

Monday, July 29

♪♪♪ Take me out to the ball game,
Take me out with the crowd;
Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack,
I don't care if I never get back.
Let me root, root, root for the home team,
If they don't win, it's a shame.
For it's one, two, three strikes, you're out,
At the ol' ball game. ♪♪♪

Strike! Out! Ball! On Monday Peter and Patti and their son Parker took Cristina and me out to a baseball game. To be honest, I don't know anything about baseball. I only know the Yankees, the Mets and the Boston Red Sox and that's about it. I don't really know the rules, when the game ends or when to yell really loud. But there's a first time for everything! During the day, Peter would send me videos to learn the rules before the game and during my lunch break I made notes of it in my little notebook. Which, of course, I took with me to the game to see if it would make any sense to me. We had such a blast! We were rooting for the home team, the Florence RedWolves, that was playing against the Savannah Bananas. Yup, that really is their name! Before the game started, we all got up from our seats and sang the national anthem. Or well, I am not American, so I just listened and enjoyed the song. It always gives me goosebumps to hear the 'and the roockets' red glaaaare, the bombs buuursting in aaaaair'... goosebumps! After the anthem the game finally started. It took a while for me to understand what was going on on the field, but the more I learned, the more fun it got. During the *innings* the mascot would play little games with the kids and we had some time to buy hotdogs. About half-way through the game it was time to honor the veterans in the stadium, which is honestly the most American thing I have ever witnessed. I mean, it is cool that they do it, but really? During an amateur college baseball game? Anyways, I had a lot of fun at the game, mainly because Peter really took the time to answer literally every single question I had! Thanks Peter! Sadly, the Bananas had no mercy for the Wolves and the game ended in an 11-2 defeat... and what was even more sad, we only saw one home run!

The ol' ball game





Friday, August 16

Sorry, I have not been writing a lot lately! Since the ball game not a lot of exciting things happened, which is okay. I've been in Florence for about seven weeks now and I am adjusting well to life here. I guess it's just like anywhere in the world, at first all things are new and exciting and after a while your days will kind of be the same. Which is fine by me! Last week we said goodbye to our outgoing social butterfly Cristina, which is also one of the reasons we don't go out as much anymore. Right before Cristina left, Ina from Germany arrived to be part of our STEP-team. Now Geraldine from France, Ina and I are the only fulltime volunteers and there are no new volunteers arriving anytime soon. We do have a new couple at the office, Emory and Andrea from OM Ireland, who will serve with OM Florence for the next six months. Not because they really wanted to, but because they are Americans and they had problems getting a new long-term visa for their work in Ireland. The lack of volunteers is also slowly affecting the work at the warehouse. Less books are being sorted, books stay in the

sorting area longer and there are not many strong people who can do the heavy lifting. All summer employees are going back to school this coming Monday so we are kind of in need of more helping hands!

And about life here in Florence... I am still happy and healthy, I am practicing my tennis skills with Peter, I go to the gym twice a week and I am still very happy with my 'promotion' to the internet department. I still enjoy the work very much and it is a lot of fun to see where the books I pick and pack are sent to. 'My' books are sent to prisons (!), universities and people all across the USA. From 'Golden State' California to Scranton, Pennsylvania (hello Office fans!) and from Hawaii to a few streets away from the office. The hours at work are long and hot but totally worth it. The temperature hasn't been below 25 degrees since I got here and most of the days are between 30 and 35 degrees... Since I moved to the internet department I've also been working in the back three warehouses which don't have airconditioning. Which means if it's 37 degrees outside, it will be the same inside (or hotter). Needless to say, I am losing weight and gaining muscles by the minute! Overall, I am doing great!



What's next?

In only three weeks I am leaving beautiful Florence already... So, in the past week I've been very busy planning my future travels! I don't have every step figured out yet, but here's a little overview for September:

The ol' ball game

September 09 – 13: Savannah, Georgia

September 13 – 17: Chattanooga, Tennessee

September 17 – 21: Niagara Falls, New York

September 21 – 27: New York City, New York

September 27, 1:05pm: Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam!

