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# Acknowledgement

We, as a part of the Indo-German cultural exchange, were blessed with the wonderful opportunity to visit Germany - a country which cherishes its culture to the fullest.

The trip was truly life-changing, lasting for two weeks, from April 25th to May 10th. There was a lot to learn - their discipline, punctuality and sense of responsibility. The picturesque landscape and the Bavarian forests were enchanting. Our trip was accentuated with beautiful churches, castles and other intricate pieces of architecture, making the experience more enjoyable.

We are grateful to so many people, without whose hard-work this trip would not have been possible. We thank and praise God for the immense blessings he has showered upon us.

We are grateful to Fr. Sebastian Mathai, the principal and Fr. Biju K.C., the vice principal, Christ Junior College, Bangalore, for giving us this chance to visit Germany. We would like to thank Mrs. Philu Rose Jose, coordinator of Student Development Office, for guiding us through the procedures required to make this trip a successful one.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Fr. Peter Erhard, the principal, St. Michael's Gymnasium, Metten, for helping us make this trip fruitful. Our special gratitude to Mr. Martin Wimber and Mr. Michael Seibold for the great support and hospitality they extended by taking care of every minute detail throughout our stay there. We also extend our gratitude towards the families who hosted our students, for their cooperation and support. The love and support of the German families made the students feel like they were home.

Once again we thank all the members of the German exchange program who helped us make this journey a memorable one.

Mrs. Sindhumol Antony  
Mr. N S Prasad

# St. Michael's Gymnasium, Metten

St. Michael's Gymnasium is the only school in the town of Metten, and is run by the Benedictine Fathers. It is part of the Metten Abbey which holds one of the world's oldest libraries. The library, which is open for tours, contains over 1,50,000 volumes on theology, philosophy and history. It is over 300 years old and still stands in its original glory.

The school, closed during the Second World War, was later reopened and classes were continued. The monastery also houses a cemetery in honour of the soldiers from the town of Metten who fought during the War. Their campus is an effortless blend of modern technology and traditional architecture. The facade was made up of beautiful pink and yellow buildings, vibrancy in stark contrast to the ancient style of the structures.

What struck me the most was the interactive and innovative methods of teaching used at the school. Every student is given individual attention and each topic is taken up in detail with videos, slides and discussions. The students have a variety of options to choose from for a snack after school - the campus is home to a cafeteria and there are plenty of restaurants and bakeries around the school.



Rahul A. N

# Metten Abbey

Hours before we left for the Munich airport, we were privileged enough to receive a guided tour through the Kloster Metten. Housing the Benedictine order, the Abbey was founded around 766, and it was around this abbey that the town of Metten grew. By the middle of the 1800s, after the monastery was re-established, a *Gymnasium*, or a secondary school was incorporated, which to this day is the St. Michael's Gymnasium. The Abbey is breathtaking and the pictures don't do it any justice.







# The Library at Metten Abbey

The library of the Abbey is open to the public, but few have the opportunity of receiving a guided tour through its majestic archways and past its ancient shelves. The library is richly stocked with medieval *Syriac* works of Saint Ephrem The Syrian, edited by the monastery's own Dom Edmund Beck. It includes one of the smallest handwritten prayer books in the world, eight pages with a prayer in the languages of German, Latin, Greek, English, Czech, Italian, French, and Spanish.

Keeping the *Neusprachliches*, or modern languages, and *Humanistisches*, or humanist values of the establishment true, the 150,000 volumes on theology, philosophy, history, and classical languages of Latin and Greek.

Shristi Chauhan

# Munich

## *An Indian's experiments with the Bavarian capital*



If a keen individual were to inquire on the German Student Exchange, they would soon realize that the Munich trip is enthusiastically remembered among the Indian students. Having witnessed the countryside, this was our first visit to a major city. Being Metropolitans ourselves, we established a quick bond with the city. We awed at bicycles carrying miniature dogs and missed out on no opportunities to take pictures to fit our 1080x1080 social life.

The trip began with the journey of Munich through the tour bus. The city tour bus was a hop-on hop-off (HoHo) bus which provided the service of an audio guide in various different languages. While we squinted our eyes to search for the monuments corresponding to the audio guide, our German partners soaked up the Bavarian summer sunlight on the roof of a double decker bus.

To delve into the history of Munich requires both sightseeing and research. The name München literally means “by the monks” and refers to the earliest settlements of monks in Munich.

