

Blog – 2 weeks in Texas

Day One: Monday, October 7th, 2019:

When I woke up on October 7, the first morning of our trip, I was excited for the day although I had a really bad jetlag. This day, I had toast with jam and strawberries for breakfast, while the rest of my host family chooses between a big variety of cereals every morning. Looking forward to the day, my host mom took me, my exchange partner Caroline and her brother Thomas to our school 'Fort Worth Country Day'. They only live ten minutes by foot away from school, but anyway take the car every morning because it's "more comfortable". We drop Thomas at lower school, while Caroline and I get off at high school. The campus is huge, but very pretty with its many old trees. I asked myself how the students can get along there. But guess what? Country Day has long hallways with lockers and I even saw a yellow school bus! And everyone wears school uniforms. I felt like in one of those typical American Highschool movies! After meeting Caroline's friends and some classmates, who were all very frank and welcoming to me, we attended first class with our hosts. For me, that means first period science. I introduced myself to the class and learned something about extinct animals in that period. Every teacher at Country Day has his own class room and they are all decorated individually. It struck me right away how different the relationship between teachers and students is. While in Germany we distinguish private life from school life and the teacher is a person of respect, the relationship between students and teachers seem to be much closer and more casual. In America, the teachers are interested in their students' private lives and often have small talk before, during and after the period. You can say that the relation between teachers and students is more on cordial terms, which I really like. After the first period and some short announcements for upper school, the German group was leaving Country Day to visit the Stockyards in Ft Worth.

The Stockyards are located in the western part of Fort Worth and are a historical heritage of Texas's famous livestock industry. In my opinion, the Stockyards represent the imagination you associate with Texas. We saw some cowboys with hats, lassos and boots riding on longhorns or horses, old shops, restaurants and beautiful brick-lined buildings and streets. The highlight of the Stockyards was when the cattle – the Longhorns - was driven out of the city. After getting an impression in Texas's cowboy culture, we had lunch at "Risky's Barbeque", where we had the opportunity to try some real Texan barbeque. I got a burger with fries and some water - of course with ice cubes. I've learned that Texans love having ice in their drinks. In addition, I tried some fried pickles. They were quite good actually and it's kind of crazy how much Texans fry. I've

even seen fried gum and lemonade during my stay! Being full with Texan food, we could go into the souvenir shops at the Stockyards, where some of us bought souvenirs for themselves or their families in Germany. Country Day students took the car back to school, where we attended classes with our hosts for the rest of the day. After an interesting history period about Christianity in the 16th century, Caroline had field hockey training, like every afternoon. Field Hockey is a sport I've never been in touch with, so it was exciting to watch at the beginning, but after a while it became boring, so I decided to watch the American Football training. The sports fields of Country Day are on the campus in front of upper school and they are in the blazing sun. I felt a bit sorry for all the students because I imagine it really tiring having training after a long school day for about two hours in the sun. But I believe they are adjusted to it. In the evening, when we came home, my host parents suggested going out for dinner. I agreed, so we took the car downtown to a Mexican restaurant, the "best Mexican restaurant in town". Caroline's mom is a physician and she had an important conference in the evening, so we started dinner without her. To be honest, I'm not a very big fan of Mexican food. For me it's too spicy, but anyway I liked some of the appetizers the restaurant offered. On the way back to the car and a burning mouth because of all the sharp spices, I got an impression of downtown. It is quite modern and I noticed that they don't have a pedestrian zone in Fort Worth. Back home, Caroline had to do her homework, but I had a two-hour conversation with her dad. We talked about studying medicine in the US and Germany, his favorite places in Texas and life in Fort Worth and Trier. All in all, the first day couldn't have been better and I got many impressions of the Texan and Mexican culture. (Lena Otto)

Day Two: Tuesday, Oct. 8th, 2019

We arrived at Trinity Valley School at 8am and went to Dr. Roemer's room who is the coordinator of the exchange program in Fort Worth. We met there every morning just to have a short check if everybody is good and if anybody had any questions. We also had a look at the program for the day.

