

Only one more week to go until I leave my beautiful southern home of Florence! I am totally not ready to leave yet and if I could I would, without a doubt, add another three months to my time here. The more I talk to the people in Florence and the more time I spend in this little town, the more I want to stay. Just when I thought I had seen and experienced it all, more things pop out of nowhere. Yesterday Patti told me it was such a pity I could not stay longer until the fall, because that's when the cotton fields start to bloom, people celebrate Halloween, everyone goes out to buy pumpkins and the weather is perfect. Darn it, Patti, I just checked off everything on my bucket list! But the road is calling and there are many more adventures ahead... And talking about that 'bucket list': in the past few weeks I've been able to check off a lot of new experiences!

Saturday, August 17

Ever since I arrived in Florence I've been slowly dragged into the wonderful world of tennis! Even though I am not the most *sportsy* person, there is no sport I do not enjoy. So when Peter offered to teach me how to play tennis, I did not even have to think about it. Over the past couple of weeks I have spent quite some time at the tennis court, not only to play tennis, but also volunteering at a big tennis tournament for high school girls. Or volunteering... more like 'keeping Peter company while he wrote down the scores'. But I had fun anyway!



After a nice afternoon in the hot sun, the rest of the tournament got canceled due to heavy rainfall. And when I say heavy rainfall, I mean HEAVY rainfall. Not to exaggerate or anything, but animals started coming down in pairs.

Fortunately the skies cleared up and the rain stopped, so we could enjoy a special evening at the Florence Motor Speedway. For y'all who don't know: I am currently in the deep, deep South. Where people say *y'all* a lot, where the last 'g' in words basically doesn't exist and where the *very* proud Americans live. And also where car races are a great way to catch up with friends and family. I'd never been to a car race before so it was quite the experience! Before we got to the races Peter warned us that the people at the track would probably not be 'from the highest class of society'. And although he was right, it did not make it less fun! The benches were filled with people that you could describe as 'typical Americans' (although those don't really exist). Baseball cap, bushy beard, thick Southern accent and an amount of

belly fat that could help a family through the winter. And boy, do they take their car races seriously! The races started with prayer (!) and of course, the national anthem and then all hell broke loose. It was a loud, smelly and humid evening, but what a cool thing to experience!





Friday, August 30

Time to cross something off that bucket list again! On Friday night Peter and Patti took us (or this time it was the other way around actually) to a high school football game at the Florence Memorial Stadium. Now, I know just as much about baseball as I do about American football, so I was happy to have Peter with me to teach me all the rules (again). And to be honest, after seeing the game, I still haven't figured it out completely yet. I do know what a quarterback is now, and I also understand how teams can score points but it is still kinda hard to follow. Fortunately, a high school football game is not complete without a school band, some teenage cheerleaders, a waterboy and proud momma's cheering on their sons. The whole atmosphere around the game was even more interesting than the game itself. High school games seem to be a big family event because the stand was packed with screaming parents, annoying siblings and a whole student squad dressed up in fluorescent clothes and

paint. Sadly, the South Florence Bruins did not have enough strength to hold the Hartsville Red Foxes back, and they lost the game with 13-16. Nevertheless, it was another amazing night in muggy Florence and I have come to the conclusion that all American high school clichés are true!



Go Bruins!

