

## **Leadership by Streetwise – Jewish Identity Trip to Budapest**

**27.10.2019 – 29.10.2019**

On Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2019, 11 young leaders and 4 staff members went to Budapest for the Leadership by Streetwise programme's second ever international Trip.

The 3-day trip used parts of the Jewish Identity Programme from the European Maccabi Games 2019, and reshaped into relevant content for young leaders in training. At every site visited, the group had a guided tour and an informal educational activity that allowed them to connect with the site and history on a more personal level and to develop their leadership skills.

Sunday started with a trip to the Citadella, a beautiful view-point of the city and home to the Hungarian Statue of Liberty. The topic of conversation was freedom, what it meant to us and to what extent we have it. This was linked with our Judaism and how visible we feel we can be with it, linking to a broader conversation about integration vs assimilation. We continued this theme throughout the trip to compare and contrast our lives as Jews in Britain, to the Jews living in Hungary today.

From the Citadella we went on to Buda Castle and Fisherman's Bastion. We discussed how the Jewish people came to Hungary in the middle ages and throughout history were persecuted and expelled, then brought back to the forefront of society for economic growth. The group got onto a discussion about teamwork and how it feels to play different roles within a team, to be needed, to be used, to be excluded. This not only was a great conversation within itself, it also showed our young people how they could connect historical stories to relevant topics today.

We ended the day having dinner with staff, board members and volunteers from Maccabi Vac Hungary. The leaders had each prepared a question that they wanted to find out an answer for to increase their knowledge of Hungarian Jews. Upon returning to the hotel, everyone shared what they had learnt and how that made them feel. One woman had shared that she has two daughters, the 12 year old who loves being Jewish and getting involved in Jewish life, but the 15 year old who has faced antisemitic comments by friends and tries to disassociate herself with the religion. Minnie Freed reflected by saying *"it's sad how negative comments can make you hide a part of your identity, if we ever hide a Star of David round our neck it is temporary, their Judaism being hidden full time is not being free"*.

On Monday morning, the group did a tour of the Jewish Quarter, visiting Kazinczy Synagogue, Dohany Synagogue, Carl Lutz Memorial and ending at the Shoes on the Danube. As well as learning about the history of each place, the leaders delved into discussions about how they've personalised their own Judaism and why they put more importance on certain practices than others. Zionism and how we see and visit Israel today, the importance of being an Upstander and understanding that whilst we may not be able to do everything – we can do something, and continuing the conversation of freedom and integration into society as young British Jewish teens. Six of the young leaders prepared a speech and remembrance activity for the Shoes on the Danube, finishing with saying Kaddish.

Late afternoon, the group went into the main shopping street where they learnt Hungarian language from locals and were able to explore Hungarian culture. From here, they went on to the Israeli Cultural Institute – a hub for Jewish life in Budapest and home to many Jewish organisations and charities, including Maccabi Vac Hungary.

The Leadership by Streetwise group and 18 young Jewish adults living in Budapest got together for an evening of networking, team building and fun. Participants learnt about each others' journeys with Maccabi. One Hungarian teenager, Lili spoke of how her grandma told her last year that she needs to understand her Judaism more and pushed her to sign up to the Team Hungary for EMG 2019. Lili joined the team and won gold in fencing; she now has Jewish friends and is part of the community. This is just one story that was shared throughout the evening. The young people also got to hear and understand about Maccabi World Union and European Maccabi Confederation's Future Leaders Forum. Yvie Curtis, Leadership by Streetwise Manager and Budapest Trip Organiser told the group of how the programme's networking and friendship building supported her in creating the trip and organising the meet up. Our young leaders spoke of how they aspire to build connections with people from around the world through Maccabi GB and hope to go on to become leaders on Leadership, coaches and managers at International Games, and even become part time or full time members of staff. Everyone left with a smile and a new connection.

Tuesday was the last day of the trip and the group visited the 'Memento' Statue Park and Heroes Square. Throughout the day, the tour guide taught about the rise and fall of Communism and what this meant for Judaism. After meeting Hungarian Jews, the young leaders were able to understand things more and had real life stories to visualise the effects of the Second World War and communism on Hungarian Jews today.

The trip ended with each person sharing something with the group, Harry Davis said *"Before this trip I saw my Judaism as a burden, now I see it as a gift."*

Upon returning from the trip, participants were offered the opportunity to share their experiences and thoughts. To read each personal reflection, please see below.

November and December will see the first two weekends of the Leadership by Streetwise programme for 2019/20. After two successful European Jewish Identity Trips, one in Amsterdam and the latest in Budapest, the programme hopes to continue to offer this experience to their young people.

Thank you.

Amelie Tausig – Level 2. *Attended Maccabi Youth Games 2018*

Words can't explain how much I enjoyed visiting Budapest with Maccabi. I went knowing nothing about the country and left with an amazing Jewish knowledge and overall education of the wonderful country. The trip taught me about Jewish life before the war and Jewish life currently. I made so many memories and I vow never to forget this trip. The leaders were incredibly kind and turned sites, which didn't seem appealing at first, into amazing places. There wasn't a boring moment. The most interesting part of the trip for me was when we met the teens from Hungary. It was highly insightful into Jewish life in Hungary and really opened my eyes to the common ground between us. I made many memories in Budapest and will remember it forever as an incredible and educational trip.

