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German Culture Course

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Berlin Is Where I Long to Be

My stay in Deutschland was the best three weeks of my life. I will try to give you a little taste of my journey, but it would be impossible to convey the sheer greatness or the impact it made.

I had many experiences in Deutschland that I did not expect, but there is one that sticks out in my mind, the igloo. Our professor told our group about an igloo her friend had constructed, and the opening was that night. She said it was not far from the restaurant that we were at so I had no choice, but to make an adventure to see my first igloo. After dinner Ed, Ryan, and myself embarked on the expedition. At this time we were in what was formerly East Berlin, and it was easy to tell because the buildings and structures still feel like they are a little out of date, but I have to say that I liked the former East's feel and style better than that of the former West. I say this because in the former East there is a lot of graffiti art on most of the buildings and I loved looking at all the different graffiti, but I want to say that it did not look trashy or distasteful. Back to the story, so we were making our way to the igloo, passing by neat little shops selling everything from knick-knacks to nice designer clothes. We stopped in one shop and I bought a couple souvenirs. Whenever I bought something, I always tried to speak solely German and see if they noticed that I was a foreigner. This shop experience was the first time I bought something without speaking any English so I already felt like a badass. Now we were only a few blocks from the igloo and I felt really excited to be in Berlin exploring and I realized how lucky I was to be there. We finally reached the park and now we had to find the igloo. We saw the outline of the igloo in the distance so we jogged toward the glorious structure. We reached the rather large igloo, and I took a picture of Ed and Ryan in front of it. We would have stayed and relaxed in the igloo, but we had to get up early the next morning so we just made our way back. The story is a little anti-climactic, but it was one of my first outings without the group and the start of me falling in love with Berlin.



I also was amazed by the amount of preservation work on historical sites in all the cities we visited in Germany. We visited Meissen and it is a great example. When we arrived on the outskirts of Meissen, I was immediately amazed by the sight of the castle. It looked like something straight out of a fairy tale. I later realized the only way to describe the feel of

Meissen is exactly that, a fairy tale. It had narrow cobblestone roads, the architecture of the buildings was very antique, and the terrain, gave me the feeling of jumping right into Cinderella or Snow White. Dresden was also another city that had a great deal of pride in its historical sites. Dresden was bombed to nothing near the end of WW2 so to see the historical church and other buildings of the old town center, built out of the remaining rubble was astonishing. I loved to look at the communist murals in the cities of the former DDR. They made me feel like I was in the film Goodbye Lenin. I admired how German culture takes pride in its history and works diligently to preserve what they can, even if it is from a dark time in their past.

While I was on the Berlin trip, I realized that German culture puts an emphasis on learning other languages. Most Germans my age spoke English, French, some Spanish, and of course German. A lot of older Germans also spoke other languages too, or at least knew how to convey their statements so that I could understand. The conversation abilities of these people blew my mind. They made me realize the value of knowing how to speak other languages and the effect of knowing other languages has on traveling. It helped me realize that being in a country and not speaking the native language is not so easy. I have a new respect for immigrants trying to make a new life in the USA because this trip gave me a taste of the difficulties that they face.

This trip really opened my eyes to understanding German culture and helped me recognize my own American culture. I would give anything to go back. Ich liebe Deutschland!