

APASS – Anglo-Polish Universities Assisted Teaching Project

APASS (North)
93 Victoria Road
Leeds
LS6 1DR
Tel: (0113) 275 8121
(8-10am and 4-5.30pm)

Dear Student

APASS do not have a website so this is some general info about the organisation and the Summer Language Camps, based on my previous experience with the organisation (Nysa 03, Lukow 05, Pulawy 05, Lublin 06, Mietne 07)

You'll find basic information concerning:

- Eligibility, Transport, Locations & Dates
- Summer Language Camps
- Applying & Costs
- Teaching & Packing

I'd like to point out that I'm not an employee of APASS, but have enjoyed my past experiences in Poland so much that I'm happy to promote their work. The information is based upon on my past experiences and of course subject to change.

Please bear in mind that placement dates and locations are confirmed at a later stage of the year, so only APASS can provide these. However, please let me know if you have a question I haven't covered in the pack regarding the teaching experience.

Kind Regards

Sally Denyer (email: avyysd@nottingham.ac.uk)

ELIGIBILITY, TRANSPORT, LOCATIONS & DATES

Eligibility

APASS members come from all walks of life - from students and teachers to people whose jobs have no links to education whatsoever. Anyone aged 18+ can apply although university students make up the bulk of applicants. Membership is not by invitation only but open to anyone who hears about it so people from a university other than your own are of course welcome. Applicants with families should note that APASS can place teenagers (13+) with their parents but unfortunately cannot take younger children. If this applies to you, I'd advise you to contact APASS directly on (0113) 275 8121 before applying.

APASS are looking for native English speakers. I'd also say a spirit of adventure, an interest in travel and teaching and good people skills will come in useful! You don't need any teaching qualifications; these are useful, but if you aren't CELTA qualified you'll find your team leader on hand with advice on teaching.

Citizens of other countries than Britain with English as their first language are welcome to apply but will probably need to obtain a work visa or a certificate of some sort, as APASS is classed as voluntary work; you should contact your embassy for details. Canadians and Americans have taken part in previous years but it's sometimes taken a while for the documentation to come through. If you are in this position I would suggest contacting your embassy immediately, but if it's too late please consider applying next year instead - and making visa enquiries in early spring.

APASS organise both host placements and language camps and the two are quite different in their make up. Please read the attached info on language camps. Also, if there are a couple of you who would like to be placed together, you should both mention this at every stage of the application process.

Transport

APASS arrange travel to Poland by coach from London. This is a pretty long journey of approx 36 hours but there are stops in France and Germany and you'd be surprised how quickly you get to know the people you're going with on a journey that long! There is the possibility of flying but (1) this can be more expensive than you would think at late notice, (2) arrangements have to be made to pick you up separately and (3) you miss out on getting to know the other members of the team on the way. There is a limit on luggage; please read your final information pack carefully as this depends on the coach operator. An extra bag in the hold generally incurs a £10 fee, but can only be carried if there is room: it's best to keep to one large item for the hold and a backpack.

Dates & Locations

There are a number of different camps running; the earliest departs at the end of June, the last leaves at the end of July so I'm afraid it is not possible to complete one in June or from the end of August. When applying you will be asked between which dates you are available and they will do their best to accommodate you on the scheme. If you are able to and don't mind which placement you go on, please give a full range of available dates when applying, plus if you're available for more than four weeks please put this. Anyone with a particular interest in an area of Poland might also like to include this in their letter. There will be six camps this year. I don't have access to details of all the camp locations and dates as these are being finalised, but all placements are chosen for their good locations, accommodation and each has a friendly group of Polish staff on hand.

LANGUAGE CAMPS: FACILITIES, ACCOMMODATION, FOOD, TEACHING & TOUR

Please read this in conjunction with the other information.

Language Camps

APASS camps vary from year to year in terms of location and specific details but they always have great accommodation, food, excursions around the local area and an all expenses paid tour of Poland in the last week. Each camp lasts for four weeks in total - three weeks teaching followed by a week long tour of the country.

