



Lagmoreyouth.

# Lagmore Youth Project Berlin 2022 Project Report

## Introduction

*Written by Arón Hughes and Shona Quigley (Youth Support Workers at Lagmore Youth Project).*

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.” ~ Saint Augustine.

Lagmore Youth Project was founded in 2019, just a matter of months before the Covid-19 pandemic, and throughout our delivery and programmes we had always strived to introduce an international opportunity element for our young people, as we believe international exposure allows our young people to read the different pages as outlined above and provides a healthy challenge for our participants development - for independence, maturity and growth.

It is for these reasons that once possible we began to develop our first international trip which is outlined very well below by our participants of Berlin 2022. As our first trip it came with its unique challenges namely not having a “guide” to follow step by step but we hit the ground running and got on with it. The young people you hear from below all went through an application and interview process to secure their place on the programme and met regularly for 3-4 months in advance and 1 month post-trip focusing on fundraising, advanced learning, goal setting, independent study alongside team building.



## Fundraising and Pre-trip planning

*Written by Aoibhinn Graham.*

When I first applied to the senior youth form, I wasn't very confident in myself that I could get in, plus no one I was close with had applied which had made me even more nervous. It was very nerve wracking waiting to find out if I had been selected to make it to the interview process but once I had done the interview, I was feeling way more confident and that I had a better chance to get on the youth form. After I was told I had got in, I was proud of myself and relieved but also, a feeling of uncertainty because I only knew of a couple of people and I also wasn't close with any of them. Despite this, we all got closer during all the prep meetings and fundraising efforts which took place before we went. We all had to work together, started bonding and worked really well as a team to ensure our trip was funded and successful.

At our first couple of pre-Berlin meetings, we talked about different fundraising ideas alongside exactly where we wanted to go and things we wanted to do while we were there. We had to pick a place to go and we had narrowed it down to two places:

Berlin, Germany and Cyprus, Greece. Aron Hughes, one of our youth leaders, had made an estimate on how expensive both places would be but also at one of our meetings we broke off into teams and were challenged to come up with location proposals for each - drawing on the educational benefit, costs and the overall experience benefit. We ultimately concluded on Berlin as a more



relevant, cost effective location for our International trip. To be honest I was really hoping that we went to Berlin, Germany because I had always wanted the opportunity to travel there and tick it off my list!

Once decided we had to jump right into fundraising and our first idea we put into action would be the football cards competition. After our football cards we then came up with the idea to run a ballot for an overnight to The Galgorm Hotel and Spa, which we all took on the responsibility over a number of weeks to sell as many ballots as possible. We were also able to get sponsors and we are very grateful for the sponsorship from such kind businesses like Dowds Group and organisations such Open College Network (OCN) Northern Ireland.

Thanks to all those who donated and to those who sponsored us, we were able to raise an amazing £6700 in total which covered all the costs of our trip to ensure it was the best possible experience.

If I had to conclude this whole experience, I would have to say that it was scary being in a different country without my family but fun and exciting being able to visit the TV Tower, The Berlin Parliament, Building, The Brandenburg Gate and so many more famous landmarks and even getting to do the fun activities such as mini golf and bowling and shopping. Being able to do all these different things really made me be a more independent person and to not rely on my parents for everything.

### Day One

*Written by Jack Hanna and Teagen Prenter.*

Our day began by meeting at the marquee at 12:30am where we received our lanyards and finished packing our group bags before leaving at 1am heading to Dublin Airport. After a long trip we got to Dublin airport and got through security and at that point we were all super excited to go to Berlin as our plans started to become very real as we awaited our flight. We were given about 45 minutes to chill and explore



around the airport shops and restaurants before we went to our gate and boarded the plane to fly to Berlin. Once in Berlin we were very tired from being awake already for about 12 hours however our excitement kept us going as we looked forward to our first day in Berlin.

We used the trains to get to the hotel which was called Hotel Meininger and was based in the Mitte area of Berlin. The train we went on from the airport to the hotel was a double decker train which is the first time for many of us to ever see, nevermind travel on. In the afternoon, we used the hop on hop off tour to go and see some exciting famous landmarks and an explanation of why it's famous. Some of these places included Reichstag, Hauptbahnhof, Schloss Bellevue, Siegessäule, Zoo, Kurfürstendamm. This tour was great because the places were balanced between educational and fun and gave us a chance to see our surroundings and an

introduction to where we would be staying in Berlin. During this tour however we were all exhausted as we had been travelling all day so it was nice to sit on the bus and look at these places.

