

Caringbah German Trip - "Keep Rockin' '05!"

By Nicole Moyle and Elyse Williams

It was a rather godly hour of the afternoon when we embarked on our journey; fresh-eyed, excited, and freshly showered, we might add. Sixteen students and two chaperones, Frau K and Geoff, lined up in the group check-in line, whilst our parents waited, possibly more stressed than they had ever been before. After flying through the duty-free section in record time, we boarded the plane, most of us finding ourselves sitting with our friends, be it French or German, be it in the very last row of the plane, or sitting next to a complete stranger with a rather strange body odour. Half an hour into the flight, we realised that this flight was not going to go as fast as we had previously thought, so we desperately searched through the in-flight entertainment. Some of us found new friends (cough cough Sarah) while others found themselves hanging out with the same people.

Nineteen hours and one lost passport later sixteen rather forlorn students arrived in Berlin with their bulky suitcases. Except for Chris Gall, who in fact had no luggage at all. After having to get off our luxurious bus in the middle of Berlin due to the Berlin marathon, we had to lug these bulky suitcases down a flight of stairs and through the German underground, where we learnt the true meaning of efficient trains; which would sacrifice anything to be on time, including the unneeded limbs on your body. After finding the correct train, we arrived at our stop, and then realised we had no idea where our hotel was. When we finally found it we were given the opportunity to look at our beds for five minutes, until we had to leave the hotel and go on our walking/bus tour of Berlin. The rest of the day is kind of a haze, with most of us being so tired we couldn't listen to our wonderful tour guide Wolfgang regaling stories of Berlin's dark past. By the time we arrived back at the hotels, most people were asleep by eight o'clock pm.

Day 3: We awoke for breakfast at 7:30 and afterwards were given some free time to do whatever we wanted. Afterwards, we left lovely Berlin at 9:30 and commenced our six hour drive to Bamberg which included many games of Assassin and Deutsch Spielen. We also found, to our horror that we had to pay to go to the toilet. We finally arrived in Bamberg, which is a very, very pretty city. There were heaps of old buildings, some of them were over thirteen hundred years old. After our little tour we were taken to a restaurant where Sarah managed to "befriend" the waiter and get his email address. This was also the place where Elyse managed to embarrass herself in front of the good-looking waiter by asking: "Was ist das?" to a rather interesting looking bowl of sauce. The reply? "Das ist sauce".

Day 4: Today we made our journey to Raubling after first getting into the habit of European shopping in the morning. As we drove, many of us were worried about what our host's would be like and whether we could survive if they weren't to our liking. As it turned out, they were all very nice and today marked the beginning of an awesome time with our new international friends.

Day 5: Our day today began with a tour of Gymnasium Raubling and the chance to sit in on a German class. Some were lucky enough to go to English, but those students were forced to parade in front of the students and give a brief life story. Afterwards, we travelled all the way to Munich for Oktoberfest 2005. While some enjoyed this famed festival, others simply walked out and sat in a park for 2 hours. Oktoberfest has many expensive rides, and many more extremely large beer halls. It's kind of like the Easter Show, except with beer and the smell of cinnamon. We also discovered that lederhosen can make even the most attractive person look oh so very unattractive.

Day 6: This is the day that we were able to visit the historical Schloss Neuschwanstein, it was also a day that we would remember for years to come. It was this day that Dylan Orsborn ate a worm; never mind the historical importance of the castle! We also managed to prove our typical Aussie laziness, with a majority of us squeezing into a horse drawn carriage to get to the top of the steep mountain. The inside of the castle was absolutely breathtaking, but there are no pictures available because they weren't allowed. All we can say is now there's a king who loves his swans.

Day 7: Today we were most disappointed when we found out we wouldn't be attending a German class, the most disappointed being Steven due to the large number of girls he managed to attract in his last lesson. But we were lucky enough to have the opportunity to stand for forty minutes as we rode the train to Munich. First stop was Dachau, a concentration camp for political prisoners in World War Two. It was a rather depressing place. After that, we got more 'glorious' shopping time in Munich before departing back to Raubling. Tonight, some of us had our first experience at Valuga, a pub nearby.

Days 8-10: This weekend was a different experience for everybody as we each went our separate ways and spent the long weekend with our host families. Some went to German Mass, some went to 80th birthday parties, while others visited the Swarovski crystal mines. There were quite a few parties to attend and such wonderful

activities as shopping, concerts, swimming, scuba diving, ice hockey games, tobogganing, hiking and a 17 hour LAN party to participate in.

Day 11: Today we were back with our friends and ready for a day at Chiemsee. We caught the ferry to Herrenchiemsee, a palace on an island built as a monument to the one in Versailles. Again, some lazy people caught the carriage up, but today they were in the minority. We had a tour around the palace and then walked back to the ferry for a two minute souvenir shopping expedition, before sailing back to the mainland. We practically ran in the hot weather to the train, and then had some more quality shopping time before heading back home.

Day 12: This day was very special as our host brothers and sisters were invited to come with us to Berchtesgaden, where the 'Salzbergwerk', or salt mines were, and we had an awesome time. The bus trip was fun with a mixture of German and English shouting as we drove to our destination. We had a fun but slow train ride into the mines, and then we got to ride down the slides. The tour was full of English recordings as the tour guide spoke to the others in German. Afterwards we had a look at one of 'Hitler's Nest', and then the best part: tobogganing. At night, we all headed off to another pub, Einkehr, in Flintsbach, for a great night out. Nicole also managed to participate in Bavarian dancing, in all its thigh-slapping glory.

Day 13: Our last full day in Germany. We went to Salzburg in Austria, and it was a great day. We walked around, having many Sound of Music moments as we marched around fountains and posed as statues. We went shopping, went up to the fortress, and got to catch the funicular railway up to the top. That was a lot of fun. For our last night, many went out to dinner with their families, and got an early night's sleep for our departure the next day.

Day 14: We awoke at 4 am, having to be at school at 4:45. We said goodbye to our host families, and got out some tears and goodbye hugs before we said a fond farewell to Gymnasium Raubling and all our hosts, who will be sorely missed. We drove to Munich airport and said goodbye to Daniela, as she left for Frankfurt for a further two weeks, and we left for Vienna. Many found themselves watching the same movies as we flew home, and Michael managed to have his car models fall on the head of the lady behind him. As we arrived in customs in Australia, the boys had their BB Guns confiscated, and Mitch managed to almost forget his suitcase as we ran to meet our families. Finally we were home!

On behalf of all the students who went to Germany, we would like to thank Frau K and Geoff for putting up with us for two weeks. We had an excellent time and I'm sure many of us want to return to Germany some time soon. Auf Wiedersehen!

