

## My Experience at Debrecen Nyari Egyetem

By Hannah Vos

This past Summer I had the privilege of attending the Debrecen Nyari Egyetem, thanks to the Cleveland Hungarian Development Panel. Without this scholarship, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to go to this program, so I am incredibly grateful. Both my sister and my mother attended in years past, and their glowing recommendation was what convinced me that I should participate as well.

By far, the best part of the program was the folklore nights, where we had the chance to learn Hungarian songs and dances after eating a delicious meal. Even though one of the nights was quite humid and hot, it was something I look back on fondly. Because I have always had a fascination with other cultures (hence my Global/International Studies major choice), this was one of the most interesting experiences which everyone should attend when possible.

Not only did I learn about Hungarian culture, I also learned about the cultures of the other participants. I spoke with people from Taiwan, China, Russia, Czechia, and Slovakia, to name a few. It was so interesting to learn about different people's experience with Hungarians and Hungarian culture, especially those in Eastern Europe. Although I love to hear about Hungarians from a Hungarian perspective, it's also very important to get an understanding of Hungary as a whole, so that I can get a fuller picture of who they are.

The main reason I came to Debrecen was to learn the Hungarian language. Since I have taken classes sporadically in the past, I did have a foundation on which I could build, but my grammar skills were lacking. I was placed in a csoport with great teachers who cared about our individual success as well as forcing us to interact as a group. Among other things, I learned about accusative endings, the different forms of lenni, and a myriad of professional occupations. Although there was some traditional call and repeat learning, we also got to learn by playing fun educational games and interacting with each other, which I think is the best way to learn a language. I think it's pointless to try and learn a language if you're not going to enjoy it a little bit.

One of my favorite parts of class was listening to the students talk about the etymology of the words. Giving the students a chance to educate their fellow students just adds to the experience, since these teachers cannot be expected to know everything.

Our excursion to Hortobagy, even though it rained for a substantial amount of time, was also very educational. Learning how the farmers, ranchers, shepherds and cowherds survived was also one of my favorite parts of the trip. Additionally, I loved watching the skilled riders maintain control over so many horses at once, and watching the beautiful pottery demonstration.

The final note I would like to make is how gracious I am to have been given this opportunity. This program is about so much more than learning about the Hungarian language, although that was a large part of it. We also learned about Hungarian culture, ate incredible Hungarian food at every meal, and got to foster international relationships with the students and staff. It was an amazing two weeks which I will never forget, and I hope to return again soon for the full four weeks.