

THE Exploring Europe PROGRAMME

Languages

History

Geography

Creative Arts

Politics

Literature

Religion

Classics



First stops on the Downe House Global Education Programme



*"Education is not the filling of a pail,
but the lighting of a fire"*

Plutarch (Greece, ca. 45-120 CE)

Exploring

4 countries in 4 terms in Lower School

GERMANY
Berlin



GREECE
Athens



SPAIN
Seville



POLAND
Krakow



INTRODUCTION

Exploring Europe is an exciting programme of overseas trips and cross-curricular learning for all pupils in our Lower School (Years 7 and 8). Designed to be the introductory stage of the unique Global Education Programme offered at Downe House, girls will visit four diverse European countries over four terms, whilst gaining a comprehensive understanding of each place through a bespoke curriculum covering geography, history, politics, art, literature, classics and religion. Through travel and learning, the girls will develop important skills, leadership qualities and new perspectives which will be of significant value as they progress through the School.

A GLOBAL EDUCATION

Downe House recognises that global awareness and experience matter more in the 21st century than ever before at all levels of education and employment. Our aim is to make our girls 'world ready' by supporting them to develop a global perspective and an understanding of their place within the world – and how they can make a difference. We achieve this through celebrating the diversity of our own school community, delivering an outward-looking academic curriculum, and by offering a range of experiences overseas.

Exploring Europe gives our younger pupils a broad understanding of our continent and a deeper insight into four very different countries on our doorstep. Further opportunities to learn about the world first-hand are available to girls as they progress through the school: through trips which focus on particular areas of study or interest, and the schemes offered by our Global Partnerships Department.

Global Schools Exchange

This programme gives girls in Years 10 and 12 the chance to study at one of 17 partner schools overseas, including Sweden, South Africa, New Zealand, India, USA, Brazil, Hong Kong, Japan and Australia, as well as the rewarding experience of hosting students on a reciprocal visit to Downe House. The scheme provides an exceptional opportunity for our girls to become part of another community within the context of school and family life. Our aim is to give the girls a competitive advantage in a highly globalised and changing world.

Global Internships

This programme is open to girls in the Sixth Form and offers work-shadowing placements in a diverse range of sectors across the world – including asset management in Germany; biochem in Thailand; law in UAE; venture capital in Zambia; market research in Hong Kong; jewellery design in London; and equine medicine in Australia. Girls acquire both critical employment skills and transferable soft skills, whilst experiencing another culture and gaining an early insight into the workplace: giving them a competitive edge and facilitating their decision-making for university and beyond.



EXPLORING EUROPE PROGRAMME

The Programme is centred around four European cities - selected for their diversity and richness of history and culture. Starting in the Summer term of Remove, the girls go on a five-day trip every term, with the last in the Summer term of Lower Fourth.

The year group travels together, though we divide into smaller groups, mixed across the Houses, whilst exploring. A detailed itinerary ensures that we make the most of each visit. There is no additional cost to parents, with the exception of flights (which will be kept to a minimum), and any spending money and incidentals needed.

GERMANY Berlin

Remove (Year 7)
Summer Term

GREECE Athens

Lower Fourth (Year 8)
Michaelmas Term

SPAIN Seville

Lower Fourth (Year 8)
Lent Term

POLAND Krakow

Lower Fourth (Year 8)
Summer Term

The Academic Curriculum

Whilst each trip enables the girls to experience a country first-hand, their knowledge and thirst to find out more is inspired by their learning at Downe House. Our bespoke Exploring Europe curriculum is delivered over two teaching periods per week over the two years of the Lower School. In these lessons, the girls learn about the history, culture, geography, religion, literature and art of each country before their visit. We also equip the girls with some basic language skills which they can then put into practice. The girls evaluate each trip at the end of that unit of study, and there are opportunities for parents to share in the Programme in a variety of ways.

Modern Languages

As part of Exploring Europe, we have expanded our modern language provision in the Lower School. In addition to French, the girls learn two years of German - thus giving them a grounding in both a Romantic and a Germanic language. They have the option to continue with both languages in Upper Fourth (Year 9), study only one, or choose neither. Spanish, Italian and Mandarin are also offered from the start of Upper Fourth, and Latin is part of the core curriculum. We will accommodate any individual circumstances in which the study of two languages may not be beneficial.

