
My Exchange to Berlin

By: Adrian Cross

Goodbye canada



My Journey started July 28, 2017, as I flew off to Berlin with my Dad, so that we could start our pre-exchange tour of Europe together.

Hallo Deutschland



First tour of Berlin..... Looks amazing!



I was able to meet my host family and get to know my exchange partner, Bennett, for a couple weeks before he flew to Canada.



Berliner Dome



Reichstag Dome



Molecule Man



Neptunbrunnen

Welcome to Deutschland!



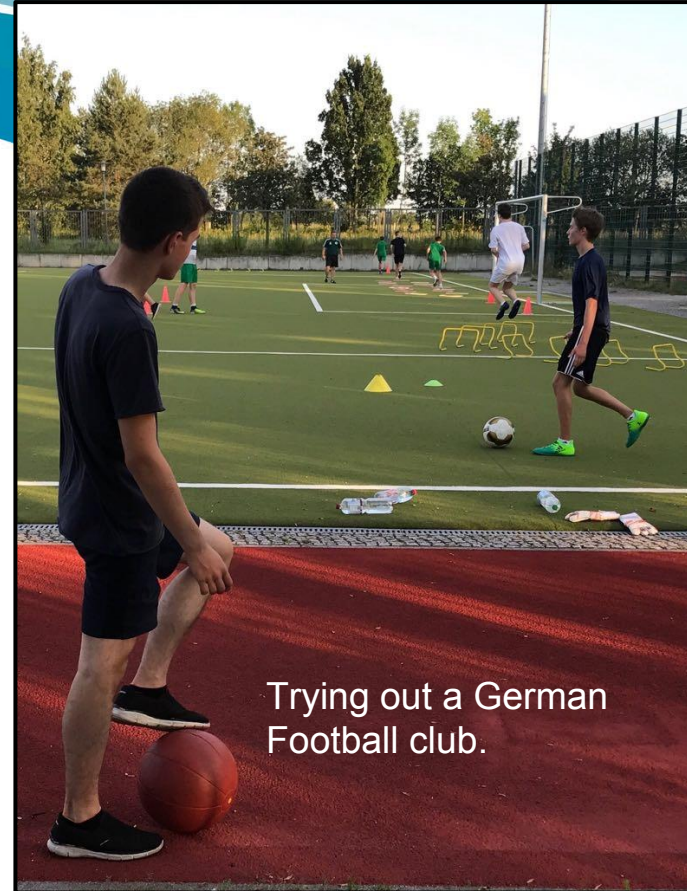
Many North-Americans are under the impression that Germans are harsh and unwelcoming at times, but I hope I'm not the first one to tell you... that is not true!!! I was welcomed into Deutschland by people of all generations. Younger people will always shake your hand and the older people will commonly hold onto your hand while introducing themselves or even give you a hug if they are relatives of your host family. Of course there are still grumpy people in Germany, but there are grumpy people everywhere in the world! I think that North Americans get the wrong idea from how blunt and honest Germans are, which is completely different from how welcoming they are. They will tell you if you did something wrong or if you shouldn't do something without hesitation and that is just something to get used to.



I was able to experience German Fussball firsthand in many different ways.



Olympic Stadium



Food!

Food in Germany is very different from North America. They eat simply with a diet full of bread and Wurst (sandwich meat). Germans often make traditional meals at home, but also bring other cultures like Chinese or Mexican food into their diet once in awhile. For Frühstück (breakfast), Germans will commonly eat bread with butter and jam or wurst and for dinner they will have the same foods, but also a main dish like pasta or fish. I find German food to be much more simple than Canadian food and that is a good thing. Sometimes in North America we get too caught up in fancy elaborate meals and we always have to eat something different every day. It can be stressful to prepare food in Canada when there are too many options!



Street food

When out and about in Berlin, I discovered what people eat on the streets and what they don't. Gyro/Doner restaurants, traditional German kiosks, Currywurst/Bratwurst kiosks and Asian restaurants are the most common places to go to when out and about. Traditional German kiosks usually have German bread, German sandwiches, German Bretzels and German desserts. Wurst kiosks are found all over Germany, although the sausages can differ depending on the location. Berlin is famous for currywurst which is cut up sausage with curry powder and ketchup.



Bratwurst



Hackepeter

Raw
and
fresh!



School was extremely challenging and at times I felt like I didn't belong there but I still have many good memories of hanging out with the German students and trying to learn German.



Eating typical German food from the cafeteria during the break.



