

My Trip to Bad-Würzach!

This Summer I had the exciting opportunity to visit Bad-Würzach a town in Baden-Württemberg thanks to the St Helier-Bad Würzach Partnerscraft Committee. I stayed with a host family in a town called Kiblegg just outside Bad-Würzach who had four children. Their eldest daughter attended the local Gymnasium called Salvatorkolleg and I spent two weeks in the school alongside young people the same age as me. At first I was really nervous as it was a completely new environment, however, I soon realised that we all had so much in common and they were as excited to learn about Jersey as I was to find out about German culture. In school, I had the opportunity to not only practice my language skills but also take on some new subjects, such as Latin and politics which was a fantastic experience. The students also study French and it was certainly a challenge to try and translate between French and German but it gave me the chance to connect all my language learning which was a highly valuable and unique experience. I noticed some of the differences between my school life and theirs. For example, three days a week we finished at 1pm and the remaining two days we finished at 5pm. I found this a really good system as it enabled the students to take part in various extra-curricular activities such as sport, dance or drama while still having time for their academics. On my last night there was a Bayerische Nacht (Bavarian Night) at school where all the teachers and students dressed in their traditional German costumes and there was live music, food, beer and dancing all originating from Bayern culture. It was a fantastic evening and everybody was in great spirit!

My host family took me to see the Bad Würzach Heilig-Blut-Fest, a religious tradition where over 1,500 horses and over 5,000 pilgrims and visitors parade through the town. It was an amazing atmosphere and it was great to see so many people gathering and celebrating together. On this same day we drove over two hours to Neuschwanstein castle. Once we arrived there, we parked and then walked for about another one and half hours uphill until we reached the entrance. There was a bridge that you could stand on about half way up the hill where you can see the castle in the distance – I quickly got off the bridge when it started moving! When we reached the top we had a tour inside the castle to learn all about the history of King that lived there and it is the most beautiful building with artwork everywhere. Even the walls tell stories with pictures as you walk around. From the castle you can see the Bodensee (Lake Constance) and the water is bright blue and looks incredible. On Sunday, we took another long drive to the Swiss and Austrian boarder to visit the Bodensee. We went up in a chair lift where there was an animal farm at the top and you can see all across into Switzerland and Austria and the Bodensee. We then went for a swim in the water which was warm and clear. It's a lovely area and we strolled for ages before venturing on our journey home – but not before stopping to fill up our petrol tank in Switzerland first!

On returning home I realised that I'd spoken nothing but German (and French!) the whole time and it is astounding how much more confident I feel in my spoken German. Not only was it a super opportunity to improve my language skills but it also offered me an insight into authentic German culture. I was able to try local food, such as Spätzel – a southern German dumpling dish – and immerse myself in their way of life. Going away to a new country alone and meeting new people has made me more independent and it also made me realise that I wanted to continue studying languages at university. I had the most incredible time abroad and I would highly recommend it to anyone who enjoys learning languages and is open-minded about trying and experiencing new things.