

Travel writing

I remember when we were first told about the exchange with a school in Germany. A few of my friends and me decided to take part. We thought that it would be a great relaxing week away together as a group. The only thing that dampened our thoughts was the idea of staying with a German family who we had never met before. The main thing that worried us was the language barrier. Although we had been told that their English was superb, we still fretted because our German was still at a very basic level.

The next few months flew by and the very next thing I knew I was packing my suitcase for my week away in Bayreuth, Germany.

The following morning I had to get up at around 5:30 in the morning and get ready to leave my house at 6:15. I had to collect together my passport, E111 form, my food and drink for the journey which consisted of a large amount of sweets.

When I arrived at the airport I was greeted with the tired smiles and hello's of my friends. A mixed feeling of excitement and nervousness surrounded us. we were excited at the thought of staying in Germany for a week and not having to worry about school or homework. But we were nervous because we were going to stay with a family that we had never met before.

So here we were, Munich, Germany. We had just landed and by now the mixture of emotions was running high. Once we were outside of the airport the hot atmosphere hit me. We were greeted with some familiar faces, that were those of a few of the German Students. We then spent the next three hours aboard a hot stuffy coach, before we finally reached our destination, Bayreuth.

Once in Bayrueth we headed for the school involved in the exchange, which was, the Richard Wagner Gymnasium. Here we were greeted by the german families whom we would be spending our weeks stay with. The family I was staying with were the Schmaus family and were very nice to me and made me feel vry welcome in their home.

The very first afternoon there, we went to play Mini golf. On our there in the car I couldn't help but notice how clean everywhere was. There wasn't a sign of rubbish on the streets anywhere, and there wasn't any graffiti on the walls. But most of all I noticed how friendly everyone was, unlike in England where some people give out a very negative impression to others. And the Mini Golfing facility was no exception either. It too was clean. Well presented and looked after and also the people there were very willing to help.

That night we went into the town and met with some of the others on the exchange. This was my first visit to the actual town and once again the cleanliness of it surprised me. The town was immaculate. It had an old feeling to it but at the same time it felt modern. It had cobbled streets and old looking buildings, but modernism ran throughout. Trailing off of the main high-street were smaller side streets which too were cobbled. The buildings lining either side towered quite a way above our heads and could be quite intimidating when dark as they were so far above your head. Most of the buildings lining these side streets were cafes. But weren't cafes as we know them, serving greasy food and cups of tea. These cafes resembled bars more but with a more relaxed atmosphere. The outside of the cafes was decorated with tables, chairs and sun umbrellas. Most of the cafes decorated their tables with the same style red and white checked table cloths. Sitting at these tables would be groups of young and old people laughing together and enjoying a nice glass of cold traditional German beer from a ????????

After taking a slow walk around the town absorbing the atmosphere and culture we headed for a bar known as The Underground. A favourite place for German teenagers to meet and socialise. Once inside went down a set of steps which took us 'underground'. Where we found a pool table and that it was decorated the same as a typical London underground station would be. We spent our evening here, enjoying a few games of pool and sampling a bit of traditional German beer.

The next morning I awoke to the warm sunshine and the cool breeze bursting in through the open window. We decided that we would spend the day relaxing with our friends at the local freibad, which is an outdoor swimming pool.

My expectations were great as my local 'freibad', resembled an overly large pond situated in the middle of some tatty old grass which is supposedly a sunbathing area. So I was pleasantly surprised that when I walked in I was greeted by three different swimming pools, table tennis facilities, basketball and volleyball courts. And a very large area of neatly kept grass for us to soak up the sun in.

We spent the next few hours diving in and out of the three different swimming pools. Which included for mainly doing lengths, a pool with a variety of diving boards set at various heights and then there was a fun pool with a wave machine. And many different slides leading into it which amused us all for quite a time. And made us feel like little kids again! In between sunbathing and swimming we would have a game of volleyball on the sand courts. This proved to be amusing as like me many of the others had never played volleyball properly before, but the Germans soon showed us how it was done.

The next morning was very hard for me I had to get up at 6am which in English time would be 5am and my body clock hadn't really adjusted yet. The journey to the school seemed to last a really long time even though it was only about 5 minutes down the road. Once inside the school I began to feel like an animal in a cage at a zoo! Because everyone was looking, staring and pointing at us, and it could feel at times intimidating as we were the minority. We

spent the morning joining them in their lessons looking at the way in which they were taught. In the afternoon we all headed off to the 'freibad' for a lazy and relaxing afternoon. The sun was beating down and so the swimming pool was where we all headed first. The water was just warm but cool enough to cool us all down before we all felt like we were going to explode due to heat overload. Whilst sunbathing the smell of greasy chips, and sausages cooking proved to be too much for most and so they headed off to buy some food.

The mornings were now beginning to get slightly easier for me now. I awoke to a cool breeze brushing lightly over my forehead as I lay entwined in my bed sheets. Today was going to be very hectic as we had to go by train to Nuremburg. This also involved the use of the U-Bahn (the underground). The train station was really modern aswell and was kept really clean. I also noticed that the people working there more than happy to help and always seemed to be smiling and willing to help you and answer any questions that you might have. Once in Nuremburg the first thing that I noticed was the amount of older style looking buildings and the rather large Cathedral in the middle of the town.