

International Conference of Physics Students

Split, Croatia

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The 2009 International Conference of Physics Students (ICPS) took place August 10-18 in Split, Croatia. Just under 500 physics students from Europe and the rest of the world attended the 24th ICPS this year. The conference was a great experiences to meet and socialize with students from



Josh and I during the city tour

around the globe who also share an interest and passion for physics. I was part of the U.S. delegation, together with Josh Fuchs from Rhodes College.

Upon arriving, the first day was spent mainly settling in and registering for the conference. The free time was a good opportunity to begin to get acquainted with the other students and a more organized welcome party was held that night, where friendships first began to develop.

Activities started early the next morning with everybody walking over to the conference building after breakfast, just a few block away from the dorm. During the opening ceremony, we were welcomed by the organizing

committee in addition to listening to speeches by the President of the Croatian Physical Society and a representative from the Ministry of Science, among others. Following physics demos, we listened to the first invited lecture of the conference.

During the rest of our stay in Split, there were numerous more lectures covering all fields of physics.



Building where the lectures were held

The typical academic schedule consisted of student talks in the morning, followed by an invited lecture right before lunch. A poster session was also held on Sunday for students preferring to present a poster instead of giving a talk. The topics of the invited lectures were as varied as the ones given by students, ranging from oceanography, to high energy physics, solid state physics and particle astrophysics for example. It was a great opportunity to learn about all of these fields from eminent researchers in their field, and we even had the chance to meet Nobel Laureate Klaus von Klitzing!

Besides being able to get a glimpse of other physics subjects which I was not as familiar with, the experience was also extremely rewarding to my own research interests. I had the chance to meet Professor Peter Biermann, a very well known astrophysicist who gave an invited lecture on cosmic rays. My own research involves



Lecture Room

particle astrophysics, so we had a chance to talk more in depth about this topic and mutual research projects, which even involved collaborating on a paper later on!

There is also an official aspect of the ICPS, where representatives from each country gather for the Annual General Meeting (AMG) and make decisions regarding the International Association of Physics Students (IAPS) and its governing body. There, the events and activities of the previous year were discussed, followed by voting for the new executive board and the location of ICPS two years from now. I attended this event with Josh as the U.S. delegation.



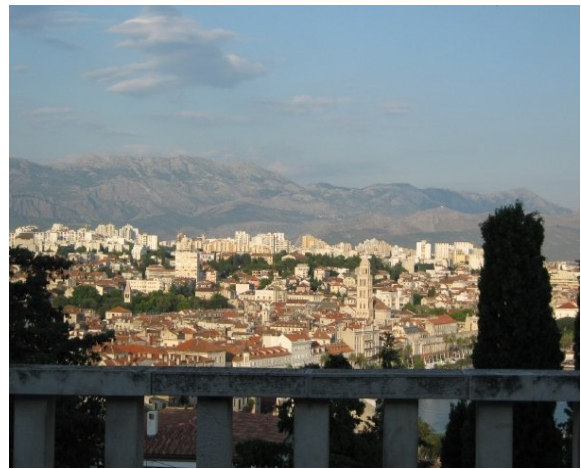
Annual General Meeting

But the ICPS was not only a remarkable academic experience, there were also numerous social and cultural events scheduled where we were able to interact more with fellow students there. Several tours were scheduled throughout our stay. On Wednesday we had a guided tour of Split and on Saturday we had a number of activities to choose from for the day. During

the tour of Split, we walked downtown, passing through Diocletian's Palace, built by Roman emperor Diocletian in the fourth century. After walking through the narrow streets of the palace, we continued on to Marjan hill, overlooking the beautiful city of Split. At the end of the night, we had the opportunity to wander through Split on our own, and had a chance to look at more sights and have a nice dinner downtown.



Diocletian's Palace



View of Split from Marjan Hill

The possible excursions on Saturday ranged from visiting various cities, to rafting to simply going to the beach. I choose to go to Sibenik, another city about an hour away from Split. There we also had the opportunity to visit various landmarks and tour another ancient city. This tour concluded with some free time to walk around and enjoy the beautiful crystal clear sea.

The amazing Split weather gave us plenty of opportunities to visit the beach during our free time, and even in the middle of the night! There was a nice beach just a ten minute walk from the dormitory. We



Beach near the dormitory

also had the chance to explore beaches farther away; the last Monday, right before leaving, we took a

ferry to one of the islands nearby, called Brac. There we spent part of the day visiting the town of Supetar.

A number of more informal social events were also organized during our stay. Various themed parties kept us entertained each night. Besides the typical welcome and farewell parties at the



Costume Party

beginning and the end of the event, there was a Croatian themed party, the yearly national party, a costume party and a surprise party. For the Croatian party we were regaled with typical Croatian food and had the opportunity to hear an a cappella Croatian folk music group. During the national party, each country set up a

stand with food and drinks representative of their country, and then many groups also performed a song, dance or show from their country of origin. While the costume party is self-explanatory, it was quite entertaining to see the range of costumes people wore. Some had planned their outfits for months and traveled with the required pieces, while other improvised last minute with what ever could be found at hand. The surprise party involved several fun activities, such as karaoke, and various competitions like limbo and arm wrestling.



National Party

As the conference came to an end, we were all sad to have to leave our newly developed friendships and return to our homes, back to study and work. I did come back with many invitations to return to Europe, which I hope to be able to visit again. Even though the trip was only about 10 days, I feel I developed great friendships, and I'm sure I'll see these people again. It is unfortunate that there is not much continuity with U.S. Students returning to ICPS. One of the things I noticed during my stay was that many people knew each other from previous visits, and the ones there for the first time were already making plans to return next year. I hope to be able to travel again next year and help increase the number of the U.S. contingent at Graz, in Austria, and relive the great memories from the 2009 ICPS in Split.



Group picture during last day of ICPS