



Trip to Lower Saxony

From 14 to 16 May, the 'WIB Group of the 16 Federal States' travelled to Lower Saxony and visited Wolfsburg, Braunschweig, Celle and Hanover, centres of German history, architecture, politics and industry.

The trip first took them to Wolfsburg, home to the Volkswagen Autostadt and the Volkswagen Group headquarters. Founded exactly 25 years ago for the Expo 2000 world exhibition in Hanover, the Autostadt attracts countless visitors with its innovative architecture, exhibitions, theme parks, off-road courses and concerts.

Princely seat of Braunschweig

The second stop was Braunschweig, a historic city that was heavily destroyed during the Second World War and rebuilt. It was the seat of the powerful European royal house of the Guelphs, the city of Henry the Lion, and therefore bears the lion in its coat of arms. In 1166, Duke Henry had the lion monument erected on Burgplatz, where the cathedral and Dankwarderode Castle, both also dating from the 12th century, are located. Henry's son, Otto IV, was crowned emperor in Rome in 1209. Braunschweig was once an important North German trading city and, due to its navigability to the North Sea, a member of the Hanseatic League.

Celle

Celle, about forty kilometres away, the southern gateway to the Lüneburg Heath, with over 400 historic half-timbered houses, was the third destination of the trip. Behind picturesque facades are places such as the old 'Provisor', a distillery of a mysterious herbal schnapps, shops selling delicacies, a coffee roastery and much more. In the beautifully restored castle, which was



The WIB Group in front of Celle Palace

largely influenced by the cultural and historical eras of the Renaissance and Baroque, the group was welcomed by a knowledgeable city guide – dressed appropriately in Baroque costume – who explained the connection between the Guelph dukes and the English royal family, the Windsors of today. This connection began almost 300 years ago with the coronation of the Hanoverian Elector Georg Ludwig as King George I in Westminster Abbey.

State capital Hanover

The trip ended in the capital of Lower

Saxony, whose parliament is located in the former castle. The president of the state parliament welcomed the group in her office and gave them a tour of the plenary hall, which was redesigned in 2016. After lunch in the sunshine by the Maschsee lake, a visit to the Sprengel Museum provided an inspiring end to the trip. The museum's founder, chocolate manufacturer Bernhard Sprengel, created one of Germany's most important centres of modern art with this building, which houses works by Paul Klee, Max Ernst, Pablo Picasso and Max Beckmann, among others.