than in Brekov. At the beginning it was difficult to feel part of the group. After the feast of culture we all felt that we succeed in the construction of a united and respectful group.

Say goodbye to this second group was even more difficult because I had the feeling I needed more time to get to know all of us better. Maybe these goodbyes were also more difficult because I know it was the end of my camps and that I would have to come back home. And after this amazing month of meeting and adventure Bratislava was a bit boring for me.

But I have to say that I also needed some rest because the work in this camp was really tiring. They were a lot of work to repair Obišovce ruins and no workers to help us, just our very active and enthusiast local partner Martin.

Free time



TRAVELING IS MY RELIGION. FREEDOM MY ONLY BELIEF.



SLOVAKIA EXPLORER

DISCOVER MY NEW COUNTRY WAS ALSO ONE OF MY OBJECTIVES

Of course Slovakia offers a strategic position to travel and discover other countries as Hungary, Czech Republic, Austria, Poland or Ukraine...

But when I decided to come to Slovakia my hope was also to discover this country I didn't know before. Discover the people there, the capital, the language, the food but also the nature...

Slovakia is definitely a country of beautiful nature. It was a pleasure to hike in Slovakia but also to discover smallest town and cute village.

I went to hike and to visit some towns around Bratislava (Trnava, Nitra) but my best trip in Slovakia were for sure my trip to Liptovsky Mikulaš with Carina and my road trip with Maëlle when we went to Slovak Paradise/ Spiš Castle/ Levoca...

But I have the feeling there is still so much to visit, discover...

My regret: I didn't hike in High Tatras...



BANSKA STIAVNICA

Slovaks are really proud of this charming little town and after several visits I have to say that I understand why.

THE CAVES

There is many caves in Slovakia and some of them are part of UNESCO heritage. I only visited 3 but I really enjoyed: Demänovská Cave of Liberty, Dobšinská Ice Cave and Ochtinská Aragonite Cave (only Aragonite cave in Europe).

SLOVAK PARADISE

If you are a nature lover this national park is for you. There is many hike to do, the most famous ones are the ones where you follow mountain torrent in his own bed and climb with scale.

WOODEN CHURCHES

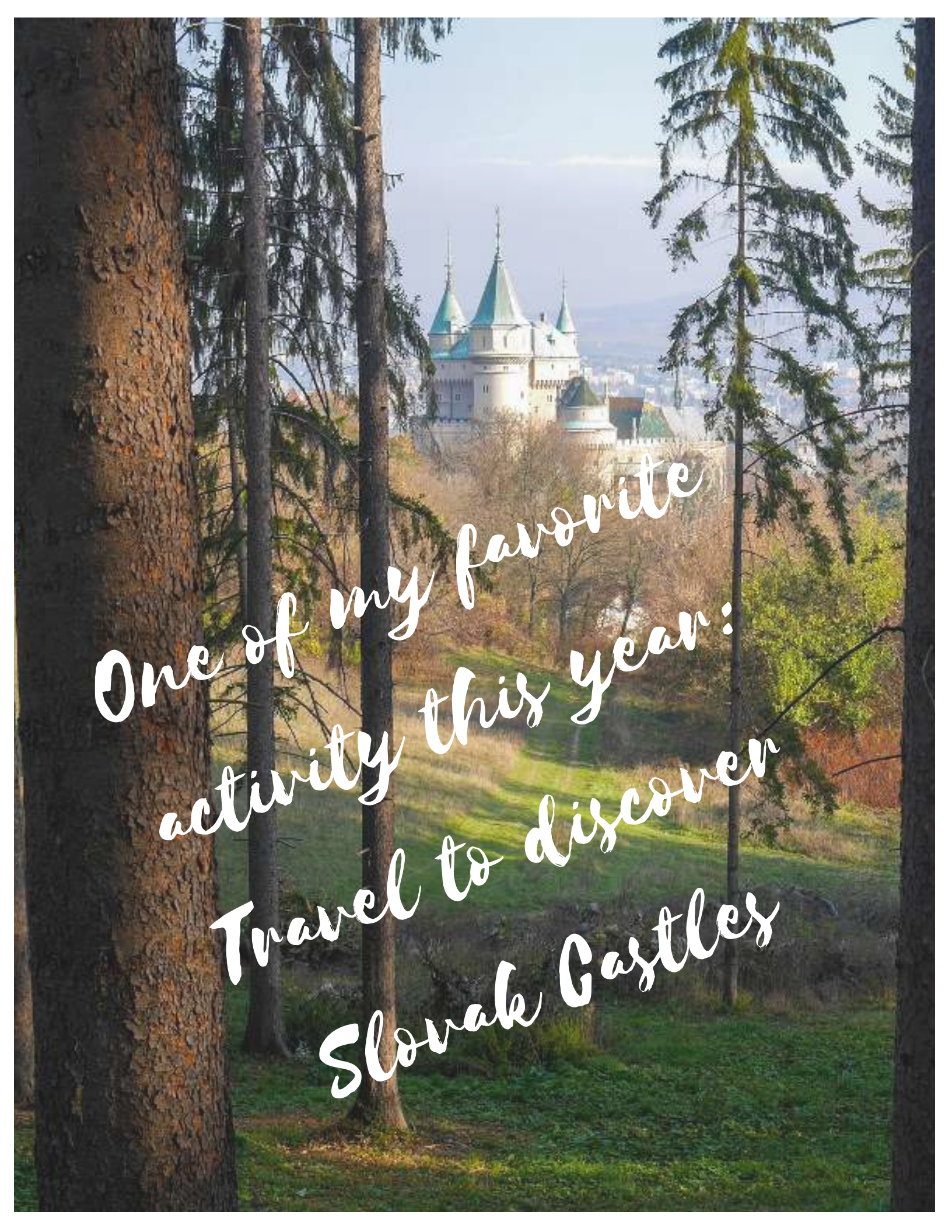
I visited only two, one in an open air museum in Hummene and one in the middle of the nature near Liptovský Mikuláš. This last one really impress me. It was a large one and inside I could still hear the sound of the nature around but also the wood of the church.

