

REPORT SUMMERCAMP HAMBURG/BERLIN

Part 1: Hamburg

The first week in Hamburg has drawn to a close and the students have already visited all kinds of different places in the city and experienced many new things. They are quickly learning all there is to know about German culture and their language skills are improving day by day. They are also starting to become real experts on what there is to see around Hamburg.

Monday was the arrival day and it was a very exciting moment for everyone involved. Most of the students arrived at Frankfurt Airport from where they all took a comfortable bus to Hamburg. The other participants came to the accommodation in Hamburg individually. Since everyone was very tired from their respective long journeys, the students only received a brief introduction by the aubiko representatives, teachers, organisers and assistants who are responsible for the programme over the next three weeks of the intensive German language course. Each student was given a personal file with important information about the course and, if they are exchange students, their future host family. This also included a daily programme for the upcoming weeks and a city map with the public transport system and important sights in Hamburg – the best possible preparation for the first few weeks of the course.

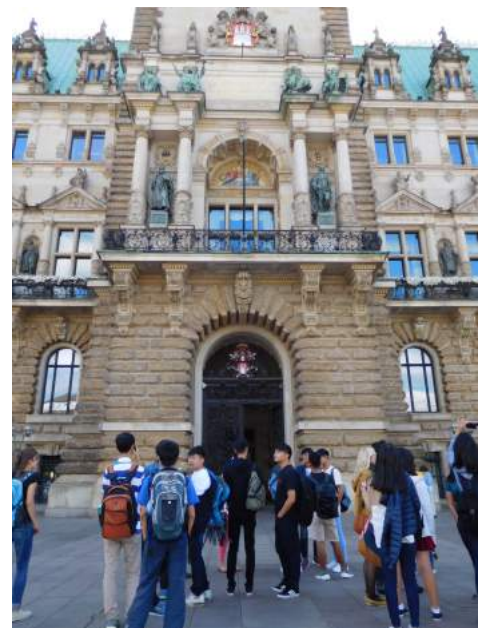


Afterwards, it was time for the placement test to find out which knowledge level of German each student is at before getting sorted into different classes based on the results. Then we had our first meal together: a classic German dinner consisting of bread and a choice of cheese, ham and salami, along with a salad. It quickly became obvious that the food will take some getting used to, as most of students are unfamiliar with bread and do not eat it regularly at home. But everybody finished their meal and the day ended with some free time to explore the hostel and its facilities. Around 22:00, everyone went to bed in the shared rooms to be rested for the first full official day in Germany.





We started Tuesday with an early breakfast in the morning. Since Germans usually eat cereal with milk or a type of bread roll with butter, jam, cheese or various sausages for the first meal of the day, all the students were introduced to what a typical breakfast looks like. Straight after that, they had their first language lesson where they began with the language basics or revisited what they already knew in order to refresh their knowledge. After lunch, the really exciting part of the day started - it was time for the first trip into Hamburg to visit the most well known sights and shop in the city centre! The tour started with an official welcome from one of Hamburg's representatives of the parliament in the city hall (called "Rathaus" in German). Dr. Sven Tode spoke about the meaning of intercultural understanding and importance of high school exchange programs. The official welcome and exceptional building of the town hall was very impressive for the students to see. It gave everybody insight into the beautiful architecture and there were many opportunities to take a great photo. The students also enjoyed the lovely weather as they explored the heart of the city and were able to wander through the many shops along the street. Later, we returned for dinner in the hostel and the students used their free time to play sports outside or do some homework for German class the next day before everyone went to bed.



The following day, it was time for a longer trip to one the most iconic parts of the city – the harbour. But before that, after the end of the German lesson and a hearty lunch, the students had a two-hour workshop with an aubiko representative on the topic of German culture and behaviour. This is very important for the students who are going on a whole exchange year and living with a host family, where some knowledge of the new country and its social rules is expected. The non-exchange students spent that time in the city, where we met altogether in the afternoon to go to the beautiful Hamburg port as a whole group. The weather was

fantastic and we started the tour by going through the Elbtunnel, a 100-year-old construction that crosses under the river to the other side, where there is a fantastic view of the entire harbour and the skyline. Once we returned, we took a ferry along the river to the popular beach Elbstrand, where there were many people enjoying the warm weather, having a barbeque or taking a walk along the beach. The students were a bit sceptical at first,



especially

because the sand looked different from what they expected but everyone soon started exploring all around the beach and eating their packed dinner. Some students even stepped into the water and spoke to other people, already trying to communicate in the foreign language. It was a lovely trip and the group returned to the hostel in the evening with many new impressions of Hamburg and a great mood.