Strict Rules

Most of the rules in Germany have to do with school. At high school in Canada, we can go out for lunch, show up late, go on our phones at school, and much more. In Germany, it's the complete opposite. No one is late, no one leaves until school is over, there is no wifi and no phones in class, no one can leave the school grounds and everyone is forced into the courtyard during breaks. In Canada, I sometimes miss school for sports, family vacation, or when I'm a little bit sick. If German kids skip school for inadequate reasons, they have major problems with the teachers and school authorities and sometimes the parents even have to pay fines!! I don't like strict rules in the first place, so German rules took a while to get used to.



Fall activities included long bike rides into the countryside, pingpong, climbing and indoor skateboarding. I became accustomed to taking the many forms of transportation to all my activities.



Being such a large city, Berlin offered so many opportunities to try new things. I was able to start skateboarding at the local hub "Skatehalle."



Drinks

One of my favourite German traditions is their love of drinks. If you go to a small supermarket in Germany, you're bound to find at least four aisles of drinks. German adults sure do love their beer and the kids like to drink juice or soft drinks at the dinner table. I especially enjoy the German soft drink, Fritz Cola which is made in Hamburg and only costs about one Canadian dollar per glass bottle!



Visiting my host
mom's family



My host mother's
Hometown ended up
being one of my
favourites to visit.
Unaffected by the
war, it feels like
traveling back in
time.

Bautzen



Organization!

The most obvious cultural difference between Canada and Germany for me is their extreme level of organization and strict rules. Germans plan very far in advance and won't go on a trip unless it was planned at least three months beforehand! They are also very punctual people and are seldom late for get-togethers, school or events. In Canada we are much more relaxed about planning and punctuality which has its pros and cons. My exchange partner shares this opinion with me and often comments about how relaxed people are in Canada.



My host family, always thinking ahead, booked a ski vacation for January in September!

Map of
Samnaun,
Switzerland



The center of Berlin is full of amazing architecture. Here are my favourite buildings.



During good weather I would often go into the city to explore all the old parts with many castles and churches.

Architecture



My favorite building in Berlin is the Berlin Dome. Inside is a huge open space where you can examine the huge dome roof and learn about the reformers of the Christian religion. Even better yet, the outside of the top of the dome is open to the public and offers a spectacular view of the Berlin centrum.



Germany has buildings from all eras from the middle ages to the present day.

Unfortunately, Berlin was devastated by the bombing of WW2, so most of the buildings are relatively new. Every new decade after the war brought new styles, some bad and some good, so Berlin is a mix of breathtaking buildings and also buildings that you wished didn't exist! The 1950's to the 1990's often brought boxy, boring apartment buildings that are unique to Berlin. The east (post GDR) side of Berlin has a significant number of these.

Downtown

When it comes to architecture in Berlin, the centrum is the place to go. Visit the refurbished cathedrals on museum island, or the half modern half old Reichstag Parliament building and of course the famous TV tower built by the communists during their reign of East Berlin.