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Through the bus tour we got to experience the enchantment of the old town. The old town houses many attractions such as the Odeonsplatz and the St. Peter's Church and the Old town hall. Being the capital of Bavaria, The Bavarian State Chancellery is also present in the city. The current Mayor of Bavaria, Dieter Reiter is a social democrat. Social Democratic Party of Germany has strong hold in Munich since 1948.

Understanding the real life changes brought by extreme nationalism or Nazism over Munich required digging up of old and worn out stories. The fist comes from the Political scenario of the Munich Agreement. The Munich Agreement essentially ceded territories of Czechoslovakia over to the German authorities.

The agreement was supported and signed by Italy, under the leadership of Mussolini. Surprisingly it was also signed by France and The United Kingdom who later became bitter rivals of Germany in the Second World War.

The second story comes from the appreciated field of Opera. Richard Strauss a world renowned German composer performed usually at the opera in Munich. Strauss was resentful towards the Nazi Party and went to the extent of calling [Joseph](#)

[Goebbels](#) , a senior party member “a disgrace to German honor”. These entries however were only entered in his personal diary and never reached the ears of the party members. Throughout, his career Strauss was given high positions in the world of opera by the Nazi Party. Strauss worked on a comedic opera Die schweigsame Frau along with his Jewish friend Stefan Zweig. Soon enough, the opera was banned by the Third Reich.

Both these stories raise the same question in an observer's mind. If the Policy of Appeasement had not been followed both on Political and Cultural fronts, could the Nazi Party have still materialized its ambitions?

Experiencing Germany and its history requires a deep understanding of the German word

Vergangenheitsbewältigung which essentially means “coming to terms with the past”. The dark past of Munich is forever a topic of conversation for all those who visit the Bavarian capital. Such topics preoccupied most of our chatter while returning from Munich.

Saakhi Mishra

# Dachau Concentration Camp

We went to the Dachau Concentration Camp, the land stained with desolation. Dachau was the first concentration camp to be built in Germany in March 22, 1933. Many thousands of people, from political prisoners to Jews, POWs and clergy to ordinary criminals, died here and it was heartbreaking to hear about their suffering. . In 1945, as the war drew to an end, Allied soldiers were liberating camps, and Nazi officials tried their best to destroy as much evidence as possible. However, the prison cells and the gas chambers told their own stories which made tears roll down my eyes. They present a chilling and upsetting account of Hitler's "Final Solution."

On this half-day tour, we spent around three hours exploring the memorial site with our audio guides. We saw the exhibition center and former compound, and learnt about the history of Dachau, World War II, and the Holocaust. We also saw reconstructed barracks, guard houses, cells, the crematorium, and administration headquarters. At the site, we could see an International Memorial, the roll-call square, religious memorials, maintenance buildings and the prisoners' baths. There was a Shunt Room where prisoners were registered and their personal belongings and clothes were collected. The bunkers where the prisoners slept on wooden bunk beds were four levels high and very cramped. Almost every category of victim passed through its Arbeit Macht Frei (Work Sets You Free) gate, including German dissidents, outspoken clergymen, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jewish people and Polish citizens.







The Path of Remembrance, an exhibit with 12 panels along the route, was walked by prisoners from the Dachau railway station to the camp. The panels along the 3km route explain the connection between the town and the camp.

While each camp was responsible for its own particular form of barbarism, what distinguished Dachau is that almost everything that happened in the system as a whole, happened at some level there. Today's memorial site combines the historical authenticity of the original environment and its many surviving buildings with the function of a modern exhibition center. It is a place of memory, of pilgrimage and of education which should be experienced by everyone.

After the tour ended we went to the Dachau Visitor Center where we could buy souvenirs ranging from Jewish peace symbols to books about the history of Germany and the Nazi rule. It was truly a heart-wrenching experience to get a glimpse of the history of the camp and the suffering that took place.  
Sudeep Bellavi

# Salzburg, Austria

"Salzburg is the stuff of fairytales," the Lonely Planet page for Salzburg reads.

From walking through its quaint cobblestone alleys and visiting the Schloss Hellbrunn, the city is straight out of a storybook. Salzburg gets its name from what the mountains and hills that border it are known to provide, salt, or 'salz' in German.

The picturesque Old Town, burrowed below steep hills, on one of which stands the mighty Festung Hohensalzburg, a 900-year-old fortress visible from almost any part of the city, looks as much as it did 250 years ago, when the city's very own son - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart walked by it.

