

## YEAR 10 BERLIN TRIP

Report written by Shantelle Roberts (10a/Hi1)

We arrived in the capital of Germany, Berlin, after a long 18 hour trip. We were all tired, hungry and restless but still eager to explore this wonderful city. We took the U-Bahn to our first stop, the German Resistance Memorial Museum. Here we learnt about all the different people who tried to resist the Nazis and people who tried to assassinate Hitler. One person called Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg (made famous by the Tom Cruise film, Valkyrie) was caught trying to assassinate Hitler, but he unfortunately failed and was later killed by a Nazi firing squad. We were able to view a memorial to him in the courtyard by the museum where he was actually shot – it was quite moving. After a very long day, we were then pleased to be able to return to our hostel for an early night.

The next day, Saturday, was the busiest day out of the whole trip. We set out bright and early for a walking tour of Berlin. Here we learnt a lot about the history of Berlin, how the city was created and how a man called Frederick the Great put Berlin on the map (and also introduced potatoes to Berlin!). We then went to and saw many different places, including the location of the infamous Nazi ‘burning of the books’. On the way to our end point – the magnificent Brandenburg Gate - we walked past the hotel Aldon where lots of famous celebrities stay and where Michael Jackson dangled his baby out the window (what a landmark!)! After the brilliant walking tour, we were all freezing cold and couldn't bare to walk any longer, but with teachers enthusiasm and a hot chocolate inside us, we all grinned and bared it and made our way to our next stop the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

We were all very intrigued to see a concentration camp but also very worried because we were warned some of things we saw would be quite emotional. At first we had a talk with our guide about the concentration camp. Then we got taken outside to see different parts of the concentration camp, it was bitterly cold and I was freezing my toes off and I couldn't begin to imagine how tough it would have been for in-mates to have worked in such conditions. We first walked down a path where the Nazi soldiers used to make the prisoners run and the slowest of the lot got beaten. We then walked up to where the prisoners used to stay. We saw the bedrooms that they had to sleep in, a long row of bunkbeds to keep 500 people. There were only 10 toilets to share with 500 prisoners and a big bowl for them to wash in. We then went to the dining hall where the prisoners ate and we found out that back in the 90's a group of neo-Nazi hooligans broke onto the site and set the dining hall alight. We saw all the paint on the walls and ceiling peeling off. We then went back inside and saw some of the machines the prisoners were tortured on, and some pictures which were disturbing and it really got to me and the others and made us quite emotional.

After all of that in one day you would have thought that we would have been tired (which we all were!) but we had one last stop - The Jewish Museum. We were all split into groups, and my group had a tour guide who was a little bit crazy - but he was very enthusiastic and instead of telling us everything like a usual tour guide, he let us work it out for ourselves. One of the exhibits we went to was a small room that was supposed to represent what a concentration camp would feel like. It was cold, pitch black and the

walls would get very narrow. I thought that just that one exhibit was the most effective thing I saw that whole day because you began to get a feeling of the horror of it all.

The day ended on a lighter note with me, Kishan, Elizabeth, Yaa, Jana, Leila, Aaron, Jeegar, Cain and just about everyone else singing our hearts out at the hostel's karaoke night. Then to bed, to rest ourselves for the next day's adventures.

Our first stop on Sunday was the National German History Museum. This was a really good and interesting museum (apart from the security that kept telling us to turn our flash off on our camera!). It had lots of different Nazi posters, clothes from the 20's and advertisements from that era (known as the Golden Age!), all good information for our Controlled Assessment. After this we went to this amazing German flea market where you could get not only the usual souvenirs but wonderful German historical artefacts.

After this, we went to the History of Berlin Museum this was a very interesting museum. I think what the museum did was put the information in a humorous and very interesting way. For example to show a cut out of a newspaper article there was a big piece of card that was like a cut up newspaper with a giant pair of scissors next to it! Another thing was that there was a broken glass but it was covered up with glass – this was a very effective way of representing Kristallnacht – 'the night of broken glass'.

Our last stop of the day was the tour of the underground nuclear bunker. It was explained to us that the bunker was never used, but in an emergency nuclear crisis it turned into a home for thousands of people. There was a high chance that the bunker would not save them from a nuclear disaster, but it was built to give people hope during the dark days of the Cold War.

The last day! We were all packed up and ready to go back home, but first we went to the Reichstag – the German parliament building (and also where the famous Reichstag fire was). This place I think was the most unpopular to the majority of us we had to stand outside in the snow and cold in a long queue for about 30 minutes! But when inside, we were impressed by the way they had modernised the old building by creating a massive glass dome. It had a long curvy staircase which took quite a bit of time to get up but gave us great views when we did!

The last and final stop of the Berlin trip was... The Olympic Stadium! This is probably the part that everyone knows about, as this is where the 1936 Olympics took place and where the famous Jesse Owens won 4 gold medals and broke 11 world records! The stadium was very big it could seat over 100,000 people! The tour guide took us around the stadium he took us to the balcony seat where Hitler would have sat, and where lots of famous sports people, politicians, and even presidents have been since. We then went to the athletes changing rooms which was really nice and it had like a mini swimming pool but it was called something else (I can't remember the name!) We then went outside and saw this big bell that had once been stolen from that time after the Olympics and it had been missing for years. Someone had hidden it after the war and buried it for safe keeping – but no-one knew where. Eventually they found it, dug it up and put it in on display outside the stadium.

After our tour was finished we all took a group photo in front of the stadium and got back on the coach to start the long and sad trip home. When we got back to England we gave Miss Anderson a present to say thank-you for all her hard work organising the trip. The end of the tour, the end of the trip and the end of

a wonderful experience!

BY Shantelle Roberts