

# Memories of Germany

## By Sebastian Condon



I am Sebastian Condon, I am currently in Year 12 at Kelvin Grove State College, Brisbane, and recently went on the SAGSE exchange to Germany. In Germany I was billeted in Essen, was hosted by the Heil family and attended Leibnitz Gymnasium for the three weeks of school. I participated in all of the eleven subjects my host brother, Nikolas, took: German, English, French, Latin, Chemistry, Physics, Maths, Sport,

Music, Politics and History. I enjoyed my time in the school, it certainly improved my comprehension skills, and I learnt many new card games in the 10 minute interval between classes. I found the German people to be friendly, especially the students, who were always willing to practice their English on me.

After the fourth week of my stay, the last week of school, it was nearing Christmas and the time had arrived for the *Tannenbaum*, to be set up and decorated. Here if a live Christmas tree is bought, it's shedding needles and in the process of dying soon after purchase. In Germany, the tree looked fresh, strong and vibrant from the day it was bought, until presumably, they threw it out, I was gone before that day came to pass. The Heils held a great interest in their tree. From the moment it arrived home there was heated debate about the height of the tree, and the straightness of its trunk. I was told to stand in one corner of the room, Jannis, my host brother's brother, in another corner, while Liza and Nikolas took up the remaining positions. Bertam, my host father lay under the tree, and on our directions fiddled with the stump for a good 25 minutes, until it was believed to be perfectly straight. That was a big cultural difference for me.

Christmas itself consisted of a church service in the early evening, of the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, and a simple baked dinner back at the house. Presents were passed around and opened after dinner and each person, received an enormous, not joking, huge, plate of chocolates, lollies and baked goodies to munch on for the rest of the evening, and presumably the rest of the year. We stayed up playing card and board games late into the morning, but eventually went to bed, as the next day was the *erste Weihnachtstag*, the first

Christmas day. More delicious food, biscuits, cakes and other culinary delights, only it was held at the Grandparents' place.

Apart from eating amazing food, I visited the local museum. Nikolas, my host brother, wishes to become an archaeologist, and he had completed his *Praktikum*, a form of work experience, only weeks before, at that very museum, so I went on what equated to a personally guided tour. I also visited and went on a tour of the *Zeche Zollverein*, a closed coal mine - now a museum.

On one of the last days of my time in Germany I went snowboarding in the longest indoor snow hall in Europe. Though not a brilliant snowboarder, I was alright, considering I had only seen snow for the first time a few weeks before.

Another highlight was my attending a soccer match, *Rot Weiß Essen vs. Ost-Friesland*. There was nothing else I have experienced like a stadium full of Germans screaming and singing '*Bundesliga zwei, Essen ist dabei!*', along with all the other ditties and songs they had invented for their local team. I was told by the man next to me that I was to scream louder if I wanted to win. Obviously my mouthful of bread roll and bratwurst did not exclude me from the cheer squad. Nonetheless, my impassioned screams must have had some effect, Essen won 3-1.

In conclusion, I had a wonderful time in Germany, and thank all the people involved in the exchange's organization. It was great.

Photos from the bus trip:



**Rothenberg ob der Tauber**



## München Weihnachtsmarkt