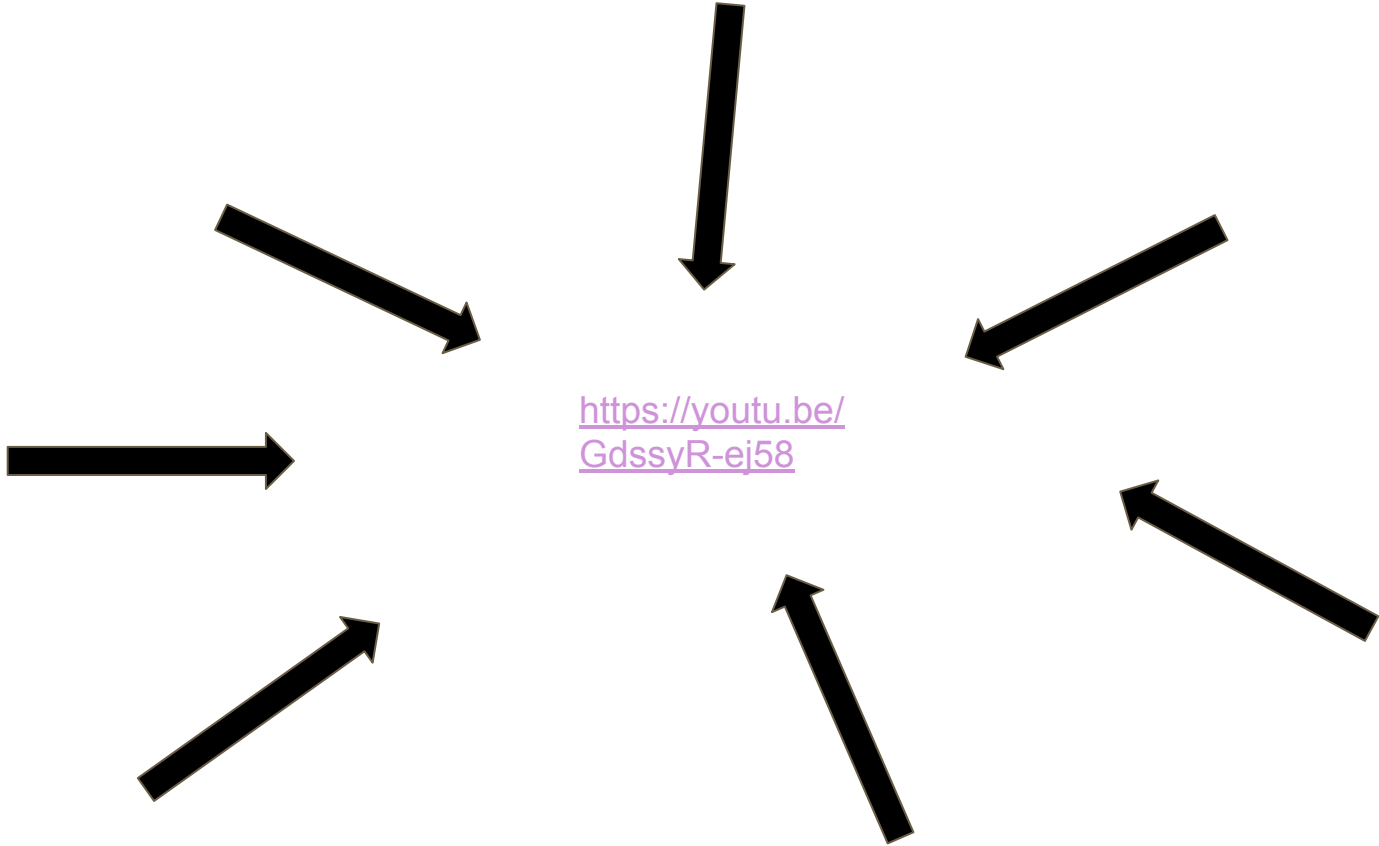
The Wall

Being the most popular icon of Berlin, the wall is an amazing sight. There are two remaining sections of the wall, one covered in graffiti art and the other preserved with a fenced off viewing area of the no man's land. One can imagine what it would feel like to be stuck on the wrong side of the wall, it was a terrible reality for many. When the wall came down in the 90's, many people's lives were changed forever! For example, my host parents who grew up in East Germany were able to see the rest of the world. They immediately flew to the United States and were bewildered by the world on the other side of the wall.



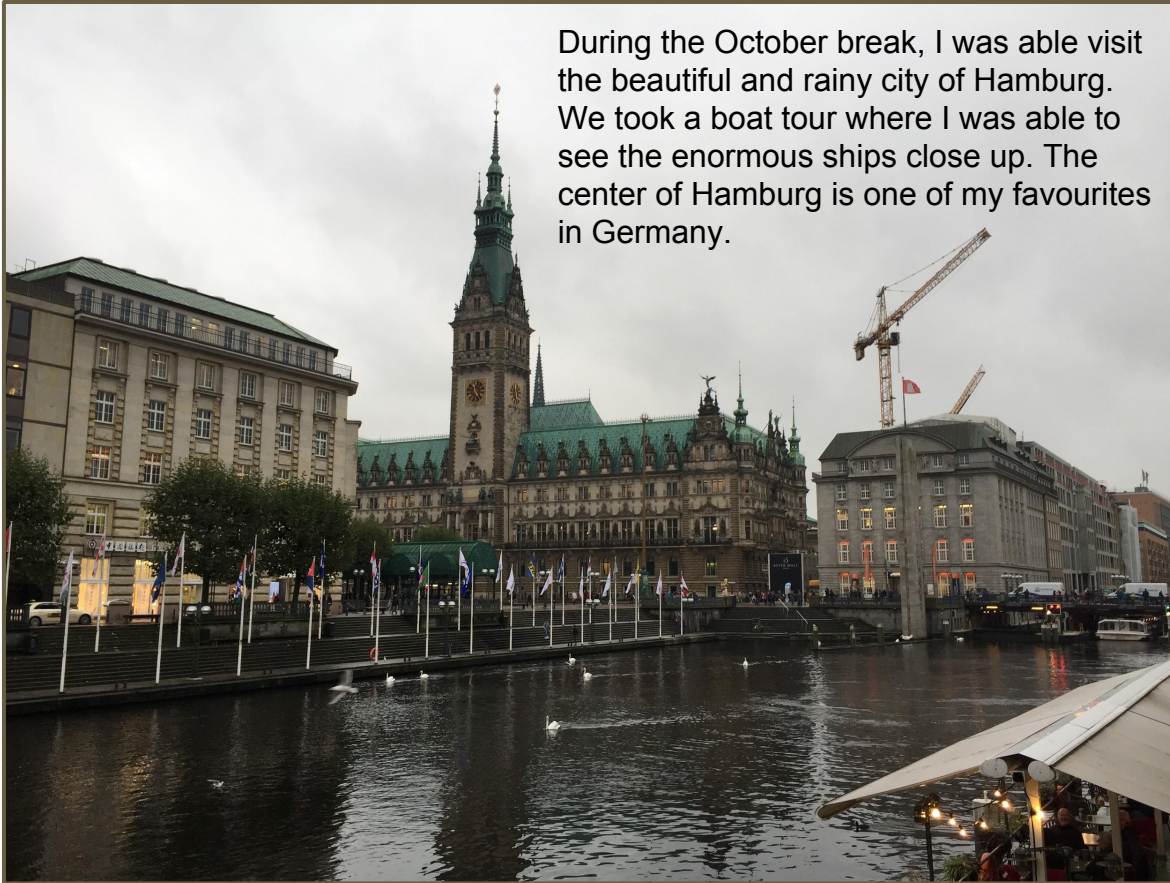
My YouTube video from our
travels in Bautzen and Dresden!