At 8.45 am classes started. First period was Spanish which I understood pretty good as I'm learning it in Germany as well. They also offer Chinese and French. The way how the teachers teach is different to Germany. Teachers seem to have a closer relation to the students and students work more with their own laptops in class so there is less discussion. Then we had independent period which means they had time to do their homework or just hang out a little. At 10.20 am there was an assembly in the school's own theatre where the whole upper school goes to (9th to 12th grade). This opportunity was used to introduce ourselves. Lunch at school was pretty delicious and they offered

tacos and chicken on this day. My exchange partner explained to me that they have a professional cook and they cook healthy and fresh every day. Then we went to a so called Socrates café where different people all over the globe discussed about peace and solutions against wars. It was on voluntary basis, like a club, so nobody was forced to go there but it was a nice experience to hear the views on that special topic from people all over the Globe. After school my host family took me to a huge sport and outdoor store called Academy where they had everything. In the evening we went to a Mexican restaurant. I'm impressed by the culture here and how everything looks - everything is so big and people are so nice. Generally, I like the way everybody was super friendly. I'm really going to miss that when I'm back to Germany because in Germany many people are more closed and seem to be stressed. (Nicolas Peifer)

Day Three: Wednesday Oct 9th, 2019

On our third actual day in Fort Worth, Texas, we did not have any scheduled plans as a group. Instead we spent the whole entire day with our host families and at school, which allowed us to dive into the American daily life.

My day started with a free period, so my host sister and I went to grab some breakfast on our way to FWCD- school. Then we sat in her advisory classroom, where she could get some work done while I was eating the Smoothie-Bowl we had bought earlier. At around 10.10 the first period was over and we went to the announcements in the commons. There wasn't much being announced, so the Upper Schoolers were dismissed and were free to do whatever they wanted for the remaining time. Next period on the schedule was Algebra, which in my host sister's case it was a class of only three students. The teacher explained to me, how the schedules of the students work: Every student has only four academic classes a day plus their sports which take place in the afternoon from 4-6 p.m. The academic classes are labelled from A to G and rotate every day, so that the class the students had first one day will be their last class on the following. That Wednesday was a F-day, since the F-Class, a free period, was the first one.

After the second period it was Lunchtime for the Upper Schoolers. I did not go to the following class with my host sister, instead I decided to sit down outside at one of the picnic tables to get some work done myself. The last academic class of the day was Chemistry, but since it was the end of the quarter and everyone was drowning in school work, they did not do Chemistry but worked and studied on their own.

After Chemistry, the academic classes of the day were over and it was time for my host sister's sport: Ballet.

Since both of my host parents work at FWCD, we were usually stuck at school until at least 6.30, because my host sister is not 16 yet and therefore cannot drive on her own. After dance class ended we killed some time in my host dad's office until he was ready to pick us up. We ate dinner at a place called Zoë's and sat around a little longer so that my host sister could do some homework. Usually she'd have another dance class in the late evening, but they had an issue with the power that day, which is why it was cancelled.

So my host family and I drove home earlier than planned and watched a movie before we finally went to bed. (Lina Engler)

Day Four: Thursday, Oct.10th, 2019

Today, the day started as a normal school day - we had lessons until a few minutes past twelve. Until then it wasn't a special day. I had the normal classes with my exchange students. We were in maths, triumphs and arts. "Triumphs" is study time – doing your homework, working on projects alone. After that we had lunch a bit earlier because we had to be ready at 1 o'clock for our challenge course. We put on our helmets and harness and then we could start. The guides secured us with ropes, then we could climb up to the first part of the course on which we had to walk over skinny ropes and small pieces of wood. To solve this course you needed to prove balance and courage. At the end of this course every could slide down the long zip line which was a lot of fun. The second part was a giant rope swing which gave you the feeling to fly. First you were clipped on a rope and then you were pulled up by five people and whenever you were ready you pulled a small rope which released you and you swing. That was so fun so we were sad that it was so short.

After this we had the possibility to buy clothes or other souvenirs from TVS. There is so much stuff they offer, lots of hoodies, shirts, jackets and souvenirs with their merchandise for their sports team, the Trinity Valley Trojans and also as school uniform.

In the evening I went with my host family to a sushi restaurant. That food tasted extremely good and the rest of the day I hung out and joked around with my host brother. This day was a lot of fun. (Kilian Holtkamp)

Day Five: Friday, Oct 11th, 2019

On Friday the 11th we had school from 8:45 to 11:20am until we left for the Kimbell Museum. I took the classes arts, psychology and had two free periods. In my free periods I played basketball outside, while my host sister studied for a test. In America you can use these free periods to study, do homework or just do what you want to do, like playing video games.

