

Soon after our summer vacation, at a much too early hour, the German delegation set off for Detroit, Michigan. Led by Ms. Saur and Ms. Lietz, everyone was excited about the time ahead despite being tired. After several films and a little bit of sleep, we finally wanted to leave the airport in Detroit to meet our exchange partners, but were held up by a fire alarm. After some time we managed to pass the passport control and were warmly welcomed. After a few group photos and some small talk, we drove to our exchange partners' homes where we went to bed as quickly as possible.

The next day was the start of our first day of school, which included a football game and a pep assembly, where lunch caused a lot of discussion. The results of the football game and the lunch were slightly disappointing, but it didn't harm our good mood.

On Saturday, the annual homecoming took place, where there was a so-called "mosh pit." Some students had problems with the DJ who ignored their music requests. Later in the evening, however, the mood improved, mostly because of a particular song. The party ended at around 10 p.m., but that didn't mean the day was over. Most students just went to the next party where UFC was broadcast on a big screen and there were a lot of snacks. If it had been up to us, the day would never have ended.

Sunday was spent with our host families. Some went to one of the many lakes in the area, while others went to more parties.

On Monday, we went to Walled Lake Northern High School again where the use of cell phones is allowed. Everything was much easier than in Germany and the behavior of the students and the teachers was also very different. Interestingly, every day was similar, at least in terms of the timetable. While some may have liked that, we found the school routine a bit boring.

Tuesday was another school day, but it was overshadowed by a special event: VfB Stuttgart played its first Champions League game in years - against Real Madrid. We had to watch it, of course. Although VfB lost the game they played well.

On Wednesday, we went on a day trip to Detroit. We met at school at 7 a.m. to take a bus. Our city tour started in the so called Guardian Building, an old bank that looked like a church. After a two-hour city tour and lots of photos we were glad when we could finally sit down in a Coney Island and eat "Coney Dogs". Even though the big cities in America have about the same number of inhabitants, they seem to be much bigger. The houses are probably just as tall as our skyscrapers, but they all look like they could be found in Gotham City.

We then drove out of the city center to see "Greenfield Village", a large open-air museum that shows what cities in this area used to look like. You can, for instance, take a ride in a Model T or check out Edison's inventions. In addition, we had enough time to enjoy some delicious ice cream and play "hide and seek". Everyone had a lot of fun and after a nice day in Detroit, we went back home.

The next day, nothing special was planned. There was pizza for lunch in the cafeteria, but you could only get one slice each. The students then spent the afternoon with their host families or friends.

On Saturday morning, we met in front of the school at 4:30 a.m. and then set off on the coach towards Mackinaw City. From there we took the ferry to Mackinac Island. Once there, we all rented bikes and explored the island in groups. After a while, some groups had circumnavigated the island and decided to go shopping in town. However, we didn't have much time for this as we were supposed to meet up again after two hours of free time to visit Fort Mackinac, where we were even given a musket demonstration. Unfortunately, it was soon time to leave again and so we boarded the ferry and then the bus to get to our hotel.

In the evening, we went to a restaurant and various stores in the neighboring town. After a long day, we went to bed being really tired. There was a lot planned for the day ahead. First,

we took the bus to Fort Michilimackinac, which, unlike Fort Mackinac, is on the mainland. Then we continued our journey by bus.

After a two-hour drive and a lunch break at Arby's, we arrived at the Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes. From there we went to the Great Wolf's Lodge, where we went straight to the water park adjacent to the hotel. After a restful night and a hearty breakfast, we had to make our way back – much too soon. On the way, we also visited the Capitol in Lansing, the capital of Michigan. The building was very impressive, but the tour was a bit boring. We were also hungry again, which is why we stopped off at Calvers on the way back and grabbed some lunch.

The following week and a half passed very quickly. We didn't go on any excursions as a group, but we still visited various cities, theme parks and football matches individually. Unfortunately, it was already time to say goodbye again on Tuesday and after a very nice farewell party and a last evening with our host parents and exchange partners, we left for Chicago the next morning without the Americans. When we got there, we were sad to say goodbye, but that subsided relatively quickly once we saw what awaited us. We checked into the hotel and then set off as quickly as possible to explore the city. We visited fountains, various modern works of art and the famous "Bean", a huge mirror shaped like a bean. In the evening, we were all exhausted and hungry from all the impressions, which is why we ordered "deep dish pizza", a Chicago specialty, in a restaurant, which we really enjoyed. After this great day, we went back to bed relatively quickly, as more exciting activities awaited us the next day. One of these activities was a boat tour on the Chicago River. During the boat tour, we learned lots of interesting facts about Chicago's history and the various skyscrapers. In the afternoon, we visited the viewing platform of the Hancock Tower. Once at the top, we were treated to an incredible view of the Chicago skyline, the suburbs and, of course, Lake Michigan. We spent some time on the platform and, among other things, took advantage of an attraction where you could stand in glass windows that were then slowly tilted outwards until you were looking straight down at the city. We all really enjoyed our time on the Tower, so we weren't surprised when it was time to go back down for dinner. The next morning we met up to spend the morning at either the Shedd Aquarium or the Museum of Contemporary Art. Both options turned out to be a great experience and we had a very enjoyable time in our groups before meeting up again to enjoy our last afternoon together. We did this by going to one of the beaches where we played football or just chilled out. We had one last dinner in the USA before it was time to pack our bags.

The next morning, we took the bus straight to the airport. Once there, we still had some time before the flight left, which we spent eating or shopping. At around 4:30 p.m., we took off for Frankfurt after a slight delay. The flight went by very quickly and before we knew it, we were already in Frankfurt and then soon in Stuttgart, where we were happy to see our families.

All in all, the exchange was an incredible experience that none of us will ever forget. As students, we would like to thank Ms. Saur, Ms. Lietz and Mr. Engler and the entire organization team, without whom this exchange could never have taken place. You did so much for us so that we could experience this incredible time - thank you!

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