

## REPORT SUMMERCAMP HAMBURG/BERLIN

### Week 3: Berlin

Saturday was the day of the big move to Berlin. After breakfast and an early start, we all took a bus from the central bus station to Berlin. It was an exciting ride – unfortunately with some traffic on the way - and everyone awaited the capital with great eagerness. Once we arrived



in the early afternoon, it was time for the first authentic meal that everybody needs to have tried while in Berlin: Döner! Although it is an adaptation of Turkish cuisine in sandwich with meat and delicious sauce, there is no food that is more popular or famous in the German capital than a Döner Kebab. The students really enjoyed trying it and even the vegetarian version was extremely tasty. After that, we continued the journey to our beautiful new hostel

right beside a lake in the

Northern section of the city. There, the students had some time to relax and move into their rooms before the real fun started. We used the rest of the day to go on the first tour into the city centre and visit one of the most iconic sights that Berlin has to offer, namely the Berlin Wall / East Side Gallery. Although the students quickly remarked that Hamburg is architecturally more beautiful than the capital, they were still impressed by the diverse atmosphere and the history of the area. Together, we spent some time at the nearby river Spree and listened to some street music that was happening in the area while eating dinner. Later on, we headed back to the hostel and the students were glad to use the rest of the evening to settle into their new rooms, take a look around the facilities and enjoy the calm compared to the lively sounds of the big city. Soon enough, everyone went to bed, already awaiting the events of their second day.





A trip to Potsdam was planned for Sunday, the warmest and most summery day so far. Situated close to Berlin but actually the capital of the bordering state Brandenburg, Potsdam is very different and reveals another style of architecture as well as being much smaller and cosier. We started the day with the breakfast buffet in the hostel, which was just as delicious as the one in Hamburg but with the added bonus of

being able to sit outside in the sunshine to eat as well. Then, everyone took the public transport in the direction of Potsdam, which is around an hour away. Even though it grew hot very quickly, the students really enjoyed the trip and were impressed by the sight that greeted them at their destination – the city’s famous Sansoucci Palace. The aubiko representative Bert, who came to Berlin with us, took everybody on a tour around the palace gardens and spoke about the history and purpose of the royal palace. We also spent some time in the beautiful park to eat our packed lunch from the hostel, before setting out to explore the city centre. There, the students all had a big ice cream to cool down in the heat before we embarked on the train back towards Berlin. Before heading home, we put in another stop at the ultimate sightseeing spot known around the world – the impressive Brandenburg Gate. Of course, the students took lots of photographs here to show their friends and family back home. Then, the group finally headed back to the hostel for dinner and spent the evening playing cards, table football and board games. From the long travel during the day and the tiring temperatures, it was not long before everyone turned in for the night.



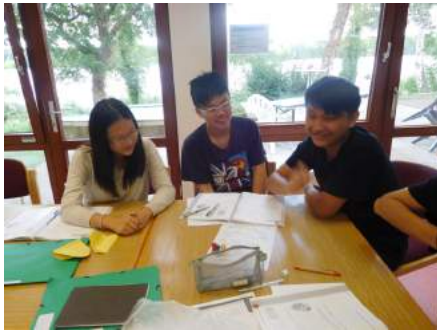




Monday rolled around very soon and with it, the students returned to their German lessons in the morning. They are really progressing rapidly with their skills and compared to the first week, they have all gained much more extensive knowledge and are growing consistently more confident. After lunch in the hostel, the afternoon continued with another workshop for cultural preparation, which all the students attended to discuss new aspects of German culture and behaviour. To reward everyone for the good

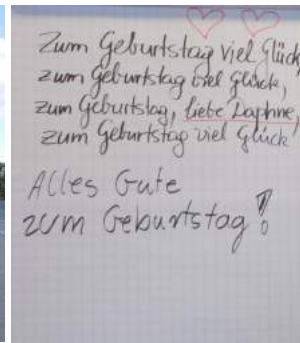
work, the late afternoon programme involved a guided boat trip along the river Spree, through the government district all the way up to Friedrichsstraße and the Museum Island. The students were able to see a lot and it was a great opportunity to experience a big part of Berlin without having to walk as much as the previous day. While the weather was colder than before, it was still an enjoyable ride and everyone returned to the hostel with many new impressions of the city. The evening was then spent in a laidback fashion once again, where some students took a walk to the nearby supermarket and others spent time on their homework and following their respective hobbies.





