

September...

INGRID'S SEPTEMBER REPORT:

Since I have moved to a new area of Germany I thought I better get out there and check it out, So on the first weekend of September I did just about all the touristy things there are to do in Bremerhaven!

It was sensational weather on the Saturday, so I took the ferry to Helgoland. I have been saying I want to go to Helgoland ever since my Exchange year back in 95, so it was about time I got myself there!

It is a 3 hour journey, and I have heard some absolute horror stories about the size of waves one can come across... So I was more than happy when the sea was as flat as a pancake.



my ferry

Helgoland isn't very big (about 1km by 1km) and has a pretty interesting history. It belonged to Denmark, the Falklands and then finally Germany. It is most famous for being a duty free zone! There is no actual port for the ships to dock at, so they just 'park' in a sheltered waterway and then a little dingy comes and shuttles the people to land.

As you can imagine being a duty free haven there is mainly just Duty free shops everywhere! I was rather excited though as you can't buy Midori in Germany, but you can get it on Helgoland! I went for a meander around the island. There were sheep cruising around, lots of tourists, but still a sense of serenity.



„Lange Anna“ and the cliffs of Helgoland

Unfortunately when you do a day tour, you only have about 3.5 hours on the island. Even though it is only small it would have been nice to spend an extra few hours there.

Smoking is still big in Germany, so I didn't want to sit inside the ship with all that stale air, so I headed outside, to find more smokers... Honestly they are just everywhere :0) So I found a perch on top of the box with the life vests, I was pretty tired, so I figured here was as good as any for a nap and lay down for a small kip until I woke up half

frozen and with a small group of spectators, so I moved inside to a comfy couch in a non-smoking room and slept again!

On Sunday there was a little bit of chaos in Bremerhaven as they were hosting their first triathlon, those not competing in the triathlon (the whole 111000 population of Bremerhaven bar the 1000 odd competitors) were complaining about the road closures, and the fact the city was spending so much money on a minority group and blah, blah, blah... I have learnt in my short time in Bremerhaven that the people here tend to complain about everything all the time...

I headed to the 'Zoo', I use the term Zoo loosely here. It is actually called the Zoo on the Sea, but there are only about 10 different species of animals on display... Anyhow I just really wanted to go and see Lloyd, the polar bear.



Lloyd



After the Zoo I wanted to go on a cruise of the Harbour, so got my ticket and jumped on the boat for the 10am departure, which was cancelled because of the start of the stupid triathlon, oh and the fact that I was the only passenger!

As it turns out it started to rain so I looked for an indoor activity which I found in the German Emigration House. It takes visitors on a journey through the various stages of the migration process and is definitely worth a visit. It has something for everyone and is very hands on and interactive, they really have done a great job with it!

The weather had cleared up by the time I finished, so tried my luck with the boat cruise again, and yep this time we were sailing. It was a nice hour and I got an insight into the industry here. Bremerhaven is the 2nd largest port in Germany for the import and export of cars. We could just see rows and rows and rows of cars getting ready to be loaded onto ships. One company has a contract to extend the length of several oil tankers, it was a pretty amazing sight to see one of those ships in dry dock getting welded together.



some of the docks



My next stop was the Ship museum, anything and everything you need to know about boats and ships. It also had sections on whale hunting, living in the Antarctic and they also had an exhibition about fish fingers on! Did you know that fish fingers originate from Germany?

I then jumped on the terminal bus. It takes you into the container terminals where normally the public is denied access to (it's the only kind in the world!). A spec-ie way to finish the day. Watching all the containers being loaded and unloaded, little forklifts zooming around delivering the containers to wherever it was they needed to be going even though it was a Sunday it was still a hive of activity. Most ships carry around 5000 containers and they spend a maximum of 5 hours being unloaded and reloaded!



bus & containers



Needless to say on Sunday night I was completely stuffed :0))

The first full week of September was hectic.

The Embassy had told me they would call me on Monday to let me know about the job. Me, who never even knows where her mobile is! Diligently put it on my desk... the whole day the 2 colleagues I share an office with and I just watched the phone...Nothing...Zippo... Nichts until 1645... They just wanted to know if they could contact the New Zealand Embassy for a reference (Now I haven't worked there since 2000 and I was only there for a month, hence me not putting them down in the first place) no worries I say, thankfully I am still in contact with my boss from there and gave him the quick heads up. And that was it.

On Tuesday evening I went for a beer with Carsten from Hospitality Club, I figured it was time to meet some locals! We had a good laugh and he subsequently invited me for dinner with his girlfriend the following week.

On Wednesday I was in the kitchen, which is actually a cupboard with a sink and a dishwasher AND in the boss' office when he started up a general chat, the next thing he is up, closed the door and has us sitting at his conference table....O.K., things were getting a little serious, anyways at the end of the day he offered me a job here! It came completely out of the blue... he thankfully gave me sometime to think about the option!