KOŠICE

I went to Košice for the first time during my camp in Obisovce. It was quick but I saw enough to decide to come back few months later. I really find the city lovely and authentic. Even more charming than Bratislava.

VIHORLAT PROTECTED LANDSCAPE AREA

With the volunteers of my first camp in Brekov we went to Morske Oko. The plan was just to walk to the lake and go around but we finally decided to hike more in this area and to go by foot to Snina, another town. The hike in the forest was really nice and we had the luck to climb a high rock who offer us a beautiful view on all this wild area.



One of my favorite
activity this year:
Travel to discover
Slovak Castles



MY CASTLE TOP

THERE IS AROUND 100 CASTLES IN SLOVAKIA SO NOT EASY TO PICK JUST 3...

1 ORAVA CASTLE

Situated on a high rock above Orava river, this one is definitely my favorite one.

The castle was built in the 13th century.

Many scenes of the 1922 film *Nosferatu* were filmed here.

I really enjoyed the 2:15 of visit who allowed you to visit every part of this amazing castle. I particularly enjoyed the highest and oldest part of the castle call: The citadelle.

In Slovakia most of the time you cannot visit castle or cave alone and you have to attempt guide visit. In Orava it was the same but they had a really cool audio guide tour that you can download for free.

2 BOJNICE CASTLE

How to not fall in love with this romantic castle?

Built in the 12th century, the castle was reconstructed by János Ferenc Pálffy in the idea of french castle of valley of Loire.

I enjoyed my visit and had the feeling to be a princess in a fairy tale.

3 ŠPIS CASTLE

Very different of the two previous one Spiš castle looks maybe more authentic than one like Bojnice. And it's one of the biggest castle in Europe. You definitely have to visit it.

If you are bored of Slovak's castle you can always take a look in Czech Republic and visit Lednice.



OTHER TRIPS

BECAUSE SLOVAKIA IS CENTRAL EUROPE

As I said it before Slovakia, and especially Bratislava, has a perfect position for who wants to travel in Europe.

So, some weekends I went to discover new countries.

As Vienna is only one hour from Bratislava it was my first expedition with Carina. Then I come back in November to visit the Belvedere museum and enjoy the beautiful Christmas market!

Our next trip with Carina was Krakow in Poland. If we forget the bad accommodation I have to say that it was an amazing trip and I highly recommend Krakow.

Then we decided to try Czech Republic with a one day trip in Brno.

And finally I went in holidays in Prague. This time with a French friend who flied especially from France to Czech Republic for the occasion. We spent seven days in the wonderful Czech capital I understand perfectly why there is so many tourists there. Prague is absolutely beautiful and even with 7 days I have the feeling that there is still so much to discover.

*Falling in love
with Prague*





OTHER FREE TIMES ACTIVITES

MAKE SLOVAKIA MY NEW HOME

EVS is about volunteering, getting new skills, helping, working... but it's also about travelling, meeting people, finding yourself.

When I arrived in Slovakia I knew I was there for 11 months but I think I didn't realise what it meant. And actually it means, of course travelling, discovering... but also that you have to construct a new life in a different country, with different habits, different language and without your friends and family. For this construction new friends and free time activities are essential. .

Little by little you created new habits, you find favorite places to meet your friends, you start to practice your hobbies again or try new ones...