Thursday started once more with breakfast and the intensive German lesson before the students went on their lunch break. Everyone really enjoys the warm food for lunch but they are still not entirely used to the large amount of bread that the Germans are so fond of during the other meals. However, they have learned that there are so many types of bread here so they are bound to find one that they love. Afterwards, we took the public transport back in the direction of the harbour where we started the day



before but this time, we went into the Speicherstadt. This is an old part of the city, which was once very important for trading and now it is a historic landmark and UNESCO world heritage site. The students were placed into different groups and we started a rally through the area where they had to ask other people questions about the buildings and directions to certain places, all in German. With different groups leading everyone else, we walked through the Speicherstadt

and into the modern Hafencity, ending at the new concert hall Elbphilharmonie beside the river. From here, we took a ferry back to the harbour and made our way to the highlight of the day: the Musical Aladdin, based on the popular Disney film. Hamburg is famous for its amazing musicals and we wanted to give the students an opportunity to experience one of them personally as well. It was a brilliant show with countless colourful costumes and incredible singing and dancing. Even though it was a very late evening for them, all the students who came along were very happy to have joined the trip to the theatre.





The last day of German course for the week was Friday. This also meant that it was time for the first intermediate test to see how well everybody had learned so far. The results were very positive overall and everyone improved a lot in vocabulary and sentence structure. After lunch, there was another round of cultural preparation for the exchange students, while the non-exchange students headed into the city again to spend some time in the shopping district Mönckebergstraße. Cultural preparation also included a short test to make sure that all the explanations were understood so far and clarify any points that were not. It was also very useful to check if the students had read their handbook, an essential document for all of them. After such an intensive day in the classroom, they had another great trip waiting for them in the afternoon – to the St. Micheal Church, known in Hamburg as “Michel”. Climbing the tower all the way up rewarded everybody with an amazing view of the city in the sunshine and even though it was not easy to go up all the steps, everybody made it to the top and took great pictures. Since the previous night had been quite tiring, we returned to the hostel early on this day so that the students had some free time to themselves after dinner before finally going to bed.





Time for the weekend! Saturday included a full outdoors programme, with a visit to Hamburg's zoo Tierpark Hagenbeck and the city park Planten un Blomen. The students had a more laidback morning with a long breakfast and then the entire group headed to the zoo, where they had another rally to complete. In smaller teams, they received questions in German for which they had to find answers while walking through the zoo. This included listing all predator animals or finding a number of animals in a certain colour and writing their

names down in German. We spent several hours exploring the Tierpark and eating the packed lunches on the way before meeting again to continue to the city park. Here, the water fountains were the main attraction because there was a live show with different formations of the fountain, accompanied by classical music. Even though the weather was not so brilliant on this day, the show was beautiful and after walking through a section of the park, everyone returned to the hostel for dinner and a well-deserved evening of relaxation after walking the entire day.



Finally, Sunday came around and the students were able to spend the last day of the week on a particularly special trip. This time, the tour straight after breakfast did not take them into the centre of Hamburg but to Lübeck, a hanseatic city that also lies in the North of Germany. It is famous not just for its architecture but for its history, its public personas like the author Thomas Mann and the production of delicious Marzipan. The students went to many of the sights including the Holstentor and several churches before continuing the journey further on a train



to Travemünde. This is the beach area close to Lübeck and while the weather was not as great as during the previous days, everyone still had a great time shopping, eating ice cream and getting immersed in the German manner of “flanieren” along the shore. Far too soon, we had to embark on the train back to Hamburg and return to the hostel for dinner and evening activities. We had a game night with popular German board games like “Mensch Ärger Dich Nicht” and card games, which many students had a lot of fun participating in. Everyone really

enjoyed themselves during the day’s events and soon enough, speaking about their great experiences in German will be no problem!



The first week flew by and the students did not only advance in their language skills but they have also grown to know and love the city of Hamburg. The second week here was equally full of great activities and also opportunities to share aspects of the students' home culture. On Monday, the students returned to their German lessons with renewed energy and continued their intensive study, already showing great improvements across the board. The teachers started the lesson off with interactive singing and dancing, which the students had already come to know from the first week. After lunch, the programme included a visit to one of the museums that Hamburg is quite famous for – the Miniaturwunderland. Located in one of the historic buildings in the Speicherstadt, it is a massive collection of miniature models representing places, historical scenarios and fictional figures from all over the world. The students were very fascinated by the detail of such small-sized figures and took many pictures with the tiny pieces! Of course, a break at the museum café for a small snack was also part of the



excursion and the group jumped at the opportunity to have pommes frites (they were thankfully not as tiny as everything else). All too soon, we had to return to the hostel for dinner and the students used the evening to prepare for the Cultural Evening that was planned for Thursday. They put together ideas for a little show with music and show acts, making plans for delicious Taiwanese dishes and how to decorate the event location at the aubiko office.





