**Trip to the Parliament**

by Miss Grace Peterson

The Parliament building is one of the most notable landmarks in Budapest. When I was invited along for a field trip to tour the building I was very excited! On a rainy day in March we set out on a bus with a group of students to see the inside of one of the most beautiful buildings in Hungary.

Budapest has many impressive landmarks. Tourists come from all over the world to explore the city. Hero’s Square celebrates the first chiefs and kings of the nation. St. Stephen’s Basilica is home to the Saint’s mummified hand. Atop the hills of Buda, the castle looks out over the city. And sitting prominently on the banks of the River Danube, the Parliament is one of the must-see sights for people visiting Budapest. I was surprised to discover that the inside was even grander than the exterior.

After waiting outside for a long time, we were finally able to enter the Parliament. We passed through a small security checkpoint and we were met with a tour guide who would lead us through the Parliament. We walked into a great hall with staircases lined in rich, red carpeting. It was very luxurious, and the students were busy snapping photos with their mobile phones. The tour guide led us up the stairs and we saw a display case containing the Holy Crown of Hungary. It is watched over by two guards who ceremoniously walk around the case and wave their swords in the air. The students and I agreed that it would be a boring job to stand guard all day without moving!

The tour was in Hungarian, but some of my students translated for me after the tour guide finished talking. One of the most interesting stories they told me was about the windows surrounding the room with the crown. The glass was the original stained glass from when it was first built. The Hungarians were able to prevent it from breaking during the war by taking out the glass and storing it in the basement of the building.

Another interesting thing we saw were the cigar holders outside the parliament meeting room. They looked like silver metal trays along the walls. This was for the men to put their cigars in to keep while they went into the meetings. The slots are numbered so they wouldn’t get confused about whose cigar was whose!

Once the tour came to an end the children were all reluctant to leave and go back to school. They really enjoyed the excursion because they got to spend time with their classmates out of school and take lots of good pictures! Some of them had already visited the Parliament before, but they were happy to go for another visit.

The visit to Parliament was very informative and I learned a lot about the history of Hungary. Thousands of people visit Budapest each year and the Parliament building is probably the most famous sight. I don’t know how many people visit the inside and take a tour but I definitely think it is worth it. Hungary may have a had a difficult time in the last few centuries, but the grandeur of the Parliament shows the long and rich history that Hungary has and is hopefully a symbol of the great things to come!