Developing Skills for the 21st Century

As well as expanding their knowledge and appreciation of Europe, the opportunities for learning and travel allow the girls to develop important life skills: nurturing high levels of competence and confidence in collaboration, communication, presentation, independent research, and analytical evaluation. The Programme inspires girls to be curious and outward-looking, with this perspective further encouraged by the many opportunities to experience and learn about other countries and cultures as they progress through the School.

TRIP ITINERARIES

Each trip has an assigned leader: a member of staff whose area of expertise and personal experience mean that they have a depth of knowledge and real enthusiasm for that country - which they are keen to pass on to their pupils. The descriptions below give a taste of what the girls can expect to see and learn on their visits. Full itineraries and trip information, including flights and accommodation, will be shared with parents in the terms before departure.



BERLIN



TRIP LEADER: Ms Elke von Mering-Ashton *Head of German*

I am absolutely thrilled to be leading the girls on their five-day trip to Germany. This is a fantastic opportunity to explore Berlin - one of Europe's most vibrant and historically rich cities - and for them to put into practice what they have learnt in the classroom, including their German language skills.

From standing at the Berlin Wall Memorial to cycling past iconic sights like the Brandenburg Gate and Checkpoint Charlie, every part of our adventure will bring Berlin's story to life. We will marvel at the views from the Reichstag Dome and the "Alex" TV Tower, explore the stunning Gardens of the World, and soak up the culture on Berlin's famous Museum Island and in the majestic Berliner Dom. There will be free time to explore too - in the Tiergarten and on Berlin's famous Kurfürstendamm, plus a delicious evening meal in a local restaurant on our last night. One of the real highlights will be meeting students at the Schillergymnasium in Charlottenburg and joining them for some fun summer activities.





ATHENS

TRIP LEADER: Mr Rob Castell *Director of Performing Arts*



I am hugely excited to lead the trip to Greece – an incredible country with an epic sense of history and arguably the central focus for anyone who wishes to understand the origins of Europe. Greece is also a beautiful, fun and vibrant place with a thriving modern cultural landscape. I currently lead the biennial Sixth Form Greece trip for Drama, Classics and Philosophy students, so it will be fantastic to give our Lower School girls an introduction to the rich history and culture of the country. Athens is an absolute giant of a city and we have much to discover as we explore its ancient archaeological sites and its fascinating museums. We have many exciting activities planned including a Democracy workshop on Pnyx Hill, an Ancient Greek Tragedy workshop, an olive oil tasting and a water sports day. I am also delighted that the trip includes a visit to Nafplio with all its charm and maritime magnificence, as well as to the brilliantly well-preserved site of Epidauros, which never fails to inspire the artists within us all.





SEVILLE



TRIP LEADER: Mrs Genevieve Ford *Deputy Head (Pastoral)*

Our visit to Seville and Cordoba will allow the girls to immerse themselves in the heart of Spanish culture – not as spectators, but as active participants. In Seville, we will explore the majestic Royal Alcázar, cruise along the Guadalquivir River, and take in sweeping views from the iconic Setas de Sevilla. A guided walking tour will lead us through the historic Santa Cruz district, past the Giralda, and into the vibrant soul of the city. Highlights will include a visit to the Flamenco Museum, watching a live show, and joining a dance class. We will also test our Spanish vocabulary at a local market before learning how to prepare gazpacho and paella Valenciana in a cookery workshop.

Our day in Cordoba will allow us to marvel at the beauty of the Mezquita, wander through the historic Jewish Quarter, and take time to appreciate the city's unique blend of Christian, Islamic, and Jewish influences.





KRAKOW



TRIP LEADER: Mrs Jennifer Grant *Head of History & Politics*

Krakow is, to my mind, the most beautiful small city in Europe. The capital of Poland until the 16th century, it is a cultural and historical treasure. Standing in the Old Town near the Church of St Mary's and the Cloth Hall, one can look up at the imposing walls of Wawel Castle, which contains the tombs of Poland's monarchs. The girls will particularly enjoy the Vistula river cruise past the Castle and the fire-breathing statue of the Wawel Dragon. We will also have the opportunity to visit the Wieliczka Salt Mine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the glorious ski resort of Zakopane, at the foot of the Tatra Mountains. In the heart of Europe, Poland has been subject to numerous invasions: the Schindler's Factory Museum sensitively presents the experience of Krakow's inhabitants, Catholic and Jewish, under German occupation. For tumultuous history and sheer aesthetic beauty, our time in Krakow will remain with the girls for a long time.



