



BYU WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

FOREIGN TOUR

May 11-25, 2023

France | Egypt | Turkey | Greece



BYU women's volleyball returned from a successful foreign tour last week after visiting countries France, Egypt, Turkey and Greece, playing five matches against international opponents while abroad.

“Our 15-day foreign trip was an extremely valuable experience for our players and staff,” BYU head coach Heather Olmstead said. “We accomplished everything we were hoping to and more. The opportunity our team had to visit four countries, three continents and compete against some of the best clubs and national teams in the world all while representing Brigham Young University will last a lifetime for us.”

Going 3-2 against foreign competition with wins against Vakifbank, Fenerbahçe and the Greece Junior National Team, the Cougars' spring tour marked the program's 11th international trip but first since 2016.





Paris, France

Traveling from Salt Lake City to France, the team began its trip with a day in Paris, visiting the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and the Notre Dame cathedral, also boarding a boat tour, stopping by a local bakery and walking around the city.



Istanbul, Turkey

Kicking off its time in Istanbul, BYU held a clinic for about 30 youth, presenting further opportunity to get to know the local people and share some of the team's volleyball knowledge and skills.



Nafplio, Greece

Beginning its time in Greece on the coast, BYU started its stay in Nafplio, where it was able to sightsee, shop and relax. The team also held a Sunday devotional on a hillside.



The Cougars played three matches in Istanbul and recorded 12 aces in each one, beginning against Eczacibisi.

Llarenas led the way with 13 kills on a .458 clip, while freshman outside hitter Claire Little added 10 to go along with 12 digs. BYU totaled 15 blocks and 95 digs as a team.

Little also paced the Cougars in their win over Vakifbank S.K. with eight kills and 10 digs, while freshman middle blocker Mia Lee totaled four blocks. Setter Kalia Thunstrom landed four aces and Llarenas added three. BYU finished with 40 kills, 39 digs and nine blocks in the match.



Corinth, Greece

On the way from Nafplio to Athens, they stopped in the ancient city of Corinth to visit the place where the Apostle Paul taught and preached during the New Testament time.



The team was then able to spend the day with U.S. ambassador Jeff Flake, who joined them as they caught a ferry to its next match. Outside hitters Erin Livingston and Eden Bower fueled the Cougars in their victory against Fenerbahçe S.K. with seven (.583 clip) and six (.500 clip) kills, respectively.



Athens, Greece

The Cougars' final match abroad was a win against the Greece U-19 team that featured 78 total kills on a .428 clip, 61 digs, a tour-high 20 aces and nine blocks. Eden Bower notched 17 kills (.519 clip) and Little landed 14 while hitting .737, with Llarenas adding nine (.615 clip).

Cairo, Egypt

BYU's lone game in Egypt was played against the Egypt Senior National Team, where the Cougars tallied 46 kills, 11 blocks, eight aces and 51 digs. Both setter Whitney Bower and middle Whitney Llarenas recorded three aces, while libero Aria McComber totaled 13 digs. Following the match, the two teams had the opportunity to mingle and enjoy a meal together.

Sightseeing in Cairo featured a camel ride through the desert and the Pyramids of Giza, including a mini graduation for three of the incoming freshman whose high school graduation ceremonies occurred while abroad. The team also adventured down the Nile River on a yacht and walked through the Cairo street market before making its way over to Turkey.



Outside of the trio of games, the Cougars' stops in Turkey included the Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque and Fenerbahçe Stadium, home of the Turkish multi-sport club Fenerbahçe S.K.

Sophomore libero Hannah Billeter recorded eight of the team's aces and middle blocker Brielle Kemavor tallied four blocks. The team also hosted another clinic with middle school-aged children and enjoyed being able to teach them volleyball techniques.

Once in Athens, BYU visited the Acropolis, Mars Hill, and Panathenaic Stadium, home of the first modern Olympic games. The team concluded their trip with a day-long cruise along the coast of Greece, visiting islands, relaxing and snorkeling in the Mediterranean Sea.