On Thursday night my host parents arrived. On the way home from work Oma had sent me to best fish shop in Bremerhaven to get some supplies... I have enough trouble with knowing my fish in English, let alone German, so when I was at the counter and asked for 2 pounds of something, the guy standing next to me said 2 pounds!?!?! Like I was a little bit of a freak, but I stuck to my guns as that is what Oma had written on the list... When I got home I found out the counter lady had packed me 2 kilos, instead of 2 pounds, DOH! Anyways, as it turns out we almost demolished all of it anyway!

Friday was Oma's 93rd birthday, I whipped up a mud cake for Oma to have at her morning tea... Now as the older generation sometimes is, when I was telling her about me making the cake, she always had to finish the conversation by saying how good her cakes were, and really cakes today aren't of the same standard, blah, blah, blah. It turns out her and her old duck friends were completely thrilled with my cake, the first thing Oma said to me when I got home was "Ingrid, we have NEVER eaten a cake like that before it was absolutely delicious" I am glad it was a hit because I don't think I would have heard the end of it had it been a disaster :0)



Oma, my Host father & sister Peter and Bettina at Oma's birthday

The other exciting news that happened on Friday was I got a call from the Australian Embassy just before I was heading home.... Yep, I got the job! I couldn't believe it, then typical for me my mobile, that I never use, had no battery left and went dead in the middle of the conversation... Bugger, but it was all good, my colleagues here are really nice and just shoved one of their landlines in my hand and let me call... Not the greatest first impression! I am the 'preferred candidate' for the position, the position isn't actually mine until I pass the stringent security checks which can take 3 – 6 months!

It was great timing though as my host family were all here for Oma's birthday, so we had a double celebration.

While they were here we went to weekly markets for fish and vegetables, went for a walk along the Dyke and in general just took it easy. My host family left early on Sunday morning and I headed to see the cheese market, yep the only thing available was cheese, o.k. there also some Pineapples there, and it was held at the fish market...weird, but there was a good atmosphere and loads of people milling around. After the market I headed to the 'beach' with my new book. The 'beach' has sand and water, but you aren't allowed to swim in there because it is contaminated and there is also the risk of getting run over by a massive tanker, but hey, when in Rome...

The following week I went to Carsten and Judith's for dinner. Carsten cooked up a traditional German feast which was amazing.

The mobile I have here is an old one from my host sister, when I say old, it is about a 1992 version :0) When I recharge the battery it only really lasts for a 2 minute chat and then it is dead again, so I figured since I am now staying here I can get myself a new one and a long term contract. Naturally did my home work and found the best deal was with Deutsche Telekom, but I had to order over the internet, no problems and completely hassle free... so I thought!

I ordered it on the 14th and 2 days later it arrived at my door, only problem was I wasn't home, and the UPS guy wouldn't leave it with Oma, so he arranged it so it would be delivered to work on the following Monday (it just happened to be a Friday...)

On Monday the UPS man turned up and it was all good, until I opened the box... I pulled out the carton that the mobile was in and it looked a little worse for wear, and no wonder, someone had opened the parcel from the bottom and taken out the mobile phone, they did leave the charger in there conveniently... My colleagues couldn't believe it, and neither could I!! So I spent the next 30 mins calling Deutsche Telekom and filling out and faxing forms. The best news of the day came from the lady on the end of the

phone when she said 'Sometimes it can take weeks for them to come and collect the parcel.' Sensational! Needless to say it has given us something to laugh about at work...

I finally got to go on a road trip with work to one of our customers, which was a little annoying as they are in Dortmund (10mins by train from Bochum) and we went there on a Wednesday and 2 days later I was heading to Bochum, but besides that it was interesting to see what happens 'out on the field'.

The trip to Dortmund should take 3 hours from Bremerhaven (should being the operative word here). We left Bremerhaven at 5.33am and arrived in Bremen as scheduled, but when we went to catch our connecting train, it had a 68 minute delay!! Thankfully we were travelling first class and headed to the lounge. Then when we got on the train we headed to the restaurant for breakfast which was great until I looked at my ham to find a nice piece of green hairy mould the size of a 20cent piece (that's an Australian 20 cent piece, not a Euro 20 cent piece!) growing! Needless to say my appetite was quickly gone... Then to top off the first class experience with Deutsche Bahn, my Boss went to use the toilet and found someone already using it... Yep, the door was broken and the poor guy was desperate!

It was actually a bit of a sign of things to come for the day as when we arrived in Dortmund we got the taxi which had the driver who didn't know where we needed to go and had to ask someone! Then all things with our customer went smoothly until there was a self created problem by the IT department with our software... All in a days work really.

On the last weekend of September I headed to Bochum for the weekend. Herr Adams was going away, so I went to hang out with Christian.

Until next month!