Walking by the Salzach river, your view is raised to glorious domes and graceful spires, the very same that did some of the greatest artists, writers, and musicians proud centuries ago.

Being the hometown of Mozart, and the location of the filming for the iconic film - The Sound of Music, this city welcomes scores of visitors daily.







Despite being so popular among tourists, this city manages to maintain the aura of a quaint little town, backed by towering mountains.

Behind the main money spinners, the real charm of the city, other than the city itself, is the way the culture of art has seeped so deep into daily life; in the city's food and café culture, the variety of performing arts spaces, and the integral part music plays in daily life, seeping out of windows and being played on manicured gardens. The joke, "If it isn't Baroque, don't fix it", is a perfect maxim for Salzburg.

Malcolm Antony

# Walhalla

On our way back from Regensburg, we stopped at a rather peculiar place, the Walhalla. It is a Greek-style monument, on a cliff by the Danube, built by Ludwig I in commemoration of the Unification of Germany.

The view from the Walhalla is breathtaking- looking at the Danube with all the farmland and ships leaves you elated from the soul. The majestic pillars allow you to fathom the architectural expertise and labour involved in the construction of this beautiful building.

The interior of the Walhalla is now a memorial for various notable artists from Germany and Austria with beautiful paintings made with natural colours.





# Regensburg

On 30th April, we were asked to assemble at the school with our German partners and set off to explore the ancient city of Regensburg, about an hour's drive from Metten. Our first stop was the Regensburg University. The University in itself has historic value as it was a Recruitment Centre for soldiers joining the German Army. It is a renowned university in Germany, famous for its technical courses and architecture. As we were going around the University, we came across the sports facilities and loved the jump rope where we spent a lot of time trying to find our balance!

We were then greeted by the Roman walls of The City of Regensburg which still stand strong today. Regensburg is a Bavarian city on the Danube River in South West Germany.

Regensburg is famous for having the largest mediaeval old town. One of the most famous sites, located in the old town, was the Dom (Cathedral of Catholic Diocese of Regensburg), where we were taken. It is an excellent example of German Gothic architecture.

We were allowed to walk through the streets of this magnificently elevated city and learnt about the historical importance of the town. The cobblestone streets with

This town has indeed been my favourite as a very special surprise awaited us. Our German partners informed us that we would be having lunch in an Indian restaurant, Ganesha. It was a nostalgic moment when all of us sat together and enjoyed our Indian meals. Most of the staff were Indians and spoke fluent Hindi. Our German partners enjoyed the Indian food and were taken by surprise by the various elements of flavour in our dishes.

Another surprise was when Father Biju K.C., the Vice Principal of our college, joined us for lunch in Regensburg.

Drithi Rakashekar





# Passau

Passau is a German city that lies close to the Austrian border and at the confluence of three rivers, the Danube, Inn and Ilz. The 28th of April, a sunny Saturday was when we planned to tour through the city of three rivers. Our hosts and tour guide told us about the rich history of this beautiful town and that it was part of the Roman Empire. All the buildings and structures, now yellowing with age, had a sense of elegance and composure about them. A street in the Old town displayed the works of different artists and is called the Artists Alley. Some of the cobblestones have been painted in bright colours to draw attention to these local artists.

The St. Stephen's Cathedral, established in 1668, is a major tourist attraction in the old town of Passau. Apart from its architectural beauty, this magnificent structure is home to the largest pipe organ outside the United States. Our next destination was the Vaste Oberhaus, a fortress that was built on top of a mountain during the medieval times. The sweet breeze made our tiring climb bearable. The Oberhaus gave us a spectacular view of the city and the three rivers. Its strategic location gives a good vantage point of the old town and the rivers, which gave it importance during the war.

The day was complete with a number of memories captured in photographs. Our visit to Passau was a memorable one and one that we will always cherish.

Aditi Jain





# Mt. Zugspitze

We all rose very early to assemble at the school and commence our 4.5 hour long drive to Mount Zugspitze. At 2,962 meters, it is the highest point in Germany. All of us were excited as it was the first time many of us got a glimpse of snow and mountains. On reaching the peak, we were delighted to see the fresh layer of snow and we immediately lost ourselves to the kid in us and started a snow fight! The frigid feel of the ice in our clothes and our faces didn't seem to matter as we were all in frolic and joy. The magnificent view of the German and Austrian Alps from the viewpoint left all of us awestruck. The tranquil air up there gave a feel of inner solace. The clean air made us feel fresh and complain about the pollution back at home!

