

FIRST WORK MEETING IN COURMAYEUR (VAL D'AOSTA, ITALY)

26TH-30TH OCTOBER 2009

Courmayeur had the honour of hosting the first Work meeting for the Comenius "Treasures of the Mountains" project when teachers from all eight participating countries arrived in Courmayeur Aosta Valley Italy on Monday 26th October.

In order to get the meeting off to a good start, the mayor of Courmayeur, Ms. Fabrizia Derriard together with the head of the Courmayeur secondary school Mr. Franco Cossard, greeted the delegation in the Municipal offices, in the presence of regional television and newspaper reporters.



Picture 1: Participants at the meeting in front of Courmayeur's city council.

After meeting their Italian colleagues, work began immediately for the partners at the Congress Centre with discussions concerning the week's timetable and direction of the project. In fact, this was the first of four intense work sessions held throughout the week dedicated to the precise planning of activities for the next two years.



Picture 2: Marcel (Spain), Walter (Austria) and Per (Norway) presenting different aspects of the project to the partners.

The Safe Mountain Foundation put its spacious conference room in Villa Cameron at the disposition of the group and work proceeded smoothly. Among numerous topics, much attention was given to the major means of communication to be used during the project: the Moodle platform, the eTwinning portal, the web page and blogs. Further discussion was dedicated to where subsequent mobilities will take place, how both individual and shared tasks and responsibilities will be distributed and the realization of objectives and final products.

In spite of the fact that only four partners had been present in Barcelona during the preparatory visit in January 2009 and the others had never met, we soon became collaborators, working in unison towards a common goal. Without doubt, the best aspect of a Comenius project is the possibility of growing together, comparing each other's methodologies, discovering the skills and talents of our newly found colleagues and combining our forces to create something original, inventive and rewarding.



Picture 3: Norwegian and Austrian students participating in Courmayeur's work meeting.

Being the first opportunity to discuss the treasures of our respective countries which have to be subsequently "discovered" by students, it was decided that most students wouldn't take part in this initial venture. However, three Austrian and two Norwegian students participated, contributing profitably to the progress of the project and mixing with their Italian counterparts. They discovered the mountainous wonders of northern Italy and take home an indelible experience.

Although the delegation worked hard, there was still time for enjoyment, getting to know each other and learning about the treasures hidden in the mountains surrounding the Aosta Valley.



Picture 4: Work session at Liceo Linguistico Courmayeur.

Blessed with the fortune of crystal-clear blue skies, enchanting autumnal colours and white, snow-capped peaks, we trekked up the Val Veny to Lake Combal where blocks of ice were falling from the Miage glacier into the waters of the lake.

During the meeting we were able to discover the joys and challenges of geocaching. Thanks to our GPS devices, we planted three caches over the course of the week in strategic positions of natural beauty or cultural interest: one in the surroundings of the Miage glacier; another one near Torino shelter and the last one in the Roman remains of the Aosta city.



Picture 5: Above: preparing a geocache. Below: looking for Miage glacier geocache coordinates.

The Alps didn't cease to amaze as we rode the cable car to the top of Europe and its majestic peaks. Accompanied by the Courmayeur alpine guides we ventured, with trepidation, onto the glacier to observe its fathomless crevasses and ice valleys.

Everyone present agreed that it really is the eighth wonder of the world! The alpine guides took us through the crystals' exhibition at the Punta Helbronner cable car station, explaining the formation of the jewels hidden in the deep cracks of the Alps.



Picture 6: Above: The team at Punta Hellbronner. At the background, the Montblanc peak (4.810 m) Below: Walking roped together on the snow. On the right, the Dent du Géant (Giant's tooth) peak (4.014 m).

However, the Aosta Valley offers not only natural spectacles but also an age-old historical heritage. Hence, a visit to one of the best-preserved Roman cities in the world took all partners to the city of Aosta. The Amphitheatre, the Pretorian gates, Augustus' arch and the Cryptoporticus are some of the beauties we saw which were left to us by the great Roman Empire.

But perhaps the most memorable moments occurred when we were all sitting together at a table full of food! Our international gourmet dinner was an immense success. Each partner brought a tantalizing taste sensation from home, and it was a truly bonding experience to try the delicacies of so many cultures all at once.



Picture 7: Traditional dishes of each partner country at the European dinner.

Having a sumptuous lunch together at the Pavillion Refuge at an altitude of 2,200 metres was another momentous occasion. A further unforgettable evening was spent at the home of Courmayeur's principal, Franco Cossard, who invited all delegates to taste some local Aosta Valley specialities, not to mention traditional Italian pasta.



Picture 8: Traditional Italian pasta by Franco Cossard.

It was, undoubtedly, a special week. One that will remain in the memories of all those who took part. It would not have been a success, however, without the collaboration and cooperation of every individual.

So, an enormous, heart-felt thank you to Aneta, Antonia, Eva, Ingrid, Violetta, Ali, Marcel, Ole, Per, Robert, Tomi and Walter for your desire, enthusiasm and positive thinking to make an abstract idea come true.

Arrivederci !!!! See you all in Norway in February!

Rosie Crawford

Liceo Linguistico Courmayeur