Each camp usually has around:

- 15 British teachers (one of whom will be the team leader assigned to ensure everything runs smoothly, who'll help you with teaching and any questions you have)
- 5-10 Polish staff (pastoral care for the students/to translate - again one Pole will be the Camp Director)
- 100 students aged between 12-17.

Camp Facilities – Accommodation and Food

All accommodation and food is paid for by APASS. The camps are usually run at boarding schools and you will be put up here along with the Polish staff and students. Your hosts will provide you with comfortable rooms, bathrooms, a 'staff room' etc. There's usually a sports field and everything else you'd expect of a boarding school. This will usually include a computer room although internet cafes are springing up all over Poland. Pay phones are available wherever you go to keep in contact with family and friends. Occasionally British staff stay in small groups in the homes of the Polish staff but the boarding school style is more common. There's usually a big dining room and food is typically Eastern European – soup, bread, meat and vegetables, fruit, puddings. You will probably come back weighing a good stone more than when you went as they feed you so much good food!

3 Weeks Teaching – Morning Classes

Students are split into groups of around 8-10 of roughly the same ability. The teaching is very informal, usually no more than about three hours in the morning from 9 until noon. The aim is to improve the students' knowledge of English customs and way of life, their spoken English and especially their pronunciation and intonation. Some lessons took place in town or in restaurants, or playing English board games, modified 'pub games'; anything to encourage conversation! You're not expected to teach complicated grammar and you don't need to know a word of Polish as you'll find that their English is already superb. There is no formal training as such since the lessons centre on practising spoken English and are based on your own knowledge of the English language and lifestyle. However, your team leader should be able to give you a hand to think of lesson plans and find useful resources – he or she will likely be an 'old hand' with APASS. Your host card will tell you what age your students will be – usually the age bracket is 12-14 or 14-16 yrs.

The ability tends to vary through the camp but the great thing is that students really want to be there and to learn. Most of them only get to practise their English on their Polish born teachers so the competition for the camps is high and they put their names down well in advance! It's really up to you and your teaching partner as to what your lessons involve, some of mine were debating ideas.

To those of you thinking of or currently undergoing a CELTA/PGCE course – this is an experience welcomed by schools and will definitely stand in your favour when applying for jobs. Anyone who has experienced the trials of a British classroom will be pleasantly surprised with the lack of disobedient, bored students and this will most likely restore your faith in education!

3 Weeks Teaching - Afternoon Activities

The afternoons consist of activities for about an hour – drama, cricket, computing, arts and crafts (think pumpkin carving, Lowry fakes, egg decorating), Scottish dancing, cookery (shortbread was in high demand) - these were the activities run when I was over there, but really anything you think you'd like to do you're usually welcome to do. The Polish staff will provide you with virtually anything you ask for (even two hundred eggs for egg decorating...) and you can mix and match what you do. Each camp depends on what skills the team has so whether your talent's football, painting or something more exotic (I have heard rumours of bottle rocket building lessons!) you'll be in good company. Last year we did a drumming workshop, salsa classes, British Sign Language, Polish Sign Language... The afternoons are often when the students' English comes alive.

3 Weeks Teaching – Evening and Weekend Activities

It's up to you whether you take part in anything organised in the evenings or at the weekends but I'd recommend you do. Film evenings, visits to local attractions, plays, quizzes, sports (England v Poland, just never challenge them to a volleyball match, Poles are far too skilled), parties. I went out most nights last year – drinks are affordable, there are often friendly bars, clubs and restaurants and the Polish staff are great guides. Obviously your behaviour on camp has to be professional (no drunkenness etc.) but going out in the evenings is a necessary relaxation after a hard day's work.

Tour of Poland

After the three weeks teaching, there's a week long tour of Poland usually covering Krakow, Warsaw and some other important towns. We saw the Raclawice Panorama, visited underground salt mines in Wieliczka, went to Auschwitz, took in castles and other such necessary touristy areas, went rafting down the river Kroszanka, hiked in Zakopane and tackled a few hills, went up the Kasprowy Wierch mountain, made it up to Lake Morskie Oko by horse drawn cart, learnt to zap and Polish dance in a Highlanders' Inn and of course sampled the daytime and night-time culture everywhere we went. If this all sounds a little rushed, I assure you there's lots of time to go your own way if you like, but what's organised is great and I'm glad that I did everything. Again all accommodation, food and trips out are paid for during this week by the Poles, but apart from this if you decide to go your own way and wish to sample local delicacies, Poland's still fairly cheap.

