

Heartbeat



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Issue 25

From absolute beginners to silky skiing stalwarts

Last month, 81 students and ten staff travelled 1,000 miles across Europe to Altenmarkt, Austria, for this year's eagerly anticipated ski trip.

Following our 27 hour journey, we arrived at the Ennshof Hotel where we were met by our fantastic hosts, the Thurner family.

After unloading our luggage, we were straight off to get fitted with our skis, boots, poles and helmets, before spending an hour in the village of Altenmarkt, familiarising ourselves with the area.

The next day, the weather conditions were perfect as we had bright sunshine and a cloudless sky, together with bitterly cold air temperatures.

These are the conditions all skiers dream of, as it means both the snow conditions and visibility will be ideal – especially for all 73 of our absolute beginners.

After listening to our instructions, we set off for the nearby slopes of

Flachauwinkel and were met by our instructors and leader, Berni, from the Eben Ski School, and were put into our ski groups.

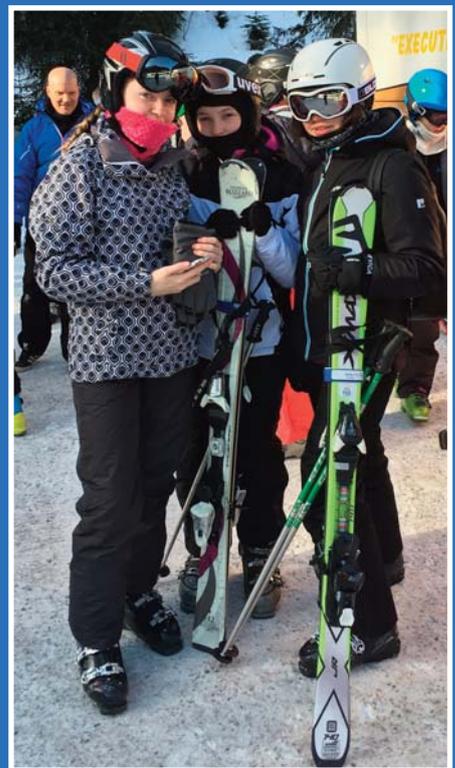
Berni led those students with previous experience and they went straight to the top of the mountain via a chair lift.

The beginners stayed in their groups on the gentle nursery slopes and soon the fun and laughter that can only be experienced by spending your first time on skis on real snow was very much in evidence.

Skiing on one ski only was very much in evidence for the first hour or so. Then, it was time to get both skis on and learn basic turns and stopping techniques. Before long, everyone was engrossed in learning their new basic skiing skills.

After a fun-packed first day, with lots of slipping and sliding and plenty of spectacular falls, we headed back to the hotel for our evening meal.

This was followed by a night in where



News in brief

Year 11 SACR are involved in a study skills workshop today, EDHT will have theirs tomorrow.

Some lucky students will be at Goodison Park tomorrow to learn about Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Wednesday sees the return of students from the French Exchange and Vitesse football trips, whilst GCSE/A2 Drama Night takes place from 6.30pm. Year 8 Consultation Evening is on Thursday and the Catenian Public Speaking Competition takes place on Friday.



the choice was to play sports in the hotel's own Sports Hall or to catch up on some much needed sleep. Day 2 saw us setting off for the slopes of Altenmarkt. One of the main aims of the day was to get everybody in our group to the top of a quite challenging nursery slope by using a button lift. Mr Summerfield was ready with the video camera to try and catch those of us who ended up on the floor in a cloud of snow. Amazingly, there were hardly any 'victims' and we were soon witnessing excellent progress, as our groups snaked down the slope following their leader and practising their snow-plough turns and stop. Instructor Martin and his group were joined by Mr Burke, Mrs Hewlett, Mr Summerfield and Miss Burke in order to gain some extra one-on-one tuition and, before long, they too were successfully managing to turn and stop. After returning to the Ennshof to shower, change and replenish our energy with our evening meal, we were soon preparing for our next night-time activity.

Coach A set off for a session of bowling in the village of Schladming, whilst Coach B remained in the hotel to take part in a quiz, followed by more fun and games in the Sports Hall. Both groups then changed over midway through the evening. Day 3 saw us travelling to the magnificent World Cup Ski resort of Zauchensee – home of Austrian superstar Michael Walchhofer. Again, the weather conditions were ideal and there were many gasps of amazement when our students realised how spectacular this particular ski area is. Austria wanted to use it as the base for the Winter Olympics of 2014 before they lost out to Sochi in Russia. Those students who were not yet quite up to the task were given additional tuition on the button lift and long nursery slope. By the end of the day most of us were now beginning to feel like real skiers, as the excellent advice and coaching from our instructors was suddenly beginning to make sense. The faces on our students as they

stepped off the chair-lift for the very first time at the top of a mountain and realised they were higher than the clouds in the valley and the aeroplanes heading for Salzburg airport were an absolute joy to behold. Even more impressive was their fantastic skiing ability in getting all the way back down the mountain in one piece. Blue 10 ski slope will live long in the memory for many of our students. That evening, we all went for a walk to the brand new Therme Amade swimming complex. Complete with lots of different pools, wave machines, diving boards and slides – one of which is a 360 degrees loop-the-loop – this is one of Austria's top leisure centres. It even has an outside pool that only the bravest tend to swim in, as night-time temperatures can be as low as -20 degrees. Not surprisingly, the students made the most of these fantastic facilities, whilst the staff lounged in the jacuzzi to ease their weary muscles. On Day 4, we woke to yet another perfect day, as we prepared to travel to the resort of Forstau. Compared to Zauchensee, Forstau is

quite an old resort in terms of chair lifts. However, its lovely long and wide Blue runs are absolutely perfect for our group and many students told us this was their most enjoyable day of skiing. Confidence was high amongst our beginners now and their progress was highly impressive.

