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Dear friends,

in the past ten years we have published forty-five letters from Taiwan in German language to keep our German speaking friends up to date. In each of these letters we have focused on one or two topics. We have reported in our subjective view and enriched our descriptions by photographs.

Numerous of our friends have expressed the desire to receive letters from Berlin, as well, when we are back in Germany. So please read our first letter from Berlin – exclusively with personal photographs from the German capital.



At the end of the last ice age the masses of ice gradually disappeared from the region where you find Berlin, nowadays. They left behind a sandy landscape with decent hills. The water of the melting ice formed some glacial valleys, by far more moderate than the fjords on Norway or the valley in the Alps. The highest natural elevation in the urban area is only less than hundred meters above the level of the river Havel.

During the past eight hundred years a growing number of human beings started to be interested in this area. It began with moderate foundation of villages and then once in a sudden the population development increased significantly when the Prussian kings took over the development plans for urban regions and parks and gardens. 97 years ago Groß-Berlin was founded by a politically motivated amalgamation of numerous small towns and villages. In spite of the turbulent history in the twentieth century Berlin still exists nearly unchanged within these boundaries with a population of 3.5 Million and an area of 900 square kilometers.



The town would not have been nick named „Spree Athen“ if there would not be numerous neo-classical temples at the waterside of this river. Within the urban area the banks of the river Spree are more or less plastered. Hundreds of bridges from all epoches permit people and vehicles to cross the river in a typical metropolitan appearance!

This is very different with the Tegeler Fließ. This small creek meanders within its glacial valley through a swampy area, surrounded by residential areas at a length of ten kilometers through Berlin to finally flow into the river Havel in Tegel district.

Due to the wet swamps the residential area was built in a respectful distance from the creek. A couple of farmers used the marsh areas as meadows. In the sixties of the last century this kind of farming became uneconomical and they stopped it. Soon the wilderness recaptured the swamps and flora and fauna developed in a new way. The public administration of Berlin has sensitively created a hiking trail parallel to the creek, in some areas as a plank roadway directly above the swamps.

Thus you can walk a distance of ten kilometers through the metropolitan area in a very natural landscape and observe numerous of animals and plants that you would not expect

here. In most of the places you cannot even spot out the typical noise of a big city since the birds sing everywhere. Once in a while you can make out the laughter of some neighbors who have a BBQ party in their invisible gardens behind the curtain of natural plants.



The wildlife stock that came historically to this creek to eat and drink had got no room to survive due to the urban neighborhood. In 2015 the Berlin city government has brought a flock of water buffaloes to the valley to act a “natural conservationists” to make sure that the swamps are kept open by grazing.

A couple of days before we returned from Taiwan to Berlin exceptionally heavy rainfalls hit the city. Numerous of basements were flooded and cars were stuck when they tried to use the underbridge passages under railway lines. The quantity of water was sufficient to temporally lift the groundwater level and even in urban parks you could still find huge flooded areas.



The same happened with the Tegeler Fließ. The water of the creek has flooded the surroundings and thus even in the metropolitan area it was necessary to remove the shoes and roll up the trousers on a hike.



So far some first impression from our re-integration into the German capital Berlin.

With warm regards

*Emmanuel + Greta*