

Name of intern: Elizabeth Rider

Home university: Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Subject: Earth Sciences

Guest institute: Leibniz-Institut für Troposphärenforschung (TROPOS)

Name of supervisor: Tobias Spranger

Thus far I have been very impressed with scientific research in Germany. It appears to me that science is very well-respected and well-funded by the German government, and that this encourages people to pursue graduate degrees. During my stay, I was able to learn more about the German university system, which is rather different from that of the U.S. Most strikingly, German universities are basically free, with just a small fee for transportation passes and the like. It appears to me that there is also less emphasis on a well-rounded education. Instead, students decide their major early on and take classes in that course.

At TROPOS, I was able to help conduct research on organic aerosols, specifically humic like substances (HULIS). On a typical day, I would arrive around 9 in the morning and prepare samples for chromatographic analysis. Around noon, I would break for lunch and coffee, before continuing in the lab. After lunch I would either continue working in the lab or listen to a talk given by one of the Ph.D. students or a visiting professor. After samples were finished running through either RP-HPLC or SEC, the results would be analyzed and my supervisor and I would go over them together.

In general, I feel like I learned a lot from this summer in terms of my professional goals. I plan on looking for and applying to graduate programs in the future, and I feel more comfortable about considering programs abroad as well.

The highlight of my stay was definitely the conference in Heidelberg. Many of us stayed an extra night to see the castle lighting. The fireworks were breathtaking! Other highlights: picnics with the other Leipzig interns; watching Germany play in the European Cup with my coworkers; successfully communicating in German; hiking in the countryside with new friends.

As for tips for future interns: when it comes to housing, I recommend making a decision beforehand about what you want in your roommates. You can ask your supervisor if they know what previous interns did and go from there. In my case, I really wanted to have German roommates, and figured living in a dorm at the local university would be a great way to meet people,

but instead, I ended up with three (wonderful!) roommates who were like me, only visiting Leipzig. They also left for summer vacation while I was still working, and I ended up living entirely on my own for the last month or so. Check online to see if there are people searching for roommates in off-campus apartments; you might not get a reply right away, but keep trying! I think that would have been better for me personally, and I wish I had made more of an effort in the beginning.

Other good ways to meet people: explore the city you're in. Stay at home. I wish I hadn't spent so much time on the weekends on trains and buses traveling, when I could have been learning so much about my city and the people in it. I was able to meet some people through coworkers, through tandem partners, and just by going to events that sounded interesting. Perhaps an English bookstore or poetry slam, or American movie screenings. The people I met here seemed very open and already interested in the U.S. or in learning English. We were able to help each other and form friendships quickly.



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