

Earlier this year, I decided that I wanted to do something fun and exciting over the summer incorporating work experience and travel. I was therefore very happy when I received an email from my department about the RISE programme! It had everything I was looking for; the opportunity to come and live in another country for the summer and to get involved with some research. I started with my application straight away and was lucky enough to get an internship for the months of August and September.

I was based at the Department of Agroecology at the University of Göttingen. I spent my internship assisting my supervisor whose PhD was to determine whether tree species diversity has any affect on insect diversity with a focus on Diptera and Hymenoptera. My time was split between the laboratory and the field sites which were based in the Hainich National Park. In the laboratory I was mostly sorting through insect pitfall trap samples that were collected the year before ready for analysis. First, I sorted all the insects into orders and then Diptera into families which gave me great practise at using a detailed key. I was also asked to put my statistical skills into use to do some preliminary analysis which gave me good practise.

In the field, I helped run a seed predation experiment and also do some mollusc sampling. The field work was always good fun as my supervisor is part of a graduate school and for those of you who do not know, this is a group of PhD students who all work on sub-topics of a main research question. It is a fantastic set up as the students are able to collaborate with each other and share ideas and results. I would say that from experiencing research both in Germany and in the UK, this is a great plus point that goes to Germany! I often met other members of the graduate school at the field site and was able to chat with them about their experiments and on occasion also help them with their data collection. One student who was working up in the forest canopy took me up in her crane that went 27m high up and out of the canopy! It was a great view and I was very lucky to be taken up above the canopy where I have never been before!

My PhD student was amazingly helpful and friendly. During my stay here, she gave me loads of information on good places to go and things to do. Before I even got to Germany she answered all my queries and set me up with some accommodation which was a great help. I was living in a shared flat with 4 other German students. They were really welcoming and I really felt at home. It was a great opportunity to live with German people in their typical student accommodation. It was a block of shared flats, 5 students in each with shared kitchen, living area and bathrooms. The room was a really great size and the students are free to decorate the room how they want! In England however, you are not even supposed to put posters up on the walls! My flat was also only a 2 second walk from my department so there was no chance in getting lost on the way to work!

The department was great too, even though it was just one small corridor, there was a lot of good research going on there! Each week, a seminar was held which I was able to go along to, either to listen to someone's results or to discuss a paper which somebody had found interesting. I was also lucky enough to be there on the annual departmental day. We started the day off with a tour around Barbarossa Cave, the only anhydrite show cave in Europe! After getting very cold, it was back out into the sunshine to have a tour around a lake led by a botanist and ornithologist, where I saw my first ever osprey, which was exciting. The day was ended with a BBQ in the department's greenhouse, it was a great day and I was lucky to be apart of it.

The weekends are a great opportunity to get out there and explore Germany! I went to Berlin, Osnabrück, Fulda, Gotha, Erfurt and some more local small towns and of course explored Göttingen. I really enjoyed my stay in Germany and would definitely like to come back and explore the country more. I may even come back for a masters programme to have the opportunity to live here again. Everybody that I came across during my stay was incredibly friendly and helpful and would not hesitate to speak English if I needed some help. Every city that I visited was really clean and spacious and the recycling here is great. Everything is recycled!

I would definitely recommend this programme to anyone. You have the opportunity to see research in action and to gain highly valuable skills that will definitely help you in your studies. Then there is the experience of living in a new country and being able to explore! It was a great way to spend the summer so get applying!

“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.”