

# THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

**C**ougar volleyball is not just about competing during the season; team members enjoy opportunities to play together and develop their skills year-round with activities like spring tournaments and summer youth camps. However, the highlight of these offseason experiences has been BYU's foreign tours. Seven times in team history, the Cougars have traveled abroad to experience culture and a different brand of volleyball, improving their skills and reaching out to fellow players all over the world.

"Our program and athletic department is committed to providing this opportunity to our student-athletes," said BYU head coach Jason Watson. "By spending time abroad immersed in another culture, competing against great athletes and participating in Church services, we further enhance the quality of education provided to our athletes at BYU."

The 2004 offseason was the Cougars' most recent opportunity to experience the sights, sounds and playing style of another culture. Due to the NCAA's Institutional Foreign-Tour Limitations policy (17.30.2.1), Division I teams in every sport are only able to conduct a foreign tour once every four years. BYU's last foreign tour was in the spring of 1999 when it traveled through Europe and Israel. With an opportunity due, BYU took full advantage.

This time around, the Cougars traveled through five European countries, including Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Czech Republic and Germany, while playing 10 matches against national, professional and semi-professional teams. After dropping two in Italy as the players adjusted to the time difference and the speed of European play, the Cougars went 6-2 the rest of the trip, defeating the Austrian and Slovenian National Teams, while earning a split with the Finnish National Team.

The Cougars' first stop was Italy, and between hopping from landmark to landmark, including the Colosseum, the Sistine Chapel, Trevi Fountain, St. Peter's Basilica and the Spanish Steps, the group hobnobbed with locals, enjoyed competitive play and ate great food. With each successive day and as the team visited other countries, the bonds of the team deepened as the players experienced other cultures and a different level of play.



**DAY 1** – After traveling from Salt Lake City to Rome, the team spent the day taking in the sights, sounds and tastes of Italy, including visits to the Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain and Pantheon as well as the first of many dishes of gelato, considered a true treat for the taste buds by all of the players.

**DAY 2** – The Cougars got down to business on their second day, playing their first European match against Club Roma and taking one game from the Italian team. But the sights of Rome could not be completely ignored as the players spent time in Vatican City exploring the Sistine Chapel, the Colosseum and the Forum. The highlight of the day was a chance to hear the Pope speak at St. Peter's Square. Of course, the evening was topped off by dishes of gelato all around.

**DAY 3** – St. Peter's Basilica captured the attention of the team on day three as the players finished up the Rome leg of their journey. After a four-hour bus ride to Communanza, Italy, the players once again honed their volleyball skills against a second-division Italian team, losing in four.

**DAY 4** – Beach volleyball was the order of the day as the team found a net set up along the Adriatic Sea and enjoyed a few hours in the sun and sand. After practice in Communanza, the players had a chance to mingle with a few fans when a group of Italian children found their way into the gym. After exchanging hugs, pictures and BYU volleyball stickers with their followers, it was back to eating for the team, complete with lamb and more gelato.

**DAY 5** – A six-hour bus ride to Venice allowed time for some much-needed rest. The team arrived in Venice that evening in time for an incredible Venice sunset and a walk around the unique city with water-filled streets and quaint apartment buildings.

**DAY 6** – As the Sabbath commenced in Venice, the players found themselves in an Italian Latter-day Saint chapel, where they were taught lessons on prayer and faith by the Italian saints. Melanie Togo-Hatch had the opportunity to play the piano, and the Spirit was felt strongly as both team members and Italians bore their testimonies in their respective languages. After mingling and taking pictures after Church, most of the players enjoyed Italy's famed gondola rides.

**DAY 7** – After leaving Italy and traveling to Slovenia, the team competed against the Slovenian National Team, earning the victory.

**DAY 8** – The team made the short trip to Maribor, a gorgeous city on the eastern side of the Alps. Players spent the day sight-seeing and enjoyed a picnic lunch atop Pohorje Mountain, which has been the site of many World Cup Skiing races.