We all sat for a meal at the Ski lodge where we were greeted with hot 'currywurst', the flavour of which was enhanced by the cold weather and our hunger. We left the mountains soon enough, as time flies when we have fun, taking the historical mountain train, Bavarian Zugspitze Railway, down to our bus.

The memories and thoughts of the Zugspitze mountain still linger within and the view of the Alps still resonates in my thoughts.

Kritika Nayyar





# Frühlingsfest

A smaller version of the well known Oktoberfest, Frühlingsfest, also known as the Spring Festival, is a folk festival celebrated in and around Germany.

We had the chance to go to the fest in Deggendorf along with our partners. Being a smaller version of Oktoberfest, it attracts more of the locals than tourists. It was like a carnival with exciting games, thrilling rides and scrumptious food. There were two tents, one for the dancing and music, and another for the food. Along with the authentic German food and sweets, traditional Bavarian outfits were worn by almost everyone there - Lederhosen for the men and Dirndl for the women. The atmosphere was kept lively throughout the festival with live bands playing fan favourites. We took a great liking to German music and still listen to some of the songs.

Aparna Balasubramanian



# BMW Factory, Dingolfing

The visit to the BMW Factory, Dingolfing, on May 3rd lasted for about two and half hours. It was arranged for the Indian students and teachers. The BMW Factory is definitely the place to visit if you are a lover of cars. The tour starts with a video presentation of the floor plan of the factory and the assembly process of the cars. It also shows the evolution of the cars but more importantly the evolution of resources and technology. The tour guide also told us about the history of the location. We were then provided with an audio guide to listen to the guide's speech no matter how far apart we were. This gave us a chance to stay at an exhibit for a longer period of time. The work in the plant is done mostly by robots rather than human hands. However, the assembly of the car's interiors are done by the workers at a time span of 60 minutes which is quite a feat! The body shop was a personal favourite of mine as it displayed the most important part - the making of the car and its evolution. We were also taken through the paint shop where the cars were given multiple coats of spray paint, again by automated mechanisms. BMW Group Plant Dingolfing is the BMW Group's largest vehicle production site in Europe: every year, approximately 3,40,000 BMW vehicles roll off the assembly lines.



The site manufactures a wide range of cars as well as components for BMW's electric vehicles and car bodies for Rolls-Royce Motor Cars. In total, the location has a workforce of over 17,500 people, plus 800 apprentices. Once the tour ended, we visited the souvenir store which was nice to look at but slightly pricey. We then bought food and drinks from the vending machine to end our long day, and posed for pictures in front of the factory.

Vivien Benoy

# The Bavarian Forest

Together with the Bohemian Forest on the Czech side of the border, the Bavarian forest is the largest continuous area of woodlands in Europe.

The towns of Metten and Deggendorf, where a majority of our homes were, lie on the edge of the serene woodlands.

Seeing the forest up close let us experience the undulated terrain of the virgin woodlands, with its majestic coniferous trees rising high. The Black Forest, found on venturing further, served as inspiration for the Grimm Brothers.

Despite the incredible views and rich history, the region sees very few tourists, especially international ones, probably because the castles nested among these dense thickets provide for a more tangible attraction.





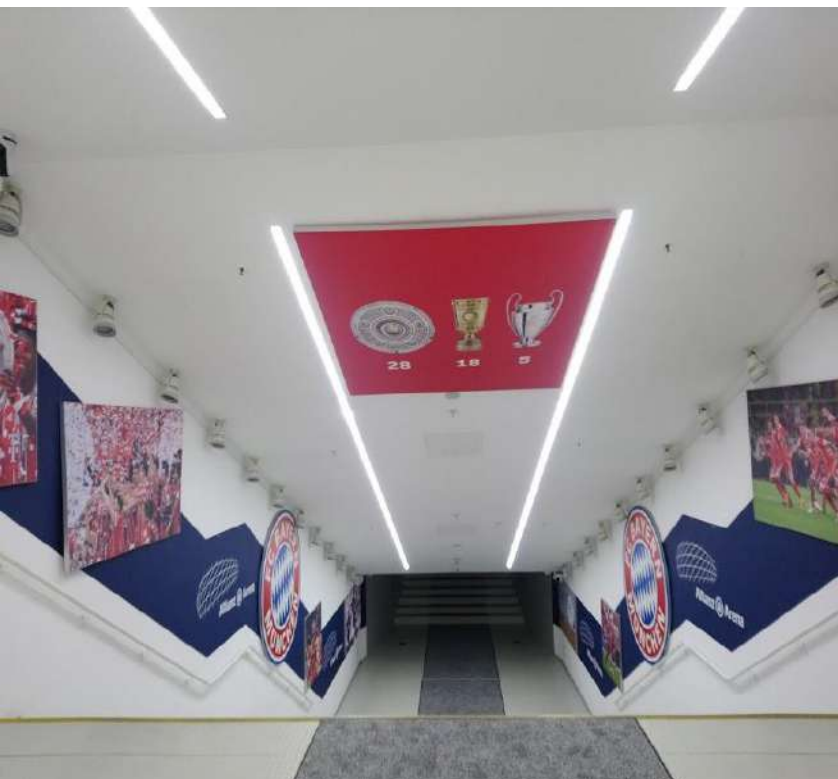
The highlight of our visit to the forest was Wald Wipfel Weg, which loosely translates to 'Forest Top Off,' a forest trail in Sankt Englmar, where we went for a walk over a treetop path made of larch wood, standing about 40 meters off the ground.