While using trains we were able to use google maps to see which stops to get on/off and when to swap trains if necessary. We were all once tasked by Arón and Shona with finding our stop where we would get off the train and we were told the destination/stop and used the screen on the trains to see when to get off. This gave people a chance to take on a challenge of navigating through a major city and also lead the group to develop our leadership skills.

Later that night we went to minigolf. This really encouraged me to be slightly competitive and support my teammates with the game also. I did figure out that mini golf isn't my best talent however, this was a good way to separate the education part of the day and a time to chill out. It was also a good way for us to get to know each other even more and chat to your group. The first day experience was tiring but also exciting. From getting up to go to Dublin, getting on the plane to travelling to our hotel was a new experience but we were all exhausted after a staggering near 24 hours of on the go!



## Day Two

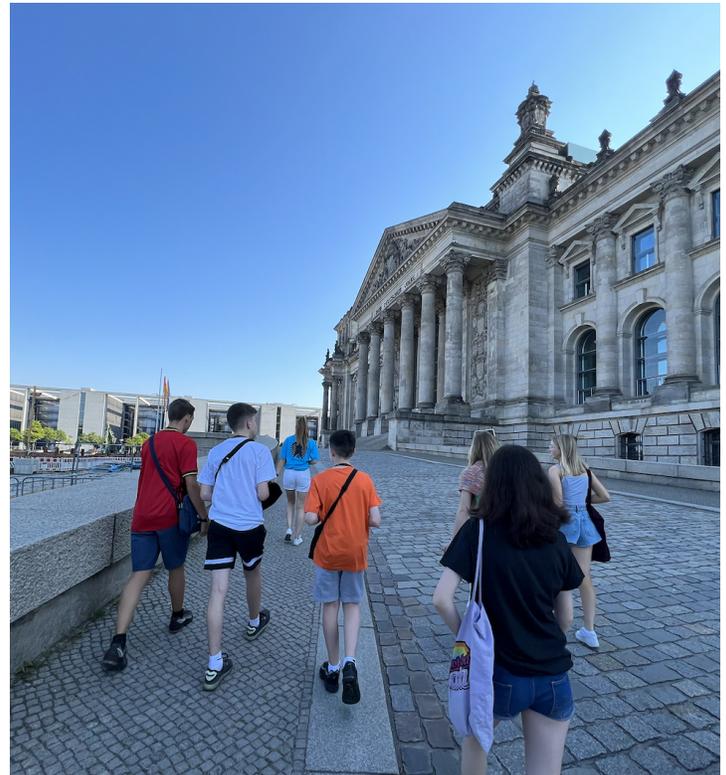
*Written by Bronagh Weatherall and Jack Callaghan.*

Our first morning waking up at the hotel was an early one. We woke up after our long deserved sleep to get our fulfilling breakfast at our hotel where there was fruit, buns, drinks and much more. After breakfast everyone went down and met at the hotel lobby where we then travelled to the subway, which was probably less than thirty seconds from where we were staying.

Our first destination of the day was the infamous Reichstag/ Bundestag building where we were able to enjoy a guided tour of the beautiful landmark. This tour involved us being able to view parts of the original building inside that had been preserved after the Second World War. This allowed us to reflect on the harsh times of the War which was only the beginning of our learning experience on the history of Berlin. At the end of the tour we were guided to the

Bundestag dome where the sun was shining down allowing us to observe the beautiful sight of Berlin. Exploring the roof of the building we got some memorable photos taken to always look back on and remember our wonderful trip to the great city of Berlin.

After our tour we travelled to the busy area of Berlin called Alexanderplatz where there are many shops and restaurants. Lucky for us there was a market on that day with clothing stalls and food trucks we went to sit down and refuel for the long day ahead. After our delicious lunch we then travelled using the Berlin public transport the U/S-Bahn to another great attraction that many know as Berlin Tempelhof Airport. We then got a guided tour of the building known to many. This also included us getting a very detailed tour providing us with knowledge to take away as we were informed on how the original idea of the building came to be. We had also become aware of what Hitler wanted to do with this brilliant structure. Hitler had decided to make the building very tall and the rooms big and hollow, this was not to have more room but of course to his bitterness and need to feel empowered, it was to make anyone who entered the building feel powerless and small.





