

Exchange Visit to Australia

We arrived in Sydney on Monday, 10th September, at 8 o'clock local time.

After having past the passport control, we looked for our luggage.

Unfortunately, Julia's suitcase was lost. At the luggage service they told her that she would receive it the next day, because it was lost in Dubai and now found. We had to pass another control and surprisingly, our suitcases were checked for food, plants and animals, because they could develop epidemics in Australia.

Ms. St.Leon, the Australian German teacher, was waiting for us in the entrance hall. We were all taken to Castle Hill High School by bus. There, we were welcomed by our host students.

After we had locked our luggage, we took part in our hosts' classes. This was actually very hard for us because we were tired after such a long flight.

At 3p.m. we could finally leave school, exhausted and excited at the same time as we would see our host families and their homes for the first time.

Tuesday morning started with a meeting in little groups where students' absence was noted and the programme of the day was announced. We had classes with our hosts the whole day where we could find out that lessons differ extremely from the ones in Germany as many students seemed to not take care of their school career.

Later, we met all the teachers and we had to introduce ourselves. Unfortunately, we were told that German lessons will be abolished at Castle Hill High School. We do hope and wish for all our fellow students, who would love to visit Castle Hill High School in the following years, that this does not mean the end of the partnership between Castle Hill High School and its sister school Friedrich-Ebert-Gymnasium in Bonn.

On Wednesday we visited Sydney's Koala Park where we saw typical Australian animals. Many of us enjoyed feeding and cuddling the koalas, while others preferred the kangaroos. Thursday was another school day but this time we got to know the Castle Hill High School's sport classes. Pupils could choose between a bowling centre, a figure skating hall, or a fitness centre. It was really great fun.

The next day - a Friday - we took the bus to Sydney which took about an hour and saw the popular Sydney Opera House built in 1957 by Jorn Utzon.

Sydney was enormous. We saw many skyscrapers and surprisingly, right in the middle of them, there were little parks.

At the weekend everyone enjoyed to spend time with their host families, because they could get to know them even better by going on trips and having fun together.

On our second Monday in Australia we took part in our first assembly, which is held on every Monday. Here, the pupils of the school and their teachers meet. At the beginning everyone had to stand up and sing the anthem. Then announcements like the school's basketball team's success or maths competitions were done. On that Monday we were introduced to the whole school – embarrassingly enough, only six German students were present. I am very sorry for the others' absence, although they had good excuses – they were allowed to go on extra trips with their host families.

The big trip with our hosts and Ms. St.Leon to the Blue Mountains was on Tuesday.

We went to a nice lookout from where we could see the Three Sisters, one of the mountains that was divided into three parts. Some of us went to the valley and saw a forest that was

reminiscent of a rainforest because of its vegetation. After that we visited another place where we could see another part of the Blue Mountains. The last one was nicer than the previous one, because it was in the middle of a forest and unknown to other tourists.

On Wednesday we took the ferry to Manly Beach, which is a really nice place. We had enough time to hang around and enjoy the sun. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to swim but we still had fun. On our way back to school we stopped at the Hard Rock Café. Once nearly everyone had bought a Hard Rock Café T-shirt, we ran to the bus station to catch the bus to Castle Hill.

Thursday was just another school day but sadly, it was our last one. That was why we had a farewell party where we ate loads. After having the party, our lessons continued until 3p.m.

Friday was a really chaotic day because we wanted to see everything we had not seen before during our 12 days stay in Sydney which was loads. We started with a walk through the Rocks, the oldest area in Sydney. It is therefore seen as the foundation place of Sydney.

We continued with St. Mary's Cathedral, which is the fifth biggest cathedral in the world but unfortunately it was very dark inside. However, it was graceful.

The cathedral was rebuilt after a fire in 1865 which ruined the original cathedral.

We then went through Hyde Park and to a really exclusive address: the Queen Victoria Building where we just looked around for a while, because shopping was not possible due to the prices.

We finally arrived in China Town where enterprising waiters would hand a menu to you.

Eventually, we had lunch there. Some of us visited the Chinese Garden, which is the biggest Chinese Garden outside China, a real oasis with lakes, temples, many plants and small paths leading through the garden. Later, we went to the Sydney Aquarium where we fondled little baby sharks and saw the bigger ones while going through glass tunnels surrounded by water and fish.

This was our last stop before getting back on the bus.

We spent our last weekend with our host families and met the others at Central Station on Sunday. We enjoyed the two weeks at Castle Hill High School with our host families very much, who were very nice, welcoming, and helpful in setting down. So everyone was really sad saying goodbye, because the time had passed by too fast.

I am sure we will have a great time when the Australian are coming to Bonn next year and we are already really looking forward to seeing them.

We hope that more German students from our school are given the possibility to share the great time with the Australian people as we did.

After having spent two great weeks in Sydney we travelled to Australia's capital, Canberra.

Canberra is of interest because of the New and the Old Parliament House, the Australian War Memorial and in particular because of the National Museum of Australia, which we all thought to be very interesting.

On Wednesday we packed our luggage and drove on to Melbourne, a very European town.

Our youth hostel was nicer than the hotel in Canberra. On our second day, or better night as I should say, we had an extremely impressive view on Melbourne while being on the 253 metres above observation deck. It was amazing!

Our time in Melbourne passed by quickly and after having a farewell meal at an Italian restaurant, we had to say goodbye to Australia.

This time will always remain in our last memories.

By Gianna Lange