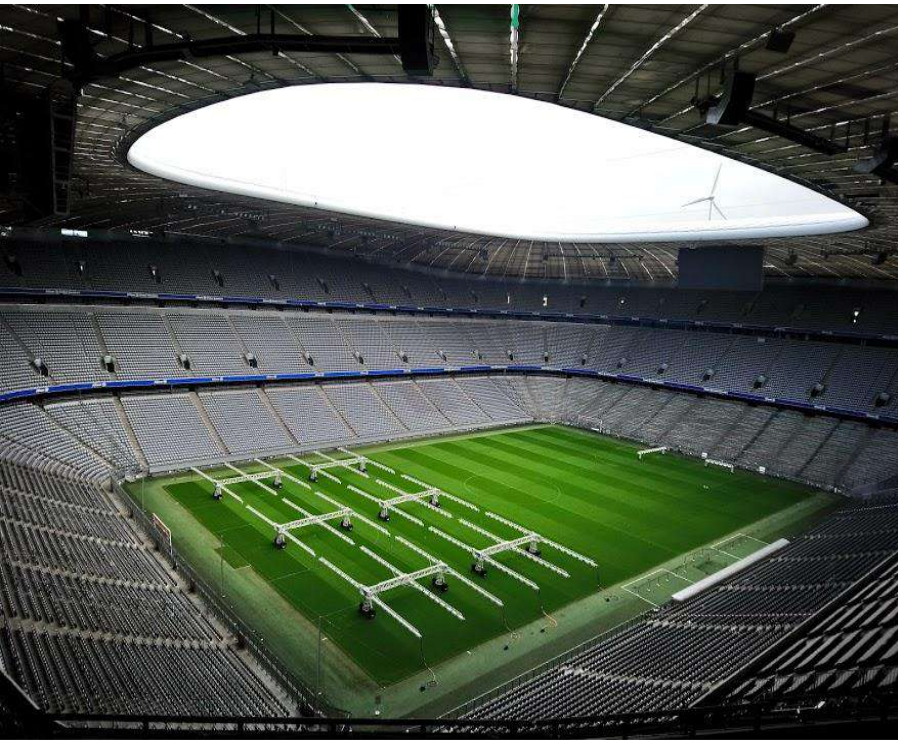
HB Chirag





# Allianz Arena





With 28 domestic titles, 18 league cups, and 6 international titles to their name, FC Bayern Munich has been one of the best clubs on the planet. A world class team needs a world class fortress and that's exactly what they have in the Allianz Arena. The stadium boasts a 75000+ seating capacity and one of the best pitches around the world. The stadium tour started out with a brief introduction to the club and its history. To get a season pass or a place in the VIP box one would have to wait for close to twenty years due to the high demand for tickets. We were lucky enough to sit in the stands, see the stadium and admire the sheer size. The main highlight was definitely the dressing rooms- the thought of standing in the same room as some of the greatest players football has to offer sends chills down your spine. Walking down the tunnel towards the pitch while the Champions League anthem played, the day after FC Bayern Munich was knocked out, was a bit of nasty irony but was still special nonetheless. All in all an experience of a lifetime and one none of us will ever forget.