Jamie Epstein – Level 2

It was an amazing opportunity to see a place where I have never visited before and never knew much about. To experience Budapest not only with my friends but with the leaders who were incredible in looking after us, teaching us about the rich Jewish history of Budapest. Furthermore, being able to look into the history of Jewish people living in Budapest and how they are treated, I felt was a fundamental part of the trip which is something I will remember the most. Our tour guide Agi was also brilliant in teaching us all about the Hungarian history linking to Judaism. Lastly I felt that seeing the Jewish Hungarian teens and the Maccabi vac Hungary people and hearing their story was especially meaningful to me, and I was able to tell my Jewish story to them. I really loved the trip and am excited to see where my leadership journey will take me next.

Minnie Freed – Level 2. *Attended Maccabi Youth Games 2018*

The trip to Budapest was full of all sorts of amazing experiences. We learnt facts about Jewish history, culture and discrimination in Hungary (visiting two synagogues and various sites), all of which was cleverly linked to topics relevant today/our lives, provoking thought and consideration of the parallels between life here and there. Drawing further comparisons, we got to meet and speak to members of the Maccabi vac Hungary members. Their stories were fascinating and it was incredibly eye-opening to see just how much the organisation can bring people together, no matter where they're from. I had a fantastic time learning about and enriching my Jewish history while in a fun and friendly environment. Massive thank you to all those who made the trip possible, roll on next year!!!



The Citadella

Harry Davis – Level 2. *Joined leadership via recommendation from brother*

Thank you for running the Budapest trip, it has helped me learn so much about my history as a Jew. This trip made me realise that Judaism isn't a choice but rather a gift and we should embrace that gift and do as much as we can to show our Judaism and get involved. It was also a brilliant opportunity to tour around such a beautiful city and experience the culture of such a historic city. Once again thank you for being great leaders and allowing us to have so much fun.

Harry Wagman – Level 3. *Attended Maccabi Youth Games 2018*

Firstly, the trip was amazing and thanks so much for all the effort you all put in. The Jewish aspect of the trip was really interesting. Hungary is a country I really never think about often, so to learn about the Jewish history of Budapest was something I found really interesting. Learning of how many Hungarians didn't find out their Jewish heritage until later on in their childhood was something that I didn't think happened anywhere in the world. The view from Fisherman's Bastion to the illuminated Parliament was very beautiful and the Hungarian Statue of Liberty was something very powerful. The atmosphere was good especially as most of them were year below and I didn't know them that well but we all got on very well and was really nice. Meeting the Hungarian people in the Israeli Cultural Institute was something really special especially as we all got to talk about our journeys to Maccabi and to speak to them about their future aspirations. Thanks so much for the trip and it's one experience I'll never forget.



Shoes on the Danube



Teamwork discussion at Fisherman's Bastion



Ethan Myers – Level 3. *Attended JCC Games 2018*

Thank you so much for the amazing trip to Budapest - I know we all had a great time. Having seen the Shoes on the Danube, and the Dohany Synagogue, then seeing the Statue Park and the Citadella, it was fascinating to learn about the history of Jews in Hungary, and how the differing regimes impacted the Jewish people. Through seeing these sites, and taking part in discussions and sessions, I learn a lot about what it is like to be a Jew in Hungary, and was interested in how to define freedom in the past and present. Discussions on the difference between assimilation and integration were central to how we viewed these points, and the one programme we did looking at discrimination in Hungary today was shocking, helping us to understand the importance of being an upstander.

Oliver Ziff – Level 2.

I thought that the trip really highlighted the amazing Jewish community and culture thriving within Budapest. I really thought that we all got to know each other more and learn about Maccabi and it's connections around the world. I developed inter personal skills when meeting the other young Hungarian Jews at the ICI and over meal times with the group.



Zionism discussion at Dohany Synagogue

Sammy Deacon – Level 3. *Joined leadership via recommendation from brother*

I loved joining the leadership team and going to Budapest over the last few days. The trip was very well planned which led to everything flowing smoothly and not any waiting around. The hotel we stayed at was good and we got given plenty of food. I learnt lots about the Jewish history of the place, for example when visiting the Shoes of the Danube. Some Jewish sites we saw were the 2 Shul's which I thought was particularly interesting to see and learn about due to me having no knowledge of these places prior to the trip. The group atmosphere was always positive and I loved the people I went with. All the leaders made sure that the group atmosphere was good and when we were visibly tired they would try to keep us engaged. The people we met both nights was great and interesting to see how Jews live and view certain aspects of Judaism in Budapest. Overall, this trip was a great way to see another place but also to develop my leadership skills in a different setting and environment, improving many attributes such as being more confident at speaking to new people, which is key to be a good leader.

Tatiana Collis – Level 2. *Attended Maccabi Youth Games 2018*

The atmosphere was beyond incredible and I really felt the leaders and the group mixed incredibly with everyone becoming close friends as if we had been on the trip for months not only 2 days. We visited gorgeous monuments, one that stood out for me was the Dohany synagogue, which really blew me away and shocked me at its amazing infrastructure. I would say it was a once in a lifetime experience that should be allowed and open to every Jewish kid.



Maccabi GB & Maccabi vac Hungary at the Israeli Cultural Institute