INSPIRING LEARNING

In the term preceding each trip, the Exploring Europe curriculum focuses on that particular country - drawing together many different subject areas to enable the girls to build a firm understanding and a deep curiosity in preparation for their visit. Our Heads of Department hugely value the opportunities presented by the Programme to bring their subjects to life, and to instil a love for learning at this early stage of each girl's academic journey at Downe House.

History & Politics

The rise and fall of empires, the clash of ideologies, the growth of democracy, and the experiences of warfare and occupation: Athens, Berlin, Krakow and Seville encapsulate many of the major developments in European history. The History and Politics Department supports the girls' understanding of each city by providing the broader context for their visits, from the emergence of Athenian Democracy through to the Spanish Inquisition, the Unification of Germany and the Second World War.

Mrs Jennifer Grant, Head of History & Politics

Geography

For Geography, the Exploring Europe Programme brings our classroom learning to life by connecting physical landscapes, urban environments, and human interactions in real-world settings. In experiencing a range of locations first-hand, pupils are able to deepen their global awareness and curiosity for what they see around them. The Programme strengthens geographical understanding and encourages pupils to see the world through a wider lens.

Mrs Nicola Price, Head of Geography

Languages

Mastering a foreign language is about building connections with people and places and our pupils are so lucky to be exposed to a whole continent's worth through the Exploring Europe Programme. Pupils see how languages and cultures intertwine in every corner of Europe. Being able to communicate at least some phrases in the local language on each trip is the icing on the cake! We deliver a rigorous introduction to language learning by exposing the girls to two language families, but we also inspire language learning more broadly - our aim is that every pupil finds the language which excites them!

Mrs Charlotte Sabnis, Head of Modern Foreign Languages

RS & Philosophy

In RS, we explore the religious and philosophical heritage of each country in the Programme. Athens takes us to the roots of Western philosophy, of thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle. Krakow offers insights into Jewish history and the Holocaust, prompting discussion on interfaith dialogue and human rights. Seville introduces the richness of Islamic and Christian interaction, allowing us to reflect on religious pluralism. Berlin presents the opportunity to learn about the Reformation, the role of religion in post-war ethics, and reconciliation. As we delve into each destination in the classroom, before experiencing them first-hand, the girls develop knowledge but also empathy, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of the role of religion and philosophy in shaping European identity.

Mr Matthew Hall, Head of Religious Studies & Philosophy

Classics

The Greece section of the Exploring Europe Programme presents a fantastic opportunity for our pupils to explore archaeological sites and imagine life in the Classical Age. Athens represents a fascinating mix: a thriving modern city proud of its ancient roots. We have fun decoding the Classical Greek alphabet, and uncover the stories of the city that gave us philosophy, theatre and democracy.

Mrs Sarah Waller, Head of Classics

Literature

As part of our support for the Exploring Europe programme, the Library offers a carefully curated selection of fiction and non-fiction texts linked to each country. The Programme brings wonderful new books into our collection and adds even more cultural diversity to our library. Whether read in preparation for their travels, during the trip, or explored afterwards, these texts enrich learning and help the girls connect more deeply with each destination.

Miss Dani Kirby, Murray Centre (Library) Manager

Creative Arts

The Creative Arts faculty runs a vibrant series of lectures and creative activities ahead of each trip. The Programme immerses our pupils in diverse cultures, architecture, and artistic legacies, sparking creativity and deepening their understanding of art, design, and history through real-world experiences. Exploring iconic buildings, galleries, museums and public art in their original settings enriches the girls' perspectives and fuels their own artistic development when they return to Downe House.

Mrs Kirsten Mortimer, Director of Creative Arts

PERSONAL GROWTH

Exploring Europe is a really exciting first step into our Global Education Programme. We believe that instilling a global outlook from a young age empowers our girls to thrive in a connected world. Our aim is to open their minds to new cultures, ideas and perspectives, and to encourage empathy and a willingness to look beyond their own borders for shared solutions to global challenges.

The girls gain a huge amount of knowledge through the Exploring Europe Programme, and connecting their learning across subjects is both exciting and inspiring. The Programme supports the girls to develop as engaged and curious learners – a foundation which serves them well in their academic studies. However, the Programme is designed to deliver more than facts: instilling confidence, strong communication and leadership skills, whilst nurturing self-awareness and a deep respect for others.

The programme also helps to build close bonds within our community. The shared experiences of travel and the collaborative approach to learning strengthen friendships, foster trust, and create a strong sense of togetherness in our day-to-day life at school.

Mrs Kate Eaves, Assistant Head (Lower School)

Inspiring girls



Downe House

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ADMISSIONS ENQUIRIES

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