Applying & Costs

Applying and paying comes in three stages.

Costs

Membership of APASS is £35, payable at stage 2. Your coach travel is £90, payable at stage 3.

Remember that you will get some money back whilst there, a small amount of 'pocket money' - around £50 for camps. I was told as an estimate that Poles pay anything between 400 and 600 pounds for each person taking part in the sightseeing or tour of Poland. In the past I've popped over to Prague in Czech Republic and L'viv in Ukraine for a weekend, so if you're thinking about doing something like that or travelling afterwards consider how much to budget. Lots of people do travel afterwards, and the Polish staff and your team leader will help you to get to your destination.

Applying

The application process is in three sections:

1. Send

- a 50p-stamped A5 size self addressed envelope (current term time address)
- a £3 postal order made payable to APASS (available from all good post offices, please DO NOT send cheques)
- a covering letter with your name, profession. Students, please mention the name of your university, the degree course you are enrolled on and which year you are in and be careful with your contact details (term address/home), asking for more information. If you are limited as to what dates you are available you should include that in the letter. Similarly this is when to ask if a camp is running in a specific area that you might be interested in.

Send these to:

APASS (North)
93, Victoria Road
LEEDS
LS6 1DR

2. APASS will then send you similar but more informed information than is here, plus the important application forms. You will be asked to complete a profile of yourself (eg. your educational background, occupation), to estimate your personality and provide two references. You won't need to send a C.V. or complete an interview.

3. If your application is successful you will receive a letter advising you about paying the coach money.

Your final information pack will include a detailed host card (also your contract) along with telephone numbers of people who have taught at your camp previously, that of your team leader and your translator in Poland.

I warn you now that APASS also ask you for quite a few SAEs – this is to cut down on administration costs. The company is not large, only employing a handful of people in England to arrange placements for up to 150 applicants. Sending SAEs saves them time and keeps the cost for you to a -- minimum.

Teaching & Packing

Teaching

Teaching is often done with a partner and you'll have a class of around 10 students.

You might be an experienced teacher of English or have never tried teaching your native language. If, like I was on my first camp, you fit into that second group it's normal to be a little nervous about teaching. The teaching on all APASS placements is informal and emphasis is put upon improving conversational English – Polish students frequently tell me that they have too many grammar lessons but rarely get a chance to chat to a native English speaker. I hope some of the following will be helpful in preparing for your teaching experience.

Advice on preparing lessons

It would be a good idea to plan out a couple of lessons before you go. TEFL websites are popping up everywhere, some of the better ones I've discovered are:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistant-arc-essuk.htm>

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/>

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk>

<http://mes-english.com/>

<http://perso.wanadoo.es/tobyrob/>

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/>

<http://www.esl-lounge.com/>

<http://bogglesworld.com>

You don't need to spend a lot of time putting together lesson plans, there are thousands already available. The most important thing is to gather together ideas and any resources you think you might need to help you teach the subject (eg menus, magazine articles)

- Aim to start the session with a quick warm up (role plays, songs)
- Decide on a topic, perhaps try the links for worksheets. For example, think about a lesson on Celebrities. You can start with the Name Game (students get the name of a famous person and a picture attached to their back, they have to ask yes/no questions to the class to figure out who they are.) You can then move onto them describing the appearance of their person....then perhaps what do they know about the famous person? What's their personality like, are they a good role-model for young people? They could role play, with an interviewer and the famous person – here you come onto criticisms and praise.
- Perhaps finish with a competitive game in teams. Think back to your GCSE language lessons – what made you want to learn, and what did you just find boring?