Nirek Asher

# Schloss Egg

Castle Egg, named after the village it is located in, meaning 'corner' in old German, was built around the year 1103, first serving the Count of Bogen and a number of Bavarian Dukes. It was most notably owned by Peter The Terrible, known for his torturous methods of dealing with criminals and other subjects. The dungeons can be visited and still hold the torture devices and chains with which the criminals were bound. Standing on the edge of the Bavarian Forest, the castle is obscured, so much so that all the guides in the castle only conduct tours in German, and is practically unheard of outside the Landkreis of Deggendorf.

The castle is presently owned by the Hartl family, aristocrats who acquired it in 1939. Today, the upper levels of this castle are barred from entry, as it serves as the living quarters of the family.

Besides being enchanted by the castle's tragic history and interior grandiose, the legend of the White Lady has stayed with me.

Two rival Counts, our guide said, decided to marry their children off to each other. The father of the bride, however, had ulterior motives. He instructed his daughter to kill the man she was to marry on the night of their wedding. Servants who happened to overhear this conversation reported it to the other Count, who ordered the execution of the bride, still dressed in her white gown. To this day, locals say, on a full moon night, you can see her walking the grounds, sometimes wailing, sometimes weeping.





# Neuschwanstein Castle

The Neuschwanstein Castle is straight out of a fairy tale, which is perhaps the reason why it was chosen to be the inspiration for the Sleeping Beauty castle by Walt Disney Co, which now serves as the logo for the enterprise. The energy surrounding the castle was unique. The exterior was made out of chiseled rock and granite, but like other castles it didn't feel grayscale. The castle was constructed by King Ludwig the second on fifth September 1869. The castle is on top of a large hill and the walk to the castle was probably the most amount of exercise all of us had done all summer, but it was definitely worth it. On the way up we were disconnected with the modern world and transported to the 19th Century. The old world charm was further intensified by the horse carriages ferrying people up and down the hill. Even though most of the castle was flanked by tourists, when you get the chance to be alone, the aesthetic and the value of visiting the castle dawned upon me.

Sahana Jagadish



# Organic Farm

On 7<sup>th</sup> May, we visited LFL Kringell, an organic farm in Hutthurm. Their specialities included organic fruits and meat. The farm commercially rears pigs and cows for meat and milk. As for the fruits, they had special equipment that made organic apple and orange juice.

The guide explained to us the history and working of the farm. It was wonderful to learn how the farm strived to be as eco-friendly as possible, powered entirely by solar power. We walked through the various enclosures and saw the many cows and pigs. What made it even better was that we got to hold piglets!

We came to the end of our tour with a scrumptious meal prepared in house using all the wonderful produce from the farm. It was a wonderful experience!

Varshitha Takumalla



# The Family Experience



# Living with the Exners

On reaching St. Michael's Gymnasium, I was greeted with a warm hug from my host, Emely and her mother, Nelli. What can I say about them? They were the best! We reached their house where I met Eugen, the host father. He was well built and could put a bodybuilder to shame, but nevertheless was a caring and loving man from the heart. Nelli was like my second mother who looked after all my needs and comforts during my stay in Germany. Emely was a very sportive person; a fitness freak and sports junkie! She was fun and had a fascination for unicorns. The family was very open and liberal so much so that they preferred me calling them by their first names. Communication was a problem as only Eugen and Emely knew English. Nelli and I managed to speak to each other with my broken German and her broken English. However, that didn't stop the warmth and hospitality from reaching my heart. The family was also very independent and even Emely had a job - she distributes newspapers.

professions reflected on their personal lives; patience, empathy and hospitality. Their dog, Bobby, was a delight and it felt as though he was a fun loving human trapped in the body of a dog. He followed us everywhere and even ate human food. The Exchange programme left me with a second family 7000 miles away. On the last day, the family bid adieu by saying "Mien sohn" or "my son" in German and gave me one last hug. These are the people I will look forward to visit again in the near future. Till then, Tschüss!

-Kshitij Kasi Viswanath



# The Beilmeiers and the Natschers



A warm hug and a squeal of excitement; that was how my stay in Germany began.

The cultural exchange was an eye-opening experience - an escape from the bustle and chaos of India. Metten, my hometown for the first week was a beautiful echo of *Winoka* from *The Little House on the Prairie* in the sense of its quaint allure and nostalgic idyll. I was particularly lucky to be hosted by two partners, giving me a glimpse into the intricacies of German life.

