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Harvard student's death is mourned

Travel enthusiast drowned during hike in Germany

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 21, 2014



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FAMILY PHOTO

Haley Rue's family described her as "the apple of our eye."

There was the 5-hour layover in Frankfurt, swarming mosquitoes in Gyor, Hungary, a misplaced passport in Budapest, and the blistered feet and sore legs.

But through her European travels this summer, 19-year-old Haley Rue maintained a sunny disposition.

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“Despite how easy it is to be cynical about society, I believe the world is brim full of fantastic people,” she said three weeks ago in an online account of her sometimes-taxing journey while writing for a travel publication. “If not, I somehow have the luck of meeting them everywhere I go.”

Family and friends remembered Rue’s adventurous spirit and uniquely positive outlook as they mourned her death this weekend.

The rising Harvard University sophomore from Tacoma, Wash., died Friday in Germany after she apparently slipped into rushing water and drowned while hiking.

“The best way I can describe Haley is that the whole room lit up when Haley came in,” her grandmother, Dorothy Rue, said by phone Monday, her voice quavering. “She had a wonderful smile. She talked and laughed and included everyone in the conversation. She was a very bright girl.”

“She loved life,” Rue added. “She was having a very good time traveling. She made friends wherever she went.”



Dorothy Rue, citing reports from German news publications, said the family has learned that Haley was hiking Friday when she accidentally fell into a waterfall in Oberstaufen, in the southwest Bavaria region, and got caught in a whirlpool.

A 23-year-old friend jumped in and tried rescue her, according to German website [Süddeutsche.de](http://www.sueddeutsche.de). He needed to be rescued by police. Divers recovered Rue’s body from the Buchenegger waterfall.

During her excursions, Haley Rue shared photos and wrote detailed accounts on her personal social media [webpages](#) and as a researcher and writer for “[Let’s Go.](#)” a popular travel guide founded and run by Harvard students.

She met up with friends and made new ones while journeying through Austria, Hungary, and Germany, according to her accounts. She compared cities she visited to romances.

“Budapest was the fling that was really fun for awhile, super attractive, but you knew wasn’t really going anywhere,” Rue wrote. “Gyor was the first date that didn’t get a second.

“And for me, Vienna is the one,” she wrote late last month from the capital of Austria.

But about two weeks later, in a telling display about her passion for exploring, she explained why she was “ready to move on” from Vienna.

“I’m 19 and not ready to really chill out,” Rue wrote. “While the consistency in relationships and good coffee is wonderful, backpacking and exploring isn’t about being comfortable. It’s about seeing the world and what it has to offer.”

The travel guide company said in a statement, “Haley was an incredibly gifted and dedicated researcher-writer, a kind soul, a beloved friend, and cherished member of the Let’s Go family.”

In an e-mail to students Sunday, Harvard College dean Rakesh Khurana said: “Those who knew her marveled at her kindness. She was poised, elegant, genuine, joyful, grounded.”

Her grandmother said that friends and family held a vigil in her hometown Sunday.

An alumna of Mount Rainier Lutheran High School in Tacoma, Rue had not yet declared a major, her grandmother said.

“She had many interests,” Dorothy Rue said. “She was very athletic. She played basketball. She was on the track team. She enjoyed running and hiking and she enjoyed visiting us.

“Our family is very devastated,” Rue added. “She was the apple of our eye.”

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