

## **My Trip to Germany**

- Abhishek Ghosh

The following article talks about my 20-day trip to Germany in May, 2010 as an exchange student from Mumbai, India and my impressions of the country. It was an exchange programme organized by the Hellenstein Gymnasium School in Heidenheim, in the south of Germany. The trip has taught me so much about their lives, their music, dance, and architecture – in short, their way of life. An Exchange programme does more than just introduce you to the foreign lifestyle! It makes you learn so much more about your own country! I'd be glad to share my experience with you all!

### Day -1

With my bags packed, tickets in my pocket and an open mind, I joined my schoolmates in the bus that was to take us to the airport. Everyone's face reflected the hopes and excitement of what is usually expected of a fledgling about to take flight!!! At 2:00 a.m. on the morning of the 20th of May, there was an announcement beseeching all the passengers of Flight QR 200 to board their flight. Saying our last good-byes to family members, we hurried towards the airplane to discover what was in store for us....



Our group in the BMW Museum, Germany

On our arrival at the Munich airport, we were greeted by the greenest fields we ever laid our eyes upon and a pair of enthusiastic German teachers – our hosts for the next twenty days! I must say, we Indians seemed to attract all the attention.....we were the loudest and

largest group around! We were driven along the highway to our final destination-Heidenheim. There we were greeted by the parents of our exchange partners. Later, we were taken to our 'homes' for our stay in Germany.

### Day -2

After getting over the effects of the jet-lag, I was in for a grand surprise...the largest, most delicious cake I had ever tasted, ready for me at the breakfast table. I was joined by the jolly father of my German friend – who insisted I call him Joachim, his sweet wife – Erika and of course, my exchange partner, Vanessa.

We planned a trip to the Steiff museum...something that is really unique. An entire building dedicated to the art of teddy-bear making...where else in the world do you get too see such a wonder?! There, I had an opportunity to exchange news and events with other accompanying Indian students.

### Day-3

7:25 a.m. and it was time for school. The Hellenstein Gymnasium dominates the centre of the city and is indeed an imposing building. The teachers, however, were most friendly and tried their best to speak in English. The students were much freer in school, thanks to the respect the Germans give to independence!

We were ushered to all our classes – music, dance, French (my personal favorite) and English. The teacher was quick to win all our hearts...she was most entertaining and loved to interact with us and marvelled at how we were fluent in her subject (English) ...something very rare in mainland European countries. We even got to watch many movies and documentaries in school, indeed, a very enjoyable experience!

The next few days, we all were split up into little groups. We accompanied our hosts to the destinations they chose for us.

I had the opportunity of going fishing in the Brenz and accompanying my partner's brother Julian and his father to the local football stadium, and the gymnasium. Germany is known for its sports and I can confirm that!!!

We also visited the neighbouring towns of Ulm which has the tallest church tower in the world and numerous mediaeval towns in the vicinity. I'd advise against eating too much while climbing any of the church towers as it may endanger the pleasure of the view at the top!

Nordlingen is one town that simply amazes you! It is the site of a meteor crater and has a medieval city-wall encircling the entire town. We loved traversing the narrow cobblestone streets and wandering about the town ourselves....I wouldn't mind getting lost in the by-lanes of this magnificent getaway!

In Munchen, we went to the BMW Museum...a marvel that left us speechless!!! Our cameras can testify to that! The building itself seems to resemble the car's engine and

once you're in it, it's like crossing over to the 'BMW car paradise'!!! If you have noticed, museums seem to be hotspot in Germany – strange, huh?!

After that, on one of the days, we crossed the border over to Austria. We trekked up a mountain where we were quick to play 'snow fight'! Then we enjoyed ourselves at the 'super fast sleigh' that runs down the mountain (I tried it out 3 times). With the wind gushing and the Alps at your feet, it is a definite thriller!

By the end of the programme, we were so integrated into the German way of living that leaving the place seemed indeed a sentimental and difficult task. I certainly brought back a camera full of pictures, a rucksack full of souvenirs and a load of good memories of the trip and friends for life!!!



Auf Wiedersehen