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For those of you who are interested in the program but are skeptical about the sunny picture others have painted, let me assure you that this program lives up to its reputation. You will experience new places and things. You will also meet some truly amazing people who make you think about the world differently. Germany and its people will challenge you both technically and personally, but you will end up loving them for it. It is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

My German adventures actually began in January while I was looking for an internship to fill up the long summer months. DAAD was not on my radar when I ran across a departmental email about some internships in Germany that required little to no German proficiency. I applied at the last minute, scrambling to get a letter of recommendation and bothering the registrars office about my transcript. One month later, an email from DAAD arrived to tell me that I had made the program and would get paid to live in Germany for the summer. My work would focus on OLED displays and I would also participate in a two week language course in Berlin. I immediately said yes, not fully recognizing the leap I was taking.

I hardly noticed the passing of time that led up to my departure, but it all hit me at once the week before. I was going to Germany by myself, I wasn't that familiar with display technology, and I only knew how to say three phrases in German. Panic started to settle in and I would be lying if I said I wasn't scared. But there is little you can do once you get on the plane, so I managed to make my way to Berlin anyway.

In case nobody told you, Berlin is awesome. You can try to be blase about its grafitti and the blocky Communist architecture of east Berlin, but the city gets under your skin eventually. The two week language course was excellent because we spent the entire morning speaking German and the entire evening exploring the city. In one week, I had found what would become my favorite bakery and learned to ride the public transportation like a pro. I also made my first RISE friends, had my first döner kebab, and fell in love with German beer (a miracle as I hate American beer). Two weeks passed in a blink, and I was off to Stuttgart before too long.

My technical work in Stuttgart has been an invaluable experience. I had previously co-oped two semesters at a major corporation and participated in undergraduate research at school. I was interested to know how working in a research lab compared to those experiences. First, the equipment is generally newer or better maintained than that I have used in the USA. I was able to build my own LCD clock in the cleanroom, even though I usually worked at the computers. This was a really cool way of diversifying my experience. I was expected to document all of my



findings and make a real contribution to the project. Finally, the people who work here are a lot of fun. Contrary to the uptight and stuffy image that has been spread about Germans, they are actually very interesting and hilariously funny. Though we are very focused on work most of the time, our lab makes an effort to provide some time to relax and get to know one another. This summer, we went on an excursion to Hohenzollernberg (the original seat of the Hohenzollern family) and the ruins of a Roman villa.

You will hear over and over again that Germans work hard and play even harder. This is most definitely true. If you love to play team games, eat BBQ, or drink beer with friends, then you have definitely found the right place. I was in Stuttgart for a week before I joined our lab's (LfB) soccer team as they prepared for the university tournament. Pretty soon those training sessions were joined by weekly games of ultimate frisbee, soccer games with the Chemistry department (Germans vs Americans), dinner parties with fellow interns, trips downtown, evenings at the opera, and long afternoons in the Schlossgarten's beirgarten. While all of this was great fun, nothing matches the pure pandemonium of the UEFA Eurocup Tournament. Even as a lifelong soccer fan, I have never seen anything like the jubilation of 40,000 people crammed in the Schlossplatz when Germany made it to the final.



*Abbildung 2: Stuttgart during Germany vs Spain final.*

It was like Germany itself had erupted.

There were 11 RISE students and 2 RISE Pro participants in Stuttgart, which meant there was always someone around to come along on adventures. Never underestimate the friendships you can form in a matter of days. Heidelberg is another perfect example of this. Even though the 300 interns who participated have their own unique interests and past experiences, but we always managed to find some common thread that made getting along easy. That thread was DAAD and the program. DAAD managed to create that phenomena of the freshman year of college, where everything is new and you make new friends in minutes. It was also great to see my Berlin friends again and trade our numerous travel stories.

My German colleagues would often joke that I have travelled more in three months than they have in five years. DAAD provided us with a five day Germany rail pass which we used whenever we got the chance. I also flew to the Czech Republic and Italy during my stay. While I enjoyed every single one of my trips, there are some sights that will stay with me always. The Cinque Terre coast at sunset, flying over the scraping peaks of the Swiss Alps, the eerie blue of Lake Constance, and a glowing Berlin from the Reistag are all sights that have left some imprint on my brain.



*Abbildung 3: Monterosso, Italy*

All good things must come to an end and on a chilly August morning soon to come, I will say good-bye to Germany. It will be a surreal experience to retrace the steps that led me into the country back out again. As corny as it sounds, I am not the same person who arrived there months before. I am much more sure of myself now, and a lot more open minded about what lies around the corner. I would like to thank the DAAD and its sponsors for this great opportunity, as well as my family and friends for their support. And to those who are considering the program, I strongly urge you to apply. Take this chance, take this leap, and you will not regret it.

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.