Afterwards we had lunch in the cafeteria, chicken nuggets with pasta and corn. Not everyone eats in the cafeteria because some prefer their own food more. There are three lines, one always has pasta, the second and third line depended on which day it was. Friday for example was junk food day. There was also always a table with salads and fruits.

At noon we drove in a typical yellow school bus to Fort Worth Country Day school to pick up the other German exchange students.

As we arrived at the Kimbell Museum we were impressed by a painting by Michelangelo. We were told that he drew it when he was only 13 years old. My favourite painting was the "Man with the Pipe" by Pablo Picasso. There were also sculptures at the museum.

We took some pictures of our group in a small garden with water running through it. After the tour we had time to write down our experiences and impressions so far - of Fort Worth and America - into our journals. I think it was a good idea because now we can always read our journals again and remember the experiences we made.

Back at TVS, a pep rally was taking place, where little kids played games against each other and cheerleaders performed. A pep rally is there to make the students and teachers excited about the upcoming football game.

Later, my host family picked me up from school and we went home for about two hours. Then we left again and went back to school (TVS), where I helped my host sister with the photo Booth. We volunteered to support the parents prepare for the homecoming game that night. There were different tables, some for food and other things. After my shift we went to have a burger and watched the Volleyball VS boys. VS means varsity and they are usually the teams with the best players of the school.

In America school sports and teams are very important. You have the choice to pick a sport, go to the theatre or do PS. PS is only running and lifting weights. Sports are divided into three seasons, while we were at the TVS it was the sports football, field hockey and volleyball. My host sister played for the field hockey team.

Afterwards we watched the homecoming football game because the next day was homecoming. Unfortunately, both teams lost but there was still a lot of cheering in the audience. We should have school sports and cheerleaders at

our school too because it strengthens the school community and it was always a great atmosphere at the games. (Charlotte Rink)

Day Six: Saturday Oct.12th, 2019

Today was the day everyone had been waiting for: Homecoming day. I know some people had hair and makeup appointments to get ready for the homecoming dance, which took the whole day, but my exchange partner had theatre rehearsal instead. We had to be at school by 9 am and I had to eat my breakfast taco, which is scrambled eggs and potatoes or bacon with cheese wrapped in a really fluffy tortilla, in the car. It took us less than 15 minutes to get to school as we took the highway. I noticed that every time we want to get somewhere in Texas, we have to go on the highway because Texas is so big! When we got to theatre rehearsal, we realized that many people had skipped, probably due to the homecoming dance. Even the girl who normally does the spotlight wasn't there and her replacement had to leave early due to a hair appointment, so I was asked to do the spotlight. I had to climb a ladder to get up on the quaint box and even learned some theatre linguistics such as stage left and stage right and I had a lot of fun helping out. After theatre rehearsal ended at 3 pm, we finally went home to get ready for homecoming and went to the Kimbell museum to take pictures with the rest of the sophomores. Everyone was really well dressed and all the girls had a bouquet of flowers. The picture taking took place everywhere and that lasted for about the next hour and a half, which was kind of exhausting. Finally at 6:30, we sophomores got on the bus to drive to the stockyards, where there was a big room with round tables and a dance floor. We first ate dinner, which was barbecue and then everyone started going to the dance floor. At first, no one was really dancing, but then "party in the USA" from Miley Cyrus came on which loosened everyone up. After that there was a lot of jumping around and laughing. The whole atmosphere was so energetic and I got to talk and dance with a lot of people I saw around school the past week. After homecoming, I was absolutely exhausted because I had done so much jumping around, but I can imagine that the girls who wore high heels were in more pain than I was, although many took their shoes to dance. Overall, I think homecoming was my favorite experience here in Texas so far, just because of the sense of community it gave me. I really felt that I fit in and everyone was so nice, welcoming and energetic. I had the most wonderful time ever and this is an experience I will never forget. (Seoyoung Park)