Walking around the eerie obsolete building that was towering over us made us feel insignificant - exactly how Hitler wanted people to feel. We finally finished our tour and headed back to our hotel to have some rest and reset time. After our short rest we then travelled to the historic sight of the Berlin Wall which once used to split Germany into two, the Federal Republic of Germany of West Germany and German Democratic Republic or East Germany allied to the Soviet Union. Walking along the wall the sight helped us put into perspective how lucky we did not have to live in times of harsh active conflict. Much to our surprise we were also able to realise that conflict happens in many countries and the North of Ireland where we live is not alone in their troubling times in history.

To end our day off we travelled using the trains to get dinner where we found an exquisite restaurant called Peter Pane that specialises in making burgers. We sat and ate our food together and looking back it was times like these that allowed us to come closer together as a group. After our meal we headed back to our hotel and before heading to bed we sat as a group and participated in a reflection activity which allowed us to check in on each other but also look back on a day of learning and fun. It is safe to say we all slept like logs ready for day 3 in Berlin!

### Day Three

*Written by Stephen Brady and Jake Flynn.*

We began our day with an early start as we planned to leave the city of Berlin today for the first time to go to an area called Oranienburg which was about one hour away. After breakfast we headed to the train station to get two trains to Oranienburg before we walked over half an hour to the infamous site called Sachsenhausen Memorial and Museum. It was at this concentration camp that we got a self-guided audio tour device and were able to go round the site at our own pace. We knew that we were visiting this site when we were planning it, however nothing can ever prepare you to see such devastation and hear such horrifying stories.



We learnt that over 200,000 people were held as inmates at this camp and over 30,000 people were killed. Comparing this devastation to only 3000 deaths during the troubles is enormous and allowed us to learn about the absolute harm that the Nazis inflicted on not only those at Sachsenhausen but across Europe to millions, especially the Jewish community. This visit was a hard viewing and really did take me by surprise to be able to walk on the same grounds that the inmates walked. After our visit we took the trip back home to get ready for an evening to decompress what we had witnessed today.

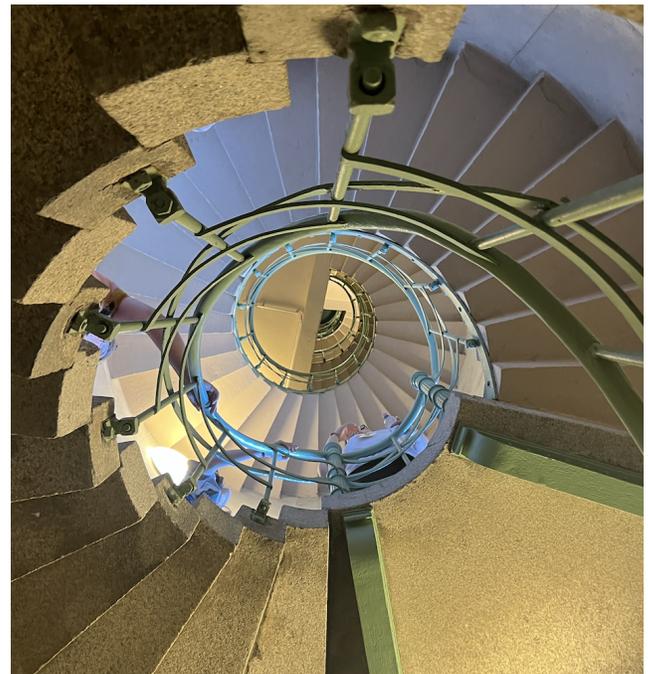
Once we were back we had an evening session of bowling for everyone to get their competitive shoes back on for the final time. I must say the girls definitely did wipe the floor against the boys but don't let them know we admitted that! The bowling activity was a great team building exercise and a great way to have some fun after the long and emotionally draining day.

After bowling we took a walk through Tiergarten. It was a nice way of relaxing after the Sachsenhausen Memorial and museum tour where we as a group learned all about its history. While we were in the Tiergarten we stopped to do our reflection where we each talked about the 'rose, bud and thorn' parts of the day which meant our highlight, most challenging part and something we will take away. Overall I thought this was one of the best days of the trip as the Sachsenhausen Memorial and museum tour was very interesting and it was good to go into the buildings and see what the living conditions would have been like for those trapped there. Probably my best part of the day was the bowling as Everyone had a lot of fun and some people's attempts were funny to watch.