Some topic ideas

Greetings, Numbers, Health, Technology, International Relations, EU, Marriage and Divorce, Languages, Local Dialects, Environment, Geography, The Arts, Cooking, Places in a town, Commands, Parts of the body, Furniture, House, Family, Travel, Future Plans, Customs, Money, Finance and Economics, The Solar System, Transport, Stereotypes, Books, Emergency Services, Pets, Legends stories and myths, Television, Buying Stuff, Hobbies, Time Phrases, Weather, Food and Drink, Animals, Music and Films, History, Holidays, Tourism, Clothes, Appearances, Careers, Education, Festivals and Celebrations, Religion and Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology, Politics, Sport, Giving Directions, Days out in England, Famous Places, The Royal Family, Famous People, Seasons,, Invitations, Jokes, Comedy, Britain's work with science.

Slightly different ideas that have worked, mostly at advanced level:

- Planning a 'break-out' from the camp
- Reworking Shakespeare for the 21st century
- Acting Harry Potter (not strictly to the text)
- The rules of rugby

To that effect, try to take some of the following:

- Interesting magazines/newspaper articles for discussion or upon which they can base their own work
- Photographs of you+friends+home town/uni/scenarios for discussion
- Restaurant menus/signs, photocopyable resources: word-searches, puzzles, etc
- Maybe a cricket bat and ball, frisbee, rugby ball, boomerang (mainly useful for camps)
- Books (traditional fairytales, english cookbook/recipes)
- British souvenirs eg. beer mats, postcards, magazines (you might find the kids clamoring to get a small token - like a postcard - from you at the end of the camp as a momento, they're also good as prizes)
- CD-R(s) of songs, with printed lyric sheets (pop songs/stage show are usually best - songs with clearly sung lyrics are best, and those with intriguing lyrics that can be discussed)
- Maybe a film or two maybe tape a couple of things off terrestrial TV? Richard and Judy, Eastenders, The Office - whatever you like.
- A very small amount of stationary (biros, post-it notes, stickers, sellotape, glue, scissors)
- Teabags/shortbread/humbugs and other such 'British' things

Whatever you do, do not forget to take

- Valid passport + photocopy
- Travel insurance documents + photocopy + any medications + E111 + photocopy
- Money (złoty for Poland – I'd estimate between fifty and a hundred pounds worth - plus a few Euros for the journey. Don't take travellers cheques as you won't be able to cash them easily), debit/credit card

- Mobile phone + charger
- Sense of humour, patience, expectation of the unexpected!

Personal items

- CD player + music CDs + batteries
- Camera + film/memory card
- Travel wash + short length of clothes-line + pegs
- European plug adaptors
- Phrase book
- A couple of weeks worth of clothes, including something warm and something waterproof. Please bear in mind that the baggage allowance is one suitcase up to 15Kg and hand luggage up to 3Kg.
- A thick jumper and a roll-away plastic coverall

General Info – Eastern Europe

I'd advise you to be prepared for a little disorganisation and not to expect it to be laid down in concrete as to what will happen each day! If someone thinks of an idea or decides to organise something, plans change quickly. My experience of Poles is that they are the most friendly and hospitable people on the planet and very laid back, which works well on camp since activities can be tailored around students.

A few tips:

1. Don't panic.
3. Learn a few words of Polish. I'm not suggesting that you try and learn Polish in three months, heaven knows I couldn't. But http://www.krykiet.com/polish_pronunciation.htm explains pronunciation pretty well and if you go to http://www.byki.com/free_lang_software.pl you'll be able to download flash cards with sound cards for basic phrases, numbers, food vocabulary etc in Polish (the best place I've found for this as not many places actually tell you how things are pronounced)
4. Remember the phrase 'when in Rome?'. Life on camp is relaxed, often nothing happens on time and plans change quickly but on the upside everyone's very friendly!
5. Start a notebook of ideas for lessons and pick out menus or articles that you think will be useful now so as to avoid panicking the day before

I hope some of that this e-mail has been useful for you. If you have a question about APASS that does not relate to dates and locations, please feel free to e-mail me: avyysd@nottingham.ac.uk and I'll do my best to help.

Good luck with your application!

Kind Regards,

Sally Denyer