Day 5 gave us the opportunity to put all we had learned during the week to the test by taking part in one of the most looked forward to events of the week – Race Day.

As we all warmed up, our ski instructors were busy setting up the red and blue poles that would form our slalom race. Complete with an electronic start gate and state of the art timing mechanisms, it was not long before our groups were taking part in a highly competitive race to see who could complete the course – without falling – in the fastest time.

Considering just four days earlier the vast majority of us were novice skiers, there were some incredible and highly skilful performances on show with bronze, silver and gold medals up for grabs for each group. For one or two of us, however, our

hopes were dashed as we lost control, hitting the snow with some pretty spectacular falls that we tried to

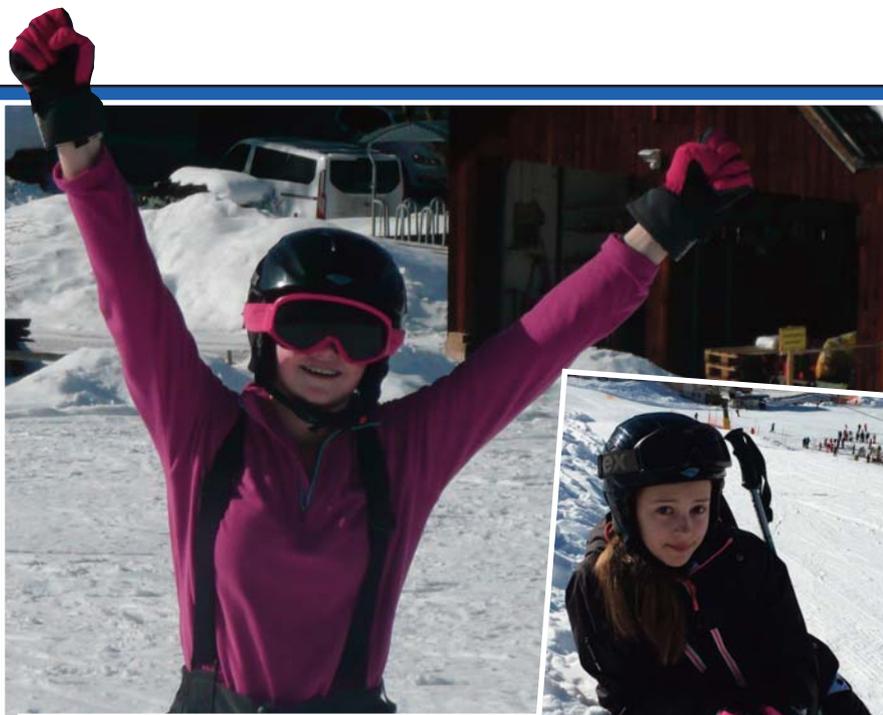


catch on video or camera.

On returning to our hotel we quickly unloaded our ski equipment before heading out for the hour of madness known as Tubing; sliding down a snow covered slope sat in a large rubber ring. There was plenty of hysterical laughter and screams of joy as pupils sped down the hill bouncing around in their rubber ring. Poor Ms Connor ended up like a human skittle as she attempted to stop those rings that were flying down so fast they could hardly stop. She had her face planted into the snow on more than one occasion. Perhaps the highlight of the evening, though, was Mr Douglas's hilarious second attempt down the hill. His rubber ring had a mind of its own and chose to veer left down the hill, causing him to plough right into those students who were waiting at the bottom. There were bodies and clouds of snow everywhere and a highly embarrassed Mr Douglas apologising to the students who were creased over with laughter.

When we got back to our hotel it was time to start making the first of our preparations for our journey home. Following our evening meal, all our instructors kindly came to the hotel to take part in Presentation Evening. Here, each group discovered the results of their race and medals and certificates were handed out accordingly. To show our appreciation, we ensured each instructor received a generous tip from their group. We also got the chance to take a look at the outstanding video footage we had of our week that had been superbly put together and edited by Miss Burke and Robin Summerfield. Robin had been taking care of our Ski Trip Blog to keep all our families back home on Merseyside up to date with all we had been up to. Day 6 – our final day on the slopes – and we found ourselves at the resort of Radstadt.

The weather had taken a turn for the worse and we found ourselves skiing in quite heavy snowfall. Thankfully by now, every single group was able to take the gondola to the top of the mountain and, before long, we were zooming down in snowy conditions with much powder snow on the pistes.



One or two brave souls chose to seek out the moguls that were forming and great fun was had as they shot into the air and then landed without falling. Others followed their instructors to the very edges of the pistes where little tracks and ridges had formed and attempted to ski over them whilst maintaining control of their skis. A couple of our groups wandered into the Fun Park on Blue 5 run and were taking on small jumps as well as skiing through mini half-pipes and specially formed tunnels. As we finished our final session, it was soon time to say our goodbyes to Berni and his fantastic team, before returning our equipment to the hire shop. After returning to the hotel to shower and change ready for our journey home, we enjoyed our final meal, before

preparing to return to Crosby. After a trouble free journey through Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium and France, we were able to catch the ferry two hours earlier than scheduled. Thankfully, there were no traffic problems on our way back to Crosby and we arrived back at Upper Site shortly before 8pm to be welcomed back by our families. It goes without saying we were all thoroughly exhausted after such a hectic week of demanding exercise but, once again, the Sacred Heart Ski Trip had been a huge success and provided us all with memories we shall treasure forever.