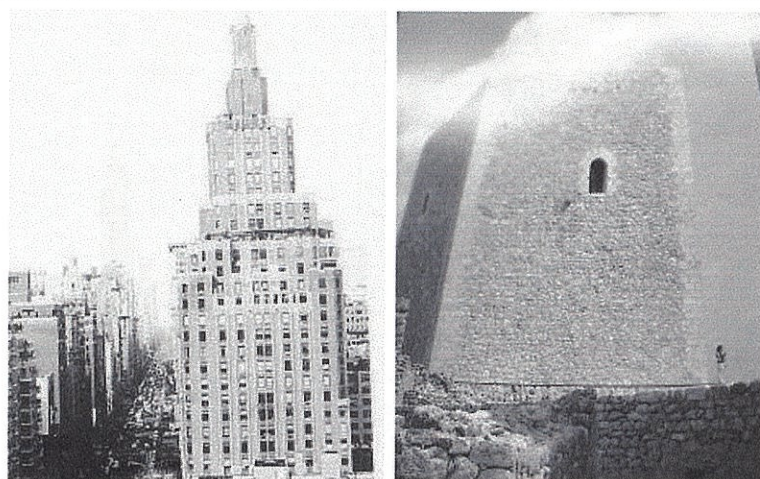




A hit with builders past and present

● Barcelona's Pedrera (above), Ulldecona castle (above right) and New York University (above left) are all structures built using stone taken from the Godall quarry in Ulldecona. The stone business there, which is worth €30 million a year, is the subject of a new promotional pamphlet produced by the local council. Included in the list of famous buildings that have used Godall stone, known as Cenia, are those of the Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí. Apart from the Casa Milà mentioned above, Ulldecona stone is being used in the renovation of both Sagrada Família and Parc Güell. Naturally, Ulldecona castle, which dates back to the 14th century, is made of stone from the local quarry, proving that Cenia is not only a modern favourite. Nor is it restricted to Catalonia, as New York University used 5,000 square metres in its construction started in 1831. / L.MORESO

Estatut is stuck at the airport

CATALONIA TODAY

● A congressional commission has approved the law governing the extent Catalonia's powers, this time with votes in favour from left-wing independence party, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC). The "Yes" vote came despite disagreements between Catalan parties regarding the management of Barcelona's airport and national sports teams. The dispute over who should have the authority over El Prat airport is the central issue on the negotiation table. The

governing Spanish Socialists (PSOE) have refused to hand over the airport's control to the Generalitat, but the issue has driven a wedge between the Socialists, as Catalan Socialist ministers are in favour of the Generalitat controlling it. In addition, the issue of the airport could help to lead ERC to compromise and to turn its current rejection of the Estatut into an abstention vote.

The Estatut has also been the subject of a harsh confrontation between Spain's prime minister

Zapatero and the opposition leader, Mariano Rajoy, during a parliamentary session. The Partido Popular leader continues to claim that the Catalan Estatut endangers Spanish unity and accused Zapatero of committing a "fraud" and of "not telling the truth" in the question of whether Catalonia should be called a "nation".

Zapatero responded by saying that everything that has been approved to date is within the constitution and that the preamble of the Estatut is impeccable.

Voyage to Lithuania

STACEE SMITH

● From February 17 to 26 the non-profit youth association *Barcelona Voluntaria* gave young people, ages 15 to 25, the opportunity to receive non-formal intercultural education through an exchange program to Lithuania.

I, Stacey Smith, age 18 and from the island of Bermuda, was one of those lucky participants, as were five others from Barcelona.

Spain was not the only country involved; Greece, Portugal, and of course, Lithuania, were also participants. The general theme was 'the cinema', requiring each country to create a short film beforehand.

Fortunately, two members of our Spanish group studied film directing; Joan Planas being one of them — his documentary on the poverty in Nicaragua *Con ánimo de lucro* has aired on local television. Visit: www.conanimodelucro.com and www.joanplanas.com.

After holding an impressive casting in search of an actor and actress, we filmed our short movie, *30sqmetres*, in a friend's apartment and became good friends before we left the country. In fact, the actress, who happened to be part Lithuanian, ended up joining us for the voyage.

Lithuania was unlike any other country I have visited. The place — though full of faded colours — was beautiful. We spent the majority of the time in the countryside, living in a cosy cabin-style house. Sure, the temperature was freezing — well below zero degrees Celsius — causing it to snow a few nights. However the sauna warmed us up, although we were crazy enough to roll in the snow during intervals!

We sleighed through the maze of trees in our backyard and strolled to a distant island along a snow-covered frozen lake, observing fisherman letting lines down holes in the ice. After



Local fisherman on a vast lake / STACEE SMITH

pausing with my friends to take in the crisp fresh air and enjoy the vacuum-like silence, it truly felt as though I was in a winter wonderland. The sky and lake could have easily been confused with a white oil painting.

Throughout the week we ate typical Lithuanian dishes and toured the area including visits to a nearby ice skating rink and an electricity power-plant.

During *International Night* each country gave a presentation on another, enjoying the opportunity to sample food and drink from each other's homelands as well as joining in on traditions such as Greek dances and Portuguese songs.

We also received interesting talks from a Lithuanian film director who discussed how to prepare a good screenplay. With our ingenuity we produced our own — this time in multinational groups. Through such activities, the participants were able to know and appreciate the personality and culture of one another.

We spent our last two days in a youth hostel in Vilnius, the capital. In a local bar we watched our short films, which ranged from commercials to comedies and dramas.

Before we knew it... gone were the interesting people we met, and the slippery slush on the snow-glazed streets of the city. We had the time of our lives! For more on the organisation visit: www.barcelonavoluntaria.org



Having fun in the snow / JOAN PLANAS