For the first half of my trip, I stayed with Lena Belmeier, her father, Joseph and their dog, Lucky. We instantly hit off, from watching movies and critiquing them dramatically every night, her being my wake-up call with *Samyukta! Up! Up! Up!* to me helping her study for a mathematics test. Joseph didn't speak English but that didn't stop us from sharing jokes and having a hearty laugh. Every morning, I'd leave a note for him in my broken German and the joy when he read it is something that will be etched in my memory. My hometown for the second week was Schaufling, a collection of picturesque hamlets punctuated with old-world charm. I stayed with The Nätchers - Viola, and her parents, Martin and Jutta. We often spoke about Indian culture and traditions; Jutta even pulled out a book on Ayurveda that she often used for home-remedies. She is a wonderful cook and I crave for her *Griessnockerlsuppe* or dumpling soup. In the evenings, Martin and I went for long walks along Danube, when we would talk about politics and taxes. This family too had a dog, Emmy or as I called her, *Emmy schatzi-poo!*

During my weekends, both my host families would travel together to places like the Herrenchiemsee island or relax with a grill-party and a leisurely drive through the Bavarian landscape. The fortnight of my sojourn came to an end in the blink of an eye. With hugs and promises to meet again soon, I bid adieu to my homes away from home. I will forever cherish this experience.

Samyukta Iyer

# The Korbers

The first bit of warmth I felt in the chilly Bavarian morning air was when Alexander, my host father, offered me pretzels. He picked us up from the school, and took the scenic way home, by the Danube River and through the centre of the picture-perfect town of Deggendorf. At home, I was greeted by Paul's older sister, Hannah, his mother, Vera, and Bazi, their big black cat.



I was introduced to the town they lived in, Winzer, through a long leisurely walk after lunch, up and down its hills and by its quaint houses.

It didn't take long for me to get along with my host family. I came to learn of Paul's passion for photography, Vera's taste for wine, Alexander's sense of humour, and Hannah's liking for the same television shows as me. All it took were conversations over meals, drives, and walks. By the third morning, they already knew how I liked my coffee, which kinds of bread I preferred, and which drink I liked with my meals.

And by the fourth day, I began saying *genau* with them in conversation, the English equivalent of "that's right". We shared a similar taste in music, and even had a playlist we stuck to during hours in the car. They were the kind of people who played Mexican music while we ate Mexican food, and jazz music on relaxed Sunday mornings.

"We will meet again", Vera wrote, on a card with my host family's signatures on it, handing it to me before I boarded the bus to the airport.



When I first received a message that I was selected for this exchange program, I was so excited and happy and I told all my friends and family about it. I lived in Metten and was placed with a wonderful host family that became my second family. I loved every minute I spent with them. They gave me the warmest hugs. My partners, Hanna and Lena, were very kind and helpful. They always kept me entertained with jokes and facts about Germany and introduced me to their music and their culture. They even gave me a traditional Bavarian dress to wear at the spring fest.

We visited Munich, Regensburg and Salzburg. My personal favorite was Salzburg where we visited places from the movie, "The Sound of Music". My host mother took me to church on Sundays which was a different yet nice experience. My host father wasn't around much because he had to work on most days, but he made sure I had what I needed. My host sister spent time with me even though she had to prepare for her A level exams. They took care of me when I was sick and were the best family I could ever ask for. On the last day of the exchange program, my host mother started crying when she dropped me off at the school and that was when I realized I was a part of their family.

Varshitha Takumalla





Truly said, it was an experience of a lifetime and I was grateful to have found a second family far away from home. The exchange program gave us an opportunity to meet new people, understand their language and culture, and have the experience of living in a German household. Moreover, we found new ways to communicate with different people to express our views, opinions, problems, and to find solutions and make memories for a lifetime. Agnes and her family hosted me for two weeks. They were extremely hospitable and went to the lengths of preparing Indian food and took me to the hospital when I was hurt. The family spoke in English as much as they could to make me feel included in the conversation. We had family time every day but the weekends were special as we spent the whole day exploring new places. On some days, we were accompanied by the other partners and their families, and did several group activities. At the end of the trip we all left with eyes full of tears and a heart full of emotions and beautiful memories.

Nihaar Baldota



I was slightly scared to meet my host family for the first time. I thought that the Germans were generally cold and a serious bunch. It didn't help that Lucas, my partner, could not be present because he had broken his hand a few hours earlier. I was whisked up from the school by his brother instead.

I was still nervous to meet his parents. However, a short while later we were acquainted with each other and they couldn't be farther from the stereotypes. They were the warmest people I've ever met in my life. We spent most of the first day talking about lives in our respective countries. Lucas joined us for dinner and he was instantly likeable, warm, approachable and had this swagger about him which I still can't explain.