The next day held a full schedule consisting of a guided tour through the heart of the city with a whole lot of Berlin's rich history. It was also the birthday of one of the students, so we made sure her special day was celebrated as well. Following breakfast and the German lesson in the morning, we took the train back into the city and headed to Checkpoint Charlie, arguably the most famous of the border crossings along the Berlin Wall during the time of East and West Germany. The students

were fascinated by the stories behind the historical site and took many pictures. Then we continued along the shopping street 'Unter den Linden' all the way down to the beautiful Humboldt University, the oldest university in Berlin. From there, it was not far to the impressive church that is known as 'Berliner Dom' and past the Neptune Fountain and Red Town Hall until we reached the Alexanderplatz with its iconic TV-Tower. While it was a lengthy walk, the many sights kept everyone on board right until the end and since the aubiko representative Bert took time to explain each building to the group and provide some fun facts about all the stops, the tour passed by very quickly. Even so, everyone was eager to return to the hostel for Daphne's birthday party in the evening!



Dinner included an amazing cake, the typical German Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte, as well as other traditional sweets such as 'Windbeutel'. The students all found it very delicious and everybody really got involved with singing happy birthday for Daphne and then playing some party games together. The biggest success was 'Zeitungstanzen' which involves several people dancing on one piece of newspaper and doing their best not to fall off and after each round, it gets folded in half until less and less people fit onto it. That was quite a challenge but the teams rapidly grew very competitive and had a lot of fun with creative ways to stay on the tiny piece of paper. To top it all off, the students learned how to dance the perfect 'Macarena' and by the end of the day, it was a real challenge to get them to go to sleep after having such an eventful time.







By the time Wednesday came around, the group was filled with new energy again because this was the day we had designated for shopping. But they had to be patient and complete their German course, preparing specifically for the language test the next day. Skipping lunch at the hostel and taking packed meals instead, it was then finally time to jump on the public transport back into the city centre and head straight to Alexanderplatz, which has countless options for shopping. The students were really motivated and used their free time very productively to look through many shopping centres, buy some extra snacks or an ice cream and explore the entire area around the 'Alex'. Unfortunately, there was a time limit to roaming around the most popular area in Berlin and after around three hours the group came together again to return to the hostel. After the previous days' full programme, they had the evening to themselves again and spent it playing all kinds of card- and board games, using the volleyball court outside or even taking the opportunity to review all their German notes and prepare for the next day's test.



Thursday was already the final full day in the German capital and that meant it was time to complete all the organizational things. It was also the most important day considering that the final language test was planned for the afternoon. The students had the morning off to collect their things and pack their luggage or choose to study for the later assessment. After lunch, there was one final workshop for cultural preparation, which also included filling out an evaluation of the entire three week intensive course, before everyone was called to be individually tested in their spoken German skills. Those who had arranged all their things



earlier and now had free time used it to play some volleyball outside or go on a ride with bicycles to enjoy the last of the good weather. There was even a surprise visit from one of the students' host sister, who came to introduce herself and get to know each other. The afternoon passed by so quickly that everyone was quite surprised to find it was already time for the evening barbeque and farewell celebration. Some of the students contributed something extra special to the party like a flute concert and some games. As an extra highlight for the final evening, a fox even came out of the surrounding park to see what was going on! The students were delighted to see such an animal up close and took a lot of pictures. Most importantly, everybody received their language certificates for successfully completing the course and some students even gave a little speech. It was truly a great ending to three wonderful weeks but even the nicest of evenings has to come to an end and everybody soon went to bed in order to get up early the next day and embark on the next part of their journey.





On Friday morning, it was important to get a quick start since most of the students were departing by bus to various destinations around Germany. At breakfast, there were more than a few tears when it really started to sink in that this was goodbye for most of them – at least for the time being. Of course, many students were also excited for what comes next but it is always hard to leave after making such good friends and sharing so many unique experiences together. Following a reluctant goodbye and many words of thanks, a few host families came to pick up their exchange students directly from the hostel and everybody else headed to their respective busses, either to head to the airport or onward to host families. All that remains to be said here is that this was simply a fantastic course for everyone involved and that it was incredible to see how much the students learned over this short period of time. Everyone grew very close during these weeks and will surely keep in touch! We, from aubiko e. V., can only wish them all the best for their exchange year here in Germany or back in their home countries and hope to see everyone again very soon!