Tuesday was another day full of intensive language learning and another workshop of cultural preparation for the exchange students. They are only a few days away from moving in with their host families so they are eagerly absorbing all the information they can about life in Germany. The non-exchange students also used the time wisely to do their homework and some chores, since it was hot enough that they did not want to go into the city earlier than everybody else. By late afternoon

though, everyone was ready to visit the Hamburg Dom, a large amusement park that takes place three times a year and is beloved by everyone in the city for its food and various rides. Especially the boys were brave enough to try the largest rollercoasters, even those that give most people a complete fright! During that time, some of the students joined the aubiko supervisors on a different project and used those two hours to go shopping in the local Asian supermarkets. We needed to collect the necessary ingredients for the Cultural Evening and the students simply knew best what they wanted to cook. They were very excited to see the familiar food in the shops and came up with many different recipes on the spot but sadly, we couldn't buy everything. Still, we met the group back at the Dom with full bags and even had time to grab some food from the many stalls before returning to the hostel.





The middle of the week rolled around very quickly and after the German lesson, the day held a particular adventure for everybody. The temperatures had risen quite high and summer was starting to settle over the city again, so we took the group on a canoe trip along the waterways of Hamburg to enjoy the sunshine and cool off on the water. We even formed several teams to compete in who could paddle the fastest along the river. However, many other people had the same idea to spend the day on the canals so it became a challenge to manoeuvre around the people who were rowing, paddle boarding or kayaking alongside us. At the same time, the students were interested to see how the Germans spend their leisure time with those kinds of activities. The takeoff was a bit tricky because nobody was quite used to coordinating the movements as a group and paddling at the same time but they were all extremely motivated the whole time. They had a lot of fun trying to overtake each other on the way, which didn't always work out so well. One group got slightly lost along the canal as well, but we all made it back in one piece and headed home for relaxation time in the hostel. After dinner, the evening was ideal for preparation of the next day's event and it ended up a bit harder than usual to get the students into bed while they were busy practicing their performances or playing sports on the hostel facilities.



Thursday was the big day for the group so, as an exception from the usual schedule, there was no afternoon programme following their German class. Instead, we separated the student teams that were responsible for cooking, beverages, decoration, entertainment and hosting in order to work on their parts separately. As an extra bonus, aubiko had procured matching T-shirts for the students, both as a souvenir from their time here at the intensive course and so that they could wear them especially for the event.



The cooking group headed to the office right after lunch and spent three hours making all the fantastic dishes for the evening buffet. Those responsible for the drinks also left earlier to purchase different beverages and make signs indicating which options they had on offer. Later on, the other groups that had stayed to prepare in the hostel followed and were all in time for the grand opening of the Cultural Evening. Many different external guests joined in, including a few host families that came to see their exchange students ahead of time and it was lovely to see them interact and get to know each other.

The entire event was a massive success, all the guests loved the food as well as the entertainment programme – from magic tricks, violin and flute music to a Chinese yoyo show and live spoken poetry – nothing was left out and the students truly earned themselves the big round of applause that they received. They were diligent enough to help clean everything up afterwards and returned to the hostel quite tired but very happy and proud of themselves.





The end of the week was dedicated to letting the students pack their luggage and enjoy some free time for themselves on their final day in Hamburg. The usual language lesson was followed by another cultural preparation workshop, in which the exchange students were once again tested on their knowledge of German culture and behaviour. They have learnt a lot but there are still many areas to cover before they are entirely ready for their stay here. Although there was no additional programme planned for the afternoon, naturally, we would never let the students continue to Berlin without a special way of saying goodbye to the two wonderful weeks they have had so far. So for the last evening they spent here, they enjoyed a collective dinner in form of a big barbeque at the hostel with all the traditional food that comes with it – sausages, steaks, potato salad and baguette bread. With some music and games to complete the evening, it is safe to say that everyone was ready for bed by the time 22:00 came around, so they could be rested for their travels the next day. The students have truly had a great time in Hamburg and most of them have discarded their initial hesitance and really gotten involved in the programme and built friendships with the other students as well as becoming more open and friendly with the teachers and supervisors. Their German language skills are improving steadily and we are certain that their final week in the capital will be just as full of rewarding experiences for them both inside and outside of class.



REPORT SUMMERCAMP HAMBURG/BERLIN

Part 2: 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

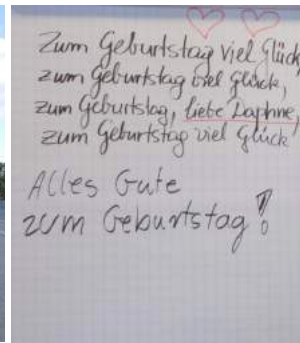
work, the late afternoon programme involved a guided boat trip along the river Spree, through the government district all the way up to Friedrichsstraße and the Museum Island. The students were able to see a lot and it was a great opportunity to experience a big part of Berlin without having to walk 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!