Over the course of the next fourteen days, I enjoyed every moment spent in their company and they took me in like I was their own. Rest assured I definitely felt horrible leaving them behind. I will always remember them as my second family.

Nirek Asher





I stayed with a family of three, although it felt like everyone in the neighborhood was a part of it, which was not what I expected. The atmosphere was completely different from that of Bangalore. My partner's mother, Barbara, was the nicest person ever. She gave me everything I needed, including the best cappuccino I've ever had! The family was quite interactive and very interested in getting to know me. Lukas' sister, Lena, was around my age which made conversation easy and relatable. They spent a lot of family quality time together and I felt that that part was missing from us, as Indians. Breakfast was usually the most fun part of the day. They spoke in English just to include me in their conversations. I can, without a doubt, say that leaving them was one of the hardest things I've ever done.

Vivien Benoy



# The Neidermayers and the Niebauers

I remember walking into the school, anxiously waiting to meet my partners, Leonie and Carmen. A week of our stay in Germany, I lived with Leonie, in Schwarzach. Her house was warm and her family, equally so. I was greeted by her lovely dog, Nelli, who I spent time with before we left. Her father was a chef and I was lucky enough to eat at his restaurant. Leonie and I often had long chats about the cultural and political differences especially when I went with Leonie for her horse riding classes. I also got a chance to meet her horse, Capitano Romano, who was the most magnificent horse I have seen. Leonie and I played games on several occasions and her dog for walks. The weekend I spent with them, they took me to Wald Wipfel Weg where I could breathe fresh air.



Halfway through our stay, I moved to Carmen's house, in Plattling. I was introduced to her grandparents, her mother, and two cats - Gizmo and Kayli, and I'm honoured to say that Kayli took an instant liking to me. Carmen and I both loved to eat and would spend our free time eating ice cream or chocolate. She also taught me Bavarian card games. Her mother, Cornelia, was the nicest person and I was very comfortable at all times. Although her grandparents didn't know any English, they would wish me "Guten Morgen!" every day. Carmen and I spent the weekend shopping and walking, sitting by the Danube. On the last day, her grandparents were kind enough to drop me off and help me with my luggage despite my repeated protests. Her grandfather even gave me a key to a room of their house!



I knew I would miss my host parents when they told me I was welcome to stay at their house when I was in Germany, and with that I promised that it wouldn't be our last meeting. Leonie and Carmen were the best partners I could ask for, and I left Germany with tearful eyes, eagerly awaiting their return. Sai Motupali Nair

# Indo-German Student Exchange Programme 2018

Bright yellow fields of mustard starkly contrasting with the brown of the barns and the grey of the sky in the Bavarian countryside, and the kind, warm welcome contrasting with the chill in the air. This is how we will always think of our first day in Germany. Walking was not a problem in Europe, we thought, with the sunny, if not cold weather, cobblestone alleys, and the old world beauty everywhere we looked. That was until we visited the city of Regensburg on an especially gloomy and windy day. Needless to say, it was cold enough for us to walk around huddling like penguins. In retrospect, it was moments like these that brought us closer to each other.

If we had to briefly explain how the programme impacted us, we can confidently say the following: *friendships, career goals and personal growth*. We made lifelong friendship not only with our German partners but also with the other Indian students and formed a closer bond with our student coordinators. We were and will continue to be a tight knit group. As for career goals, each one of us realised what we wanted from our careers - the exchange taught us that. We were exposed to the various career options available for us not only in Germany but in the rest of Europe. Travelling abroad really helped us be more aware of our own country back home. It helped us be more self-sufficient and look at the world with a more open outlook. A look back and we can, with no doubt say that we have truly grown into world citizens.

We have a few wonderful people to thank for making this exchange possible. First, the Principals of both institutions. Next, our teachers, Mrs. Sindhumol Antony and Mr. N. S. Prasad, as well as Mrs. Philu Rose Jose, and the teachers from Germany, Mr. Martin Wimber and Mr. Michael Seibold, for guiding us every step of the way and making the experience a thoroughly enjoyable one. We would like to express our gratitude towards our host families for treating us as one of their own and for making us feel at home.

The German exchange was all that we expected it to be and more. It was a journey of self-discovery punctuated with memories to last us a lifetime. Leaving our new friends and families was a hard task, and explaining the emotions we felt the day we were leaving would be just as hard as explaining the German word, *Gemütlichkeit*, or the feel-good air of cosiness we were acquainted with.

## Co-Editors:

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