DAAD Rise Professional Program 2017

BY

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I had always wanted to study abroad with a bunch of international students because I was always curious about what a foreign education system would be like and how what people from different countries be like and how do they live their everyday life. So, when I got accepted for a Master’s degree at Virginia Tech, in Virginia, USA, I was more than excited. It feels very exciting, to me, to see how people from different countries talk, how they wear different clothes, have a different culture and how they react to different issues. Going back to school after becoming a mother was a challenge in itself but this beautiful part of learning and interacting with people always attracts me. So, I accepted this challenge with a whole heart. While I was studying hard during my first year, I was also curious about how to spend the three months of Summer as there would be no classes during this time. Until this time, I had already learned that many people utilize this time by taking part in an internship and taking a short-term experience of working in the real world. I also decided to do an internship and started to search for some exciting opportunities. When I came across DAAD Rise Professional Internship, thinking about going to Germany and working in the field of my interest while also getting to know a different country and different people was incredibly exciting. I prepared well and applied for the position.

The application process was easy and after a while, I was offered an internship position in Beak Consultants GmbH in Freiberg, Germany. I quickly accepted the offer without thinking twice. Beak is a consulting company which works in the area of Environment and Geosciences; GIS/Cartography; Raw Material Sector; Software Development and AdvanGeo Software Solutions. After I accepted the offer, DAAD sent me different application materials including work permits and insurance documents and then I started the visa application process. Applying a Schengen visa was also quite easy. I could also find accommodation through online room
searching sites. I took me a while to find a room but it was not too difficult. I talked with my future roommate quite often and asked her about the things that I need to be prepared for. She was very helpful and answered everything I was confused about. She also came to pick me up at the train station.

In the beginning, it was a bit hard as I had no knowledge of the German language, but my roommates and office colleagues were so helpful that I could settle in within a few weeks. My office colleague went with me to register in the city and to open my bank account. As Freiberg lies in the eastern part of Germany, people do not speak English much as opposed to big cities and western Germany. I had no problem in the Beak itself as everyone could speak English and I could easily communicate with them.

In Beak, I was involved in a research project called “Development of algorithms for semi-automatic production of high-resolution soil maps”. The project aims to enable and simplify the generation of high-resolution soil maps by derivation of algorithms for pre-processing of geological, climatic, terrain and land use data. I learned a new software called AdvanGeo ® for this project which is a prediction software with a link to ArcGIS. My job was to predict the concentration of arsenic, cadmium, and lead on a river flood basin based on some point samples. I also assisted in the project “Hydrogeological and groundwater monitoring in the Schlosselweg open pit mining area Hammerunterwiesenthal”. The project was about exploration of the effect of a marble quarry to ground and surface water quality by means of water monitoring. I assisted in capturing water on site parameters, measuring the groundwater level and measuring of water flow rate using flowmeter for this project. Besides these, I also went on a day field trip to a lignite open pit mine where I could observe rehabilitation and renaturation methods and technologies. I learned a lot during this trip and it was very good to know that Germany is very strict about rehabilitation
and renaturation of the landscapes after they have been utilized for mining. It was very difficult to identify if it was a previous mine area after the rehabilitation. Some areas were changed to the forest, other areas became grape vines and some lands were being used for sunflower farming. The people dislocated due to mining were relocated to a new place with all the facilities. It was good to see mining companies being made liable for all the negative impacts of mining. If this kind of policy would be applied all over the world, there would be fewer impacts on the environment.

My typical day of work would be reaching the office at 9 am and working till 12 pm, having lunch with my colleagues and then working until 5 pm. The company has a tradition of all employees coming together for wishing happy birthday on every employee’s birthday. I found this very interesting; they would also gather and eat breakfast together every Friday. I think this kind of activities help to create more connections among the employees and help to lift the spirit of teamwork and would also help the company moving forward.

Besides work, I also took out some time to travel other beautiful places of Germany and other European cities like Munich, Heidelberg, Dresden, Paris, Prague, and Vienna. The cities are incredibly beautiful and rich with ancient culture showing through art, palaces and other various monuments. It was so interesting to see the monuments rebuilt in Dresden to the same shape and structure even after being destroyed during the second World War. It was so exciting to travel to a different country that was within a few hours. The public transportation in Europe is so reliable and comfortable that we can travel easily from place to place. I traveled by bus and trains. I especially enjoyed traveling in trains and some of these trains were also equipped with internet service.

Although it was a bit hard to stay away from my family for 3 months, it was also interesting in another way around to gain practical knowledge in the field of my interest and also to meet so
many different people and visit beautiful places. I got a chance to meet my old friends and make new ones too. I very much enjoyed my stay in Germany; it was an incredible experience!

I would like to thank DAAD and Beak for providing me this excellent opportunity and I am looking forward to visiting Germany again. I would also like to encourage other students to apply for the DAAD Internship program as it is a great opportunity to learn so many things as Germany is very good for research as well as an opportunity to experience Europe.
Field to Mining Rehabilitation Area

The Prague Castle
With fellow Rise interns at Heidelberg Castle

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