Meeting new people is one of the things I liked the most in my EVS life and it was also the reason why I decided to do an EVS. And I have to say that What EVS, a special events organize by my EVS friends of A4, helped me to meet a lot of other EVS.

Going out with Anthony was also one of my favourite activities. Or going to hike with special group for hiking. I also started to practice photography.

My Bratislava tips

NAMESTIE SNP

Just in front of Stara Triznica it's definitely my favorite place during the summer. Here you can find several nice pubs and just sit outside to enjoy your drink and listen some music or chat with people. There is also regularly street food market and some nice events in the lovely Stara Triznica.

PETRŽALSKÁ HRÁDZA

Tired of the city? No problem, in Petrazalka you can be back to nature very easily in following Petržalská hrádza, an enormous bike path. Usually I follow it only at the beginning, then I try smaller path near the water.

KINO LUMIERE

In France I like to go to cinema so in Bratislava I tried to find a nice one. Kino Lumiere is a really good one, not too expensive (4€), comfortable, with nice movie in original version and a website in english.

GREEN HAT TOUR / EL CAMINANTE

Both are nice international group to hike around Bratislava. No need to be a professional it's mostly about enjoying time with international people outside. I meet a lot of people through these hikes and spend nice moment discovering the surroundings of Bratislava.

WHAT'EVS IN A4

A4, it's a cultural center where you can see concert, performance, movies... but it's also the place where happen most of the WhatEVS. Special events for EVS people of all Slovakia. It's the perfect place to start to meet other EVS people, exchange about your project, have fun, attempt workshops...

