

Rise 2008 Report

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Organic Chemistry

“I agree that my report and accompanying pictures are used by the DAAD in printed materials, presentations and on the website in order to inform funding organizations, sponsors, and students about the RISE program.”

I've thrown together some correspondences I wrote while I was in Germany, along with some embellishments to give an idea of my life and experiences in Germany.

May 11th 2008 Bye!

Calgary

I met up with my friends at McDonalds for my last North American breakfast, hugs and goodbyes. This was followed by a slightly embarrassing airport drop off from my mother. I was all ready for the flight, comfy pants and all. This was just going to be like watching a TV marathon 9.5 hours on a plane – no problem.

Lufthansa Flight 495 Seat 39H

I found my seat and got settled in. I figured I should practice my German so I started watching a German movie, with no subtitles! Five minutes in it kicked in how bad my German actually was. So I turned on the subtitles and tried to learn that way.

Six hours in

Are we there yet? I WANT TO GET OFF! I can't take this anymore...

May 12th 2008 Jetlag Can Be a Good Excuse

Frankfurt Airport 6:30 am

Wait where is my PhD student picking me up? Ahhh how does this airport work?

Frankfurt Airport 8:30 am

Who knew there was only one set of doors where you could get picked? A-DUH... I blame it on jetlag.

Nina and Miriam, my PhD students, had made a sign with my name and everything. After I hadn't come out in the first five minutes Nina got tired of holding it up. One hour later they started to wonder where their Canadian student was.

Gießen

What the hell is Pfingsten and why is nothing open?

My mother warned me about the working hours in Germany and what they were like twenty years ago. But I mean that was twenty years ago! Globalization and stuff though... right? All that was missing was a tumbleweed.

Am I going to be working a ghost town?

Boothaus 2:00 pm (whoops sorry, 14:00 for any Germans reading)

Nina and I went to watch some boat races at the beer gardens. That's where everyone was hiding! We met up with a bunch of Nina's friends, everyone was so nice and spoke great English and when they spoke German Nina would translate anything I didn't understand (so almost everything).

Jugendherberge Gießen 21:00

I had to spend two nights in the local hostel because my apartment wasn't quite ready yet. It wasn't exactly what I was expecting. It was nice! I got settled in and after having been awake for 28 hours I passed out.

May 13th Holy Nice Labs Batman!

Jugendherberge Gießen 8:00

At the breakfast table I met a girl from Austria who was doing a dance show in the town and two other girls who had just finished high school (or rather their version of it) and were travelling around Germany visiting prospective universities. We had some good conversation and a great breakfast. I ate some of the best yogurt I had ever eaten, you must try the yogurt in Germany (you can even get a kind with chocolate chunks in it!).

Justus-Liebig Universität



I met everyone in the lab, again everyone was extremely nice. I was a bit scared to talk to a few of the bachelor students because they said their English wasn't very good and my German is terrible. But so far everyone has been so nice and accommodating! I'm excited to start working with everyone. Did I mention the facilities were practically brand new and they're in the process of building even newer ones!

(Nina said I wasn't supposed to take a picture when the lab looked this messy, but I did anyway)

June 19th What Involves a Giant Silly Hat and a Throne Covered in Crepe Paper?

Your PhD defence of course!

Once you've passed your PhD defence you get a silly hat with lots of cool pictures and things on it. We had a great party to make the hat, and watched some soccer of course.



After the traditional ride in the throne, we went to the local Gästhaus for dinner. I

ended up having some beers with the Bachelor students. It turned out they were afraid to talk to me because they thought their English wasn't good enough! We're going to try to learn each other's languages together.



June 26th Schloss Rauschholzhausen. Can You Say It Ten Times Fast?

"Ohhh a Schloss! So we're going to a castle?!"

"No Schloss doesn't translate into castle exactly."

"What does then?"

"Well Burgs are usually built to protect villages from attackers. Which were built much earlier than Palasts and Schlösser, a Schloss is a residence for a king and the palace is the main residence?"

"K, wait what?"

Tonight we were invited to an event for international students at the University of Gießen. It was held in the courtyard of beautiful Schloss Rauschholzhausen. We all showed up a little over dressed; I hid my tie in Miriam's purse. After a speech from the President of the University we sat down to a wonderful



dinner and a few drinks with a live band. We managed to find some tables on the west side, in a smaller

court yard so we had our dessert as the sun set on us. It was a beautiful night and another great example of German hospitality.

July 15th Canoeing, Drinking and Organic Chemistry, Oh My!

Yesterday we went on this great Canoe trip, 3 canadian RISE students and part of the organic chemistry faculty from Gießen. It was a slow start but as soon as Nina realized the ship lock was open and still draining on the other side, we got on our way down the Lahn river. It was a lot of fun – we even had some dry ice to keep our drinks cold.



In the evening we were all invited back to the professor's house for a BBQ. It was so much fun!

August 27th Maybe If I Declare my Austrian Citizenship I Can Do The Mandatory Military Service and Stay Longer?

I made a two week trip to Austria before leaving Germany. I came back to Germany though for a day, to say good bye to everyone before my flight home. My working group had a small going away party where we made and ate traditional German food... Sushi. We did have traditional German drinks though! It was one of the most fun nights I had in Germany. I didn't want it to end. I didn't want to leave.



Home

Now that I'm back home I really miss it. I experienced some culture shock in Calgary. Gelato costing more than 90 cents and grocery shopping on Sunday just seemed... Verrückt (crazy). I am really looking

forward to going back. It was just a wonderful culture and great place to live. No words can even describe the experiences I had. It will change you, for the better. Set aside any reservations and apply.

Extra Pictures



The group of friends that we made during the Heidelberg conference tried to go on a Rhine cruise afterwards. We ended up missing it and sitting at the train station in Bingen! We had just the right amount of people to spell out the town name, apostrophe and all.



Denise and I at the international beer festival in Berlin and some RISE students in Prague.