**PREVIOUS BYU WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL TEAM  
FOREIGN TOURS**

**SPRING OF 1999 - COACH ELAINE MICHAELIS**  
Israel, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Germany, Austria  
and Switzerland

**SPRING OF 1995 - COACH ELAINE MICHAELIS**  
Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Lithuania,  
Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and  
Austria

**SPRING OF 1991 - COACH ELAINE MICHAELIS**  
Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Germany, Belgium  
and Switzerland

**SUMMER OF 1987 - COACH ELAINE MICHAELIS**  
Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Russia

**SUMMER OF 1983 - COACH ELAINE MICHAELIS**  
Germany, Austria, Italy and Yugoslavia

DAY 9 – Maribor played host to the Cougars for one more day as the team had the opportunity to match up against another Slovenian team.

DAY 10 – Vienna, Austria was the Cougars' next stop on their whirlwind tour of Europe. The day was reserved for sight-seeing and resting up before the following day's action.

DAY 11 – Twelve European national teams gathered in Brno, Czech Republic for the annual Spring Cup, which the Cougars joined in on. Though not widely recognized as a tourist town, the players still enjoyed a healthy dose of volleyball action in Brno as they defeated the Austrian National Team.

DAY 12 – A crypt visit awaited the team on its second day in Brno. Despite the eeriness of such an experience, the Cougars still managed to once again showcase their volleyball skills, defeating the Slovenian national team and splitting with the Finnish National Team in two afternoon matches. Then it was off to Prague for the Sabbath.

DAY 13 – The Cougars sent a hearty Happy Mother's Day across the globe as they gathered for Church services in Prague. Once again, all felt touched by the faith and dedication of the Italian saints. After Church, the team went sight-seeing and had a little fun at a local castle. A 300-stair climb to the top afforded a fantastic view of the city, including the U.S. Embassy. The Cougars also got to experience a little bit of Hollywood as they visited a bridge used in the filming of "Mission Impossible."

DAY 14 – Sight-seeing was on the morning agenda in Prague as the Cougars had a chance to shop in the crystal shops and walk around the city. Lunch was a smorgasbord of traditional Czech food topped off with crepes filled with chocolate ice cream, a unanimous favorite. After lunch, the team loaded the bus for a 6-hour drive to Munich, Germany and their last European meal – McDonalds!



DAY 15 - Everyone was anxious to get back to family and loved ones as the team departed for Salt Lake City via Atlanta. It was a long day of traveling to get back to missed loved ones, but the memories of an incredible two weeks made the trip

worth it. Through this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, the players were able to grow closer together and form bonds that will carry them through the season. During their two weeks in Europe, the Cougars had life-changing experiences that will always be remembered!



Day 2 (Rome, Italy)  
"We woke up early this morning to go to Vatican City. We got there and discovered that the Pope was speaking at 10:30. We were pretty excited. From there, everyone split up into groups. We spent the day enjoying the sites including the Sistine Chapel, the Colosseum, the Forum, the Wedding Cake and the Pope at St. Peter's Square. Later that day we played our first match against Club Roma. We played four games and won one of them. It was a hard match for us because we were still very tired and trying to adjust to Italy."  
-- Kim Wilson, OH

Day 13 (Prague, Czech Republic)  
"After church, we went out to explore the

incredible city of Prague. We ate a traditional Czech meal at a cute little restaurant, which was beef and dumplings, I think. The first stop was a beautiful castle with a guard out front. They're those guards that almost don't look real because they don't move at all. But Mandi Kiholm got one of the guards to smile, although he tried really hard not to, by posing for a picture with her lips an inch or so away from his cheek (I think he liked it :) We hiked up 300 stairs to the top of the castle to see a gorgeous view of the city. We saw buildings that looked like castles out of a fairy tale."  
-- Lindsay Hartsock, MB