Day Seven: Sunday, Oct. 13th, 2019

On that Sunday my host mother and my host sister took me to a market that sells Christmas articles. I was really surprised that they were selling Christmas stuff in the middle of October but my host mother explained to me that Americans like to get Christmas presents for their loved ones really early so they have the opportunity to get them at that market. It quite reminded me of the Christmas markets that we have in Germany but only that the one we visited was indoor and sold quite more different articles. The stuff you could buy there were really different to each other depending on what kind of company there were. Small start-up companies had the chance to sell their products and also bigger companies. There were clothes, accessories, decoration, beauty products, toys and many more. But the prizes were really high. Even though I didn't get anything because I wasn't feeling like getting Christmas stuff in October I thought it was a nice experience. After that me and my host sister went with some friends of hers and also one of the other German exchange students to a theme park in Dallas called Six Flags. It was really big and had a lot of rides. Also, there was the Fright Fest because of Halloween aka spooky szn so when it started being dark a lot of dressed up people started wandering around and scared the guests. Horror Clowns, zombies, killers and many other scary ones. I got scared a lot. Way too many times and I've never ran so fast in my life but thinking of it afterwards I can laugh about it. The rides were a lot of fun but we couldn't get on many of them because there were so many people at that evening so the waiting lines were ridiculously long. All in all it was a really great day and me and my host sister came home pretty late, about midnight. (Goomeral Ider)

Day Eight: Monday, Oct.14th, 2019

On Monday, the 14th October one week had already passed and most of us had already settled in this new environment. Because of "Columbus Day", a national holiday, both Trinity Valley School and Fort Worth Country Day school had no classes and a free day to spend. Our German group and most of our hosts met up for a daytrip to Dallas at the T&P Train station of Fort Worth. After a not too long train ride we arrived in Dallas to firstly visit the Sixth Floor Museum. This museum got its name from the fact, that in 1963 John F. Kennedy was shot from the sixth floor of that exact house the museums located in. In the museum, an audio guide was handed to us which would lead us through the museum, giving information about JFKs presidency, his

assassination and many side facts. In the museum we could see a rebuild of the setup the murderer used and the view he had.

After finishing the tour in the museum, we went directly to a local burger restaurant for dinner. Sadly, we didn't see much of downtown having such a tight schedule, but this was excusable because the best was yet to come.

The Dallas Mavericks game. Even though the stadium wasn't that filled, due to being a pre-season match, and the Mavericks were way stronger than their opponent Oklahoma City Thunder, what reflects in the score (107:70), it was still an amazing experience for everyone. Sadly we couldn't watch Dirk Nowitzki play, but we could actually meet his German successor Maximilian Kleber. Nele had organized us post-game passes so we could chat with the German NBA player and get photos and autographs.

After that we rode back to Fort Worth and our host families ready for the next day to come. (Jonathan Böse)

Day Nine: Tuesday, Oct. 15th, 2019

Today was a usual school day. That means that school started at 8:45 which is almost an hour later than in Germany. As every day, our group met up in the Commons at 8:30 to talk about the plans for the day and what we had done the day before with our host families.

The first class I had that day was Biology. The students had to take a test on muscles and muscle fatigue so I fell asleep because I was tired since I hadn't slept much that night after having stayed up late watching movies with my host sister. In the Biology room the teacher keeps a hamster which she sometimes puts in a plastic ball during lessons so it can run around in the room.

At 10:10 the lesson was over and all Upper School students gathered in the Commons for Announcements. After Announcements we had free time until 11:05, when the second period started, which in my case was English. The English teacher is really funny. She keeps making jokes and having small talk with the students and she can't remember my name so she calls me by a different name. One day the others and I met her on the school grounds with a few students and she introduced me to them saying "Look, here's my friend Eva" (which is totally *not* my name by the way, it doesn't even sound similar).

Second class was over at 12:20 and we went to the cafeteria for lunch. Our group and our exchange students met in a separate room in the cafeteria to talk about life in twenty years. Not only did we talk about how we want to live and what we want to have achieved, but also how we want our environment

and society to be. Some people talked about living more environmentally friendly while others were discussing the importance and influence of technology in future lives.

After lunch my next class was Spanish where the students were discussing the series Gran Hotel which they had had to watch for homework and I also learned some new Spanish words.

The last class was Maths where they did stuff we had done a year or two ago so I could participate in class. The only problem was that I sometimes didn't know what the teacher wanted me to do because she used all that Maths terminology that I of course didn't know in English. She also kept calling me Anna, I guess my name's just too difficult to pronounce or remember, or both.