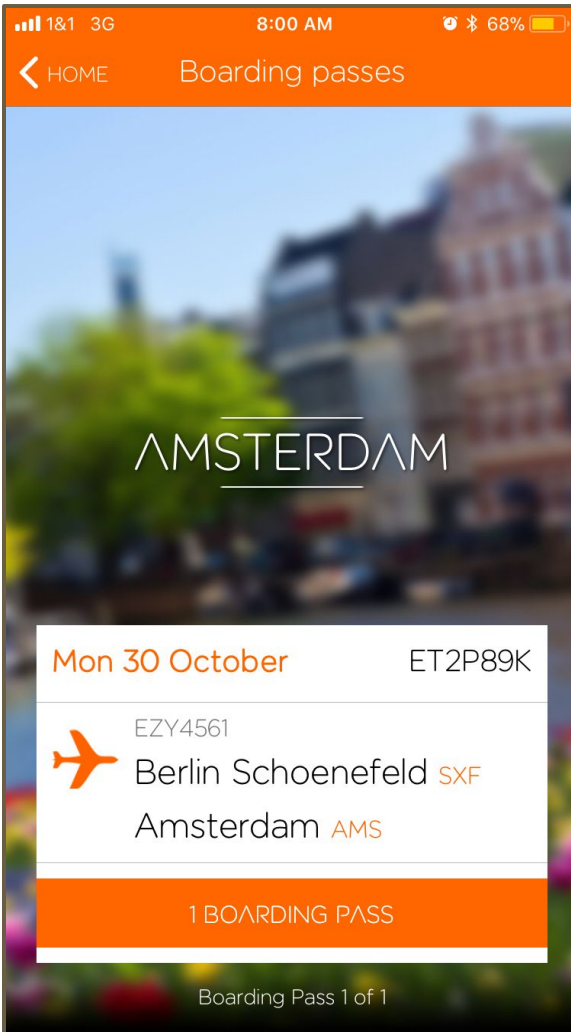
[https://youtu.be/
GdssyR-ej58](https://youtu.be/GdssyR-ej58)



Hamburg

During the October break, I was able to visit the beautiful and rainy city of Hamburg. We took a boat tour where I was able to see the enormous ships close up. The center of Hamburg is one of my favourites in Germany.





HOLLAND!

One of Rotterdam's most famous buildings is an indoor market with an arched food ceiling.



I was able to visit my relatives in Rotterdam, Netherlands during the October break. It was amazing to be able to quickly pop over to Holland for a week!

Christmas!

Full of food and drink,
Christmas in Germany
was an explosion of new
flavours and traditions.
Aside from the food, I
really enjoyed playing
games and visiting with
my extended host family.





I really appreciate the opportunity I had to ski in the Alps. It feels like being on the top of the world since there are no trees to be seen that high up. I met lots of new people from other parts of Europe, like Czech and Romania, who were friends of my host family. I was also able to try indoor skiing with my extended host family which was quite neat.

Skiing!





Swiss architecture is one of my favourites and it should be pretty apparent why! All the hotels and restaurants are finely crafted with natural wood colors in the beautiful village of Samnaun, Switzerland.



Conclusion



All in all, exchange to Berlin has been action packed and full of new experiences. I learned so many new things about Germany, that I couldn't even add half of it into this presentation. Experiencing a culture first hand presents new challenges, but it also brought new and crazy experiences into my life. I'm very glad that I was able to learn about Germany in a way that is true and authentic and create new memories that will last!