

## SAGSE Queensland – Germany Exchange 2005-6

From 26 November 2005 until 8 January 2006 33 high school students from across Queensland participated in SAGSE Queensland's exchange programme to Germany. During the course of the programme our students lived with host families in the city of Essen (and its surrounding areas) and in the state of Hesse and also spent a week on a bus tour taking in parts of Bavaria and Austria.



**In Kuala Lumpur on the way to Germany**



**“Sound of Music” Tour - Austria**

The 2004-5 exchange group included a range of students from across the state who are learning German. Not only were there representatives from Brisbane, the Gold and Sunshine Coasts but also from regional areas such as Cairns, Gympie and Toowoomba. The group also came from a range of government and private schools.

The homestays in Germany were arranged in conjunction with SAGSE Queensland's partner organisations in Essen (SAGSEE e.V.) and Hessen (DASH). This allowed our students to experience everyday life in a German family. As part of this, our students attended school with their host sisters and brothers and were able to participate in classes and gain a first-hand appreciation of school life in Germany. Our students were also able to provide their host families and classmates with an understanding of what life is like in Australia.

As part of the exchange programme, SAGSE Queensland organises a one week bus trip in early December to allow the students to experience a different area of Germany (and its neighbour Austria) and to share their experiences after spending their first couple of weeks with host families. The tour began with a visit to Nuremberg and a walking tour of the old town where the group was able to learn about the city's role in German history and visit the world famous Nürnberger Christkindlesmarkt during a walking tour of the old town. The tour then included a visit to a salt mine in Berchtesgaden before moving on to Salzburg, Austria where the students were able to do a “Sound of Music” tour, go ice skating on an open-air ice rink and generally experience life in another German-speaking country. On the way to the Bavarian capital, Munich, there were visits to the Wieskirche and King Ludwig's Neuschwanstein castle. In Munich the group had an extremely interesting city tour during which they were able to learn about the history of Munich, see the table on which the Munich Treaty was signed and view some famous works of art at close range. After the city tour the group was able to do many different activities including ice skating, shopping and visiting the famous Hofbräuhaus. The tour also included a visit to the former concentration camp at Dachau to learn more about a dark period of Germany's (and the world's) history. The final stop of the tour was at the walled mediaeval city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber. The group then arrived back to their host families, after a short stop in Heidelberg, very tired but having greatly enjoyed their visit to southern Germany and its neighbour.



**Near Berchtesgaden, Bavaria**



**In the salt mine, Berchtesgaden**

As our group was in Germany in December and January they were able to experience a German Christmas. Some were lucky enough to have snow over Christmas and all were able to visit a number of the Christmas markets that spring up in all German cities, towns and villages in the weeks prior to Christmas. The students also celebrated Silvester (New Year's Eve) in Germany. Many students had the chance to visit other areas of Germany (and neighbouring countries such as Austria and the Netherlands) with their host families and some were even taken on ski trips.



**At Neuschwanstein Castle**



**In Heidelberg**

The exchange group arrived back in Brisbane in January with many fond memories, new experiences and new friends on the other side of the world. They have had the chance to improve their German language skills and are looking forward to welcoming their German host brothers and sisters to Australia when they arrive in mid 2006. SAGSE also held a "Memories of Germany" evening in Brisbane on 10 March 2006 (which formed part of the programme for the German Weeks organised by the German Consulate). This allowed our exchange students the opportunity to share their experiences of Germany with their parents, teachers and friends. It was clear from the presentations that everyone really enjoyed their time in Germany and found the exchange programme to be a very valuable experience.

Liam Ayre – SAGSE Qld Committee Member