When we came home, my host sister and I both did our homework, then we had dinner and afterwards watched some series and movies. (Ronja Hilmes)

Day Ten: Wednesday, Oct. 16th, 2019

(Jakob Wilhelm)

Day Eleven: Thursday, Oct. 17th, 2019

On Thursday, the 17th of October we visited the International Career Day at UTA (University of Texas at Arlington). It was us Germans with our teachers, because our exchange students had to stay in school because they were all taking an exam called PSAT. This exam helps the students to see how hard the exam to get into college will be and it provides the first score for financial aid or scholarships. The other school - TVS – attends this meeting every year as part of their international career planning so some students took the opportunity to inform themselves on international careers.

Because it was 8am, every visitor had the opportunity to get a coffee before the program started.

We first heard an opening speech about how everything worked that day and about the idea of this day. After that we could always choose between two sessions with different topics. In total everyone could visit four sessions.

The different sessions included the topics:

International law

Military

Foreign services

International business

Human rights
International education
Social entrepreneurship
Environment
Technology
Media

The presentations were basically about what to do in your future and what possibilities you have when you study abroad. They focused on the future of the students.

Just to give you an example in the presentation about environment was said that Texans are really trying to do something for our environment which was kind of confusing because at the same time people told us that they are the ones who don't really care about their environment (for example by using the car even for short routes) So we could see and hear many different perspectives.

So every single presentation focused on another topic and the ones presenting always tried to include the listeners so that they don't get bored.

It was also a great experience to see the University and also the campus. It felt like standing in a small city because everywhere were different shops, restaurants, buildings the students live in and of course, the different departments. The building we were in also included a huge cafeteria and some food and coffee places like Starbucks.

After we finished the last session both groups of TVS and COUNTRY DAY students drove back to their schools and spend the rest of the day with their exchange students.

All in all it was a great day with lots of new impressions. (Damian Bier)

Day Twelve: Friday, Oct. 18th, 2019

On Friday, October 18th, German exchange students together with the two German teachers and Dr. Roemer went to the Water Gardens and the Botanical Garden of Ft Worth. The day started quite relaxed, because we were picked up by bus and drove directly from the school to the water gardens, which was about half an hour away from the school in downtown Ft Worth. Arriving there we went directly to the sight and took a lot of pictures and also learned something about the gardens, for example that they are designed by Philip Johnson and that people can enjoy the gardens any time of the year. In

addition, one had a very nice view on the skyscrapers there and the other buildings worth seeing. Afterwards we drove past the hotel where John F. Kennedy gave his last public speech, in front of it you can see a life-size statue of him as a reminder of his last appearance. Afterwards we drove to the Botanical Garden, which was unfortunately closed, but we could still enjoy the beautiful nature there. Then we were asked to write down the events and experiences we had made in the last two weeks in Texas. This was another nice conclusion and a review of what had happened up to then.

Unfortunately, this was also the last day at school but we were able to experience it again one more time in the afternoon. There was a field hockey game after school and an American football game in the evening. A lot of students showed up and cheered for and supported their team from FWCD. It was "Black Night", so many students – especially the seniors - and supporters were wearing black clothes. The cheerleaders did a great job and supported their team to a big win. In the evening afterwards, all exchange partners did something with their host family and could enjoy the last days in Texas and Fort Worth. (Nele Trommer)

Day Thirteen: Saturday, Oct. 19th, 2019

On our last full day of this wonderful trip we had time with our host families. We woke up late and at 11 am we left for lunch. It was a Mexican food restaurant, a really good one where also famous people sometimes go. The food was so good, typical Mexican with tacos, rice and a lot of cheese. After lunch we drove to an American hat store and they got a hat for me, which were handmade. Everywhere you looked were hats. You can imagine it like a shoe store so you found out your size and then there was a number of hats in the perfect size for you. When you chose one style you liked you took it to one of the workers and they shaped it for your head. You also could choose which style of shaping you wanted to have. I really appreciated that.

Then we went to the zoo which is one of the best ones in the country. They had like every animal there you could imagine and it took 3 hours to make the tour. It's a lot bigger than zoos in Germany. Then we drove home again and got ready for the farewell party at TVS. Germans, hosts and their families came there and everybody brought something to eat. There was something warm for dinner and a lot of cake and beverages. After dinner we said thank you to everybody who organized this trip and made this exchange possible by a

speech held by some German students. We talked a lot and there was a slideshow with some photos from the past two weeks so we could already have had a view back.

At home me and my host jumped into their pool and then we watched some movies and played some games. At night I packed my suitcase because we had to leave the next morning for the airport.

It was a great time and I really enjoyed our time in Ft Worth and I know the others did too. (Nicolas Peifer)