### **Day Four**

*Written by Jessica Mulryne and Jasmine Webb.*

The Victory column was a long and tiring walk up a very narrow staircase. At the very top however the long trip proved to be worth it. The view from the top gave us an unimaginable view of every corner of the massive city, showing us from a whole new perspective of the uniqueness and diversity of Berlin. The round platform at the top of the Victory Column allows you to see how every section of Berlin is different as it is full of both rural and urban areas, which unfortunately could not all be seen on our trip.



The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe helped us as a group to see how the lives of Jewish individuals were impacted in a new perspective. This memorial was designed to make the individual feel more claustrophobic and cut out from the outside world as they reached the centre of the concrete slabs. However, on the outside perimeter of the memorial it has much shorter slabs for the person to enjoy the beautiful scenery of Berlin that surrounds them. This symbolises the life of Jews before and after the holocaust, showing you a more isolated and disorientating point of view as you go further into the memorial. This puts into a new perspective how it must have felt emotionally as a Jewish person during the holocaust. This was a saddening experience but necessary as it showed us in person what words would not be able to describe.

Brandenburg Gate made for an excellent, unique experience. It was at these outstanding locations we were able to gather significant historical knowledge, prior to this I was totally unaware of the Brandenburg Gate, whereas now I could note various facts about the Gate, such as the fact it is was constructed in the 18th century under the orders of the Prussian king, Fredrick William the 2nd.



Later in the day we went to the Topography of Terror before heading to the Mall of Berlin. This historical and educational exhibition showed us many photos along with some hard to hear information about the Holocaust. One piece of information that stood out to me was how Jewish people were stripped from having any individuality. An example shown of this is how Gestapo men would shave the beards of men as an act of public humiliation, trying to show how Jewish people were not even worthy of hair. This helped me to see from a new perspective just how cruel the Nazis were, as they didn't just want to punish innocent Jews physically but also mentally and emotionally through humiliation.

After our long day we fortunately got to see even more of Berlin from, in my opinion, the best view yet. The Berlin TV Tower overlooks the city from an amazing viewpoint, making even the tallest of buildings in the city seem tiny. We also picked the best time of day to go as we got to watch the sunset from such an unbelievable view. Which was in my opinion the best way to end such a long and tiring day.



Overall, this day was my favourite out of all of them as it was the perfect ending to our trip and made me appreciate the city from many different views and new perspectives. Every place we went to made me have a new perspective on such a historical city. This made me realise the importance of the trip and how I would love to visit Berlin again another time so I can explore it and learn its history even more. I had so much fun exploring the city, yet most of all I enjoyed the end of the day in visiting the Berlin Mall as I do love shopping.

### Post-trip

*Written by Teagen Prenter.*

At the first session just after the trip we had many discussions on how our trip went and completed reflection activities. We did this by doing an activity that had a number of different questions about ourselves during the trip such as reflecting on our learning intake, challenges

we may have encountered, and our highlights from the trip. After that we had a discussion on the day by day of the trip and what we would change for any future international and what we would keep for the future. Such as educational activities, fun activities, times to chill, restaurants etc. we finished off our session by writing down one quote to summarise our Berlin 2022 experience!

**"I have learnt more of how Jews were treated and how Germany show the remembering by the Memorial to the Murdered Jews."**

**"My trip in Berlin was really eye opening and I was able to gain more independence."**

**"From my trip in Berlin I learnt more about Germany and its' history."**

**"From my trip to Berlin I have grown as a person to interact with others and be more confident."**

**"From the Berlin trip I feel less vulnerable when being myself within the group."**

**"After my trip in Berlin I feel more confident talking in a group."**

### **Thanks and Conclusions**

*Written by Arón Hughes and Shona Quigley (Youth Support Workers at Lagmore Youth Project)*

Berlin 2022 was a great success and exceeded our expectations for our first international programme as an organisation. We have seen young people grow, relationships form and knowledge increased on the topic of conflict, peacebuilding and leadership. We would like to extend our thanks to all of our sponsors, funders, parents, donators, LYP staff and volunteers, LYP Management Committee and finally, the young people who dedicated their time to learn and challenge themselves in an effort which will support and develop their community.

This may have been our first International programme however we hope it will not be our last. The opportunity these programmes offer our young people is unique and unmeasurable and pays dividends in growth and development. Thank you!

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GROUP



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