

RISE Germany 2016 – Final Report

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Subject: Engineering

Guest University/Institute: Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena

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Campus Life

During my two months in Jena, I stayed in the student dorm. The location was great because it is in the center of the campus, where I could get to anywhere easily. On the first day I moved in to my room, I immediately noticed that there was no air conditioner. As a student from the desert in Arizona, it was just hard to believe to stay in somewhere without air conditioning, especially during a hot summer day. Also, I was pretty shocked by the fact that there was a bar literally right in front of my dorm and a beer vending machine inside the laundry room. Although I was aware of the drinking age in Germany, I was not expecting that drinking in public is legal here and it was very interesting to see people holding a beer bottle walking on the street.

German Culture

After spending a couple weeks in Jena, I started noticing the cultural difference between Germany and the United States. For example, all the grocery stores and shopping mall are closed on Sunday. During the first month when I was still trying to get used to the life in Jena, sometimes I totally forgot about that no shops were opened on Sunday and found myself starving because I didn't have anything to cook. Another difference I experienced is probably the transportation. In the United States, almost everyone drives, but in Germany, the metro system is so convenient that it can literally take you to anywhere in the city. Additionally, I was very surprised on how well German can speak English. During my time here, I seldom encountered any trouble due to the language barrier, but this somehow limited my chance to practice German.

German Cuisine

In order to save money for traveling, I tried to cut my expenses on food, but this doesn't mean that I would miss out any chances to try new things. Before coming here, whenever people mentioned German food, sausages or beer will automatically come up to my mind. However, that was definitely not the case anymore after having so many delicious traditional German dishes. Staying in Jena allowed me to try some local foods like Thuringian sausage and Rostbrätel. I also had a Döner for my first time here, which is the German version of fast food, and it tastes much better than a hamburger from

McDonald's or Burger King for sure. Another big thing about German Cuisine is definitely the beer. I was amazed by the variety of beers and how cheap they are. It was funny that the cost of a beer at the restaurant is actually cheaper than any other drinks, so I don't find a reason for not ordering one whenever I went out to eat.

Traveling

My research schedule was really flexible, which I worked on my project during the weekdays, and over the weekends, I had lots of free time for traveling. One of the best things about traveling in Europe is how conveniently I can get from one country to another by either carpooling or taking a bus. We actually made a Facebook group for the students in this program in Jena, and every week, people would post about their traveling plans and invited anyone to join them. Traveling in groups is always fun; however, traveling alone is also a great experience. It allows me to plan trips according to my own interests and have more opportunities to meet new people. Over this summer, I traveled to many cities in Germany. I tried all kinds of local foods, made new friends, and visited many popular tourist attractions. I definitely made some great memories during my time in Europe and my traveling experience no doubt broaden my view of world from a new perspective.

Conclusion

My time at Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena was definitely one of the best summers I ever had. The two months I spent in Jena were truly an amazing learning experience both culturally and academically. The opportunity to participate in interdisciplinary research with researchers from diverse background, to build friendships with great people around the world, and to fully experience another country's culture was a great step to enrich my personal education. The RISE Germany program is absolutely super!!