

BEING A DIPLOMATIC SPOUSE

ENGLISH

amid the Berlin Lockdown

When life came to a sudden halt in March for Berlin residents as a result of the COVID-19-induced lockdown, this equally affected the many diplomats who are on posting in the city. This change of pace greatly impacted the work and activities of not just the diplomats themselves, but as well their families. With the lockdown measures slowly

easing, "Willkommen in Berlin" (WiB) - the official diplomatic club in Germany which aims to introduce diplomatic guests to the country and capital while fostering a sense of community - had a chance to catch up with its members to find out how they dealt with the private and professional challenges during the past months.



CAROL MALASIG
EMBASSY OF THE PHILIPPINES
Journalist and Blogger, Almost Diplomatic.
In Berlin since 2017

HOW HAS THE CURRENT SITUATION IMPACTED YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE?

The good thing about being a freelance journalist is that it is a career that is "Corona-proof". People are always looking for stories to read; some turn to reading as an escape from the stress of the whole situation. I do find myself having a lot of work and don't feel that it ever slowed down as I was always writing something. I could shoot a lot of videos for my vlog at home, as well as do research for my articles. In a way, I felt that I was even busier.

WHAT DID YOU NOTICE ABOUT BERLIN AND BERLINERS IN CORONA-TIMES?

I was very thankful to be in Berlin during the lockdown. I was happy to be living in a city that is surrounded by nature, where I could still bring my dog out. We could drive to a nearby forest and walk around

while maintaining social distancing protocols. Staying at home isn't part of my routine - it would have been difficult for me to do. I was, however, a bit concerned about a few people who don't wear masks in places where they are required.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD IN A POST-CORONAVIRUS WORLD?

I look forward to being able to hug all of my friends without thinking about a virus. Also being able to attend press dinners and events. I feel that one thing this pandemic achieved is to make people realize how much work can be done remotely - it saves them a lot of time and allows them to have a better work-life balance. But I also believe that not everything can be done remotely. Hopefully, once we're able to go back to our "normal" activities, we are more mindful and discerning of our tasks and interactions.



YOKO MATSUDA
EMBASSY OF JAPAN
Music Journalist, Juror and Writer.
In Berlin since 2017

HOW HAS THE CURRENT SITUATION IMPACTED YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE?

I used the time of Corona as a chance to strengthen my ties with the city and its people. Life became much slower, and I could finally start on projects which had been on the back burner. I was also able to strengthen my friendships with other WiB members as we had the time to go for walks together and talk intensely about more personal things and our roles in our diplomatic lives - allowing us to form deeper connections.

WHAT DID YOU NOTICE ABOUT BERLIN AND BERLINERS IN CORONA-TIMES?

The Berlin classical music scene was very innovative during the forced pause. Peop-

le did house concerts in unusual settings or outside in gardens. This city has the luxury of space and a close proximity to nature, which allowed people to follow distancing rules and give room for artists to perform. This freedom and trust in the individuality of people is a unique characteristic of the city.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD IN A POST-CORONAVIRUS WORLD?

I think we have to learn to live with Corona as it'll take some years until we'll have overcome it. I meanwhile learned a lot about the struggles of young artists during this period as we had more time to talk in-depth; I hope to be able to continue mentoring them in the future.



ALEXANDRA PAUCESCU
EMBASSY OF ROMANIA
Economist, volunteer coordinator for UNICEF Berlin and author of the book "Just A Diplomatic Spouse"

HOW HAS THE CURRENT SITUATION IMPACTED YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE?

As a family, we didn't feel the situation was so bad as we were able to do a lot of things outside and enjoy nature in Berlin. My husband had to work quite intensely during the crisis, but he could conduct work from home, so we personally enjoyed the time together. I do miss my meetings with UNICEF and WiB, but we did online meetings to have some form of interaction. I launched my book about my diplomatic life in March, and it was fortunate that I could give interviews online and do marketing for it this way.

WHAT DID YOU NOTICE ABOUT BERLIN AND BERLINERS IN CORONA-TIMES?

We were lucky to be in Berlin during Corona times as the lockdown was not as strict as back home in Romania. We could go out and enjoy the parks, forests and lakes and discover the city really well.

When the "Black Lives Matter" movement started, I went to a meeting with the international UNICEF group (while following social distancing rules) and shot a video about diversity. Young people here are optimistic about the future, which is wonderful to see.



PETRA MARIA WALTER
EMBASSY OF AUSTRIA
University degrees in International economy and History of Art.
In Berlin since 2014

HOW HAS THE CURRENT SITUATION IMPACTED YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE?

As my two grown-up children lived with us for a while during the lockdown and my husband was working from home, I was able to enjoy family life more intensely. In addition to that, I had a healthier and more relaxed life and rediscovered nature in Berlin. I kept in touch with friends through extensive phone calls, social media and walks.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO IN A POST-CORONAVIRUS WORLD?

I hope for a slower pace of life with more awareness for health, environmental protection, stronger regional supply and more

flexible working conditions. I also look forward to more personal contacts and participation in events. As soon as there will be vaccination possibilities, I look forward to attending social activities as before.

“ I HOPE FOR A SLOWER PACE OF LIFE WITH MORE AWARENESS FOR HEALTH”