

Lucy D'Urso - Language Course in Berlin, December 2015

Between the 12th and the 19th of December, I visited Berlin to attend a German language school (along with several other members of my German group) and build upon the grammar and vocabulary I had learnt during my first term as an ab initio German student.

Having never spoken German outside of Cambridge, I found staying with a host family in East Berlin really useful because I was immersed in the language in a way I had never been before. My host family spoke no English, so I picked up from them a lot of crucial colloquial vocabulary and expressions. Also, the classes at the language school (DiD Deutsch-Insitut) were all taught in German due to the diverse nationalities of the students studying there, meaning the majority of my time in Berlin was spent speaking and absorbing German.

Due to the fact that there were no lessons in the afternoon, I was able to explore Berlin and its rich history. It was great to delve into the cultural side of my German studies because the ab initio course is based purely on language in the first term. I found the Deutsches Historisches Museum, near to the Berliner Dom, particularly fascinating. It had an exhibition about how every European country involved in World War Two coped after the war, and how their populations were affected by the atrocities that had occurred.

Visiting Berlin near to Christmas was also a highly positive experience because there were a lot of traditional Weihnachtsmarkts, offering customary German food and entertainment, which gave me an insight into traditional German culture and its strong influence on modern festivities.

On returning to the UK, I felt that my German vocabulary had improved massively, as well as my ability to understand everyday spoken German. Having only visited Germany once before, it also now appeals to me as a potential destination for my year abroad in two years' time.