

Lessons from Auschwitz 2018

It is impossible to travel to Eastern Europe without experiencing humbling and heart-breaking realisations of how deeply and profoundly the actions of one group failed humanity over 70 years ago. I have studied it, but I have never felt so entrenched in the emotion and pain resulting from it as when I spent the day exploring the places that were the events themselves took place. Travel is, of course, great for the stories, the memories and the strategically framed Instagram photos, but above all else, it is the best way to venture towards a deeper understanding of the important and devastating history of this world. I visited Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp and writing about it in any length has seemed to be an overwhelming undertaking that I have put off continuously. I am doubtful of my ability to put words to paper to accurately describe the experience, because I do not think that I can do it justice. It is in no way, shape or form a fun day trip. You will leave feeling sick to your stomach, your mind reeling with questions impossible to answer, overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of your emotions, but this day trip is absolutely essential, in my mind, for anyone who has the opportunity. You can watch Holocaust films, you can visit the Holocaust museum in Washington DC, you can even visit Schindler's Factory in Kraków while you are there, but nothing will be as effective as walking in the footsteps of the victims right there at Auschwitz-Birkenau. So, it is important to try to immerse yourself in the camp and its history as much as you can and approach the camp with a maturity and a promise to yourself to respect and acknowledge the lives lost here. The Holocaust should no longer be a chapter in a history book, but a historical event which is imprinted in everybody's minds. This way, we will work together towards a stronger future where prejudice will be fought against. As the famous quote goes, 'Lest we forget'

Zoe-Alicia Bell