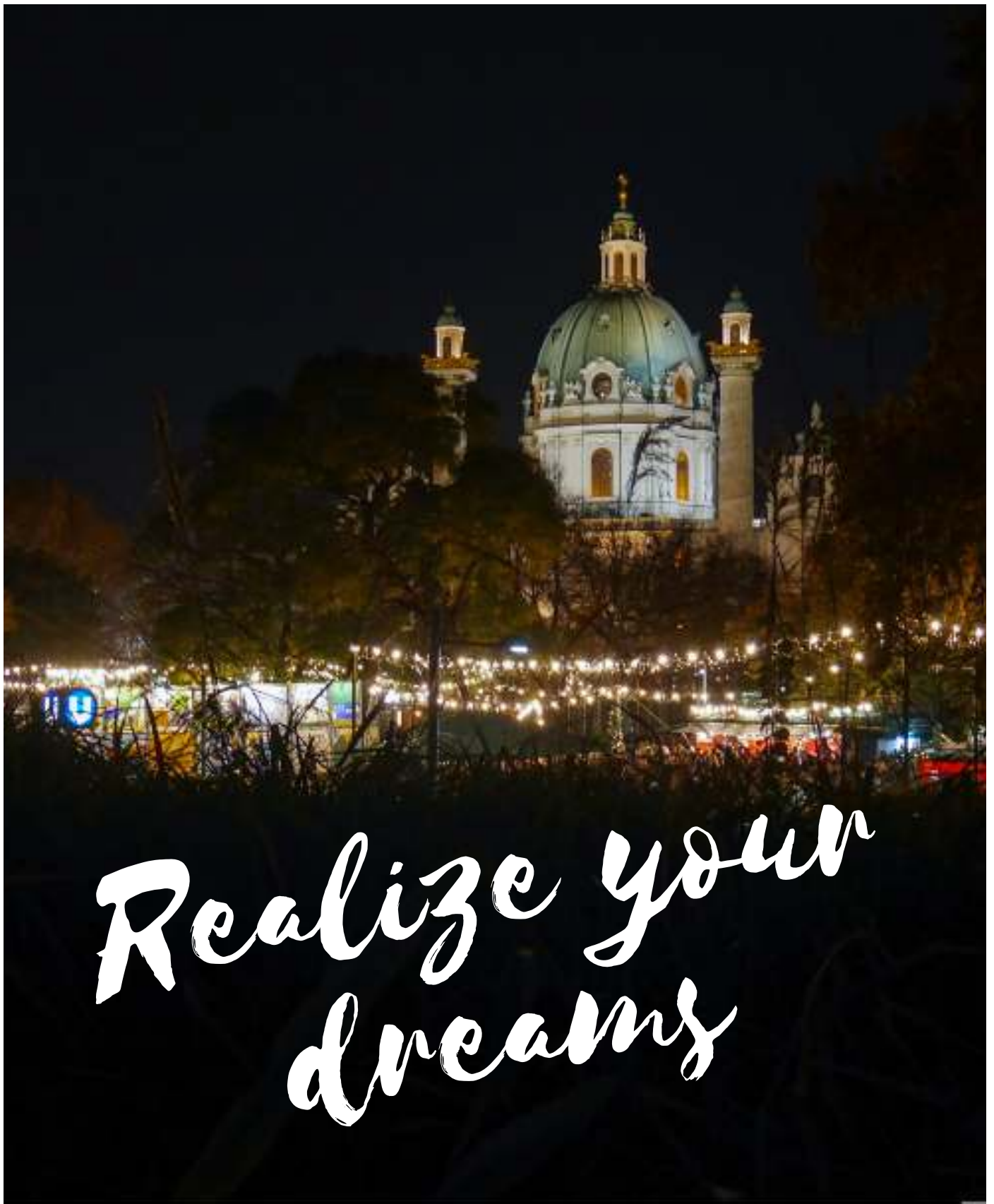
TRY ALSO

Museum for free 1st sunday of the month, movies for free in French institute, open mic and free concert in Goblins, hot chocolate in Mad Drop coffee, ice cream in Arthur, Trdelnik full with ice cream on Kamene Namestie, wine festival, hiking in Kamzik, eating in Soho Bistro....

Meet new people



MEETING NEW PEOPLE, GET TO KNOW DIFFERENT CULTURES WAS VERY IMPORTANT FOR ME. AND I WAS PRETTY SUCCESSFUL IN THIS TASK BECAUSE AFTER 11 MONTH I HAVE FRIENDS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.



Two of my oldest dreams were: To see The kiss, Gustav Klimt painting for real and to go to a big Christmas market.. On 24 of November, one month before Christmas Eve I realized these dreams in Vienna.

One of my other dream is also to discover as much countries as I can.... this year was a good start.



OUTCOME

WHAT I LEAVE, WHAT I TAKE

Why Slovakia? I spent my 11 month here trying to explain to locals why I decided to do my EVS in their country and my answer was:

Because Slovakia chose me.

Of course when I took the plane to Bratislava I had expectations but actually, not so much.

I wanted to live a different adventure, to meet new people, to get new skills, to improve my English, feel useful, know more about me... But I was pretty sure this project with Inex Slovakia would bring me all these things and that I would just have to enjoy every day. And that's exactly what I did.

Slovakia didn't give me all the answers I expected. But I still have time to find them... or maybe there is no good answer.

But for sure I discovered a lot of new and different people. Let's start with Carina and Anthony who shared this adventure with me, but also the Inex team, the others EVS in Slovakia which are a kind of family but also all the other people who cross my way even for few hours...



For almost a year English became my language and I hope that I improve my English skills, even if my expectation about being able to understand correctly Slovak wasn't achieved.

I also got various skills and I'm sure that I'm not conscious yet of how much I learned this year.

Being a leader in two camps is probably the experience which gives me the most or maybe it's more visible skills. I remember that it was tiring, sometimes stressful, that at the beginning I was a bit lost... But at the end of my camps I feel proud of myself. I also understood that I was able to lead an international group of people, to take decisions. And actually I enjoyed it very much.

My gender equality workshop also made me proud of myself. I discovered that I'm comfortable with talking about a subject I studied and that I liked to share my knowledge with the others. And it's probably a good start in my research of what I want to do in the future and what is important for me.





It's always difficult to know what you leave to the others, to realize how useful you were, or not. I really hope I was useful at Inex office and I have no doubt in the fact that what Inex is doing is. More than ever I know how Inex missions are important.

After a Civic Service and European Voluntary Service, after a lot of discussion with various volunteers I can see how voluntary work and encouraging voluntary work for young people is essential. "Find yourself in an ocean of adventure" is not only a motto, it's a truth. Volunteering is adventure and it's a very good way to know more about you. Who you are, what you like, what is important for you, what you're able to do... It's a way to gain or regain confidence, to meet people, to improve your skills... and much more.

The only way to really understand all these benefits it's to try it.

*So what are you
waiting for?*

THANKS

Thanks to the program ERASMUS + who allow people like me to live amazing adventure without money.

Thank you to my sending organization for the invisible work. Thank you of course to my hosting organization and new family Inex Slovakia. And a special thanks to every people of this beautiful team. You did a great job every day and I was proud to be part of it.

Thanks Anthony and Carina for being such great roommate, colleagues and friends.

Thanks Monika for dealing with us, even in your free time.

Thanks Svetlana for welcomed me and took care of me this first week, it helped me a lot.

Thanks to all my new friends here, we will maybe never meet again but I will never forget the time with you.

Thanks to all the people I met this year I didn't forget I just didn't have enough space...

Thanks to my family for keeping their fears for themselves and just let me be who I am.

Thanks Slovakia for welcomed me so well, you are a part of me. Now I will be even more annoying and I will not only say 'In France it's like that' but 'In France and Slovakia it's like that and that'.