

Having reached the end of my DAAD-RISE internship, I can now reflect on one of the best, most educative, summers of my life. To provide a small background, I hail from Pennsylvania, USA, and spent the past three months researching human genetics at the Universitätsklinikum in Erlangen, a small Franconian city just north of Nuremberg. My days in the lab were varied, fun, and interesting, and my free time after work equally so.

A typical day in Erlangen started in much the same way as it would back home. I'd wake up to my alarm clock blaring, take a shower, and eat breakfast. Then I'd trek five minutes down the road from my shared flat to my lab in the Universitätsklinikum. After greeting and talking a bit with my lab mates in "the big lab" downstairs, I'd go talk to my supervising PhD student. We would talk a bit about any results from the previous day and about what I'd do that day and that week. As the summer progressed, these meetings still happened every day, but oftentimes I started on my own as I became more independent and confident in the lab protocols.

Communication was heavily emphasized in my group, and my interactions with the people in my building did not stop with my supervisor. I often discussed my research, or random, fun things outside of science, with the people in my building, be it in the hallway, lab, cafeteria, or weekly lab meeting. I had previous international research experience in Stockholm, Sweden, and worked in a very international group. In contrast, my group in Erlangen was entirely German, many of whom from Franconia. Nevertheless, I hardly encountered any language barrier, and learned many new German words and phrases, from everyday useful terms to niche idioms. Sharing my culture and learning about Germany's culture with my coworkers was one of my favorite parts of the summer.

After completing my experiments for the day, which were varied but, as is the nature of wet bench research, often repetitions of previous experiments, I left lab in the early evening. While my evenings after work usually contained some minutia like grocery shopping (on a bike!), cooking, laundry, and exercise, they were also usually very fun. Sometimes, I spent time with my coworkers—we watched the world cup, went on a beer hike, had a university day at Erlangen's Bergkirchweih, went out for schäuferle, and did a German Ninja Warrior Course—other times I spent time with other students I met in Erlangen. For such a small city, there was often something to do in the evenings, and, if not, there was always beautiful surrounding nature to enjoy.

Of course, not everything is easy in moving across the ocean for the summer. There are immigration laws, language barriers, problems finding housing, and hiccoughs while traveling. However, everything gets easier with time and practice, and each one of these four obstacles lessened in comparison to my first time alone in Europe and as the summer progressed. My advice on each of them are as follows. Start as early as possible with whichever application needed for the summer, be it applying for a visa, residence permit, or simply registering in the city. I specifically chose a time frame that maximized my time in Germany without needing to apply for a residence permit, which is needed for stays longer than 90 days, to avoid some paperwork and stress, but know other students who had no problem getting a residence permit. Registering in the city is similarly easy and can be accomplished with one form and a visit to the Rathaus. Language barriers are shocking upon arrival in a foreign country but dissipated so

quickly as my ear for German improved. I don't consider myself a good German speaker by any means, but knowing important phrases, having an open mind, and always being polite can lead to quick improvement and easy navigation around Germany. Finding housing was one of the most difficult parts in preparation for this summer. My advice is to be quick and don't be too picky. It's just a summer apartment, so I recommend being flexible with time, location, roommates, etc. I couldn't get Wi-Fi in my apartment this summer, which was annoying at first, but became a blessing since it motivated me to spend as much time as possible exploring Germany instead of the internet. Furthermore, involving your PhD student is always a good idea and can help avoid misunderstandings. Finally, hiccoughs will happen while traveling. It's a fact. My best recommendation is to try not to get too caught up in a situation and understand that things happen. It's best not to let a minor inconvenience ruin a trip. As you go on more trips, everything becomes so much easier to the point where finding the right train and ordering food in different languages becomes second nature. I went from getting lost in my own city to biking 100 miles through 3 countries without any phone on my last weekend in Germany.

Overall, my summer with DAAD in Germany was fantastic, and I'd recommend applying to anyone considering it. Besides my travels, evenings in Erlangen, and times researching and laughing in lab, I'll come out of this summer with new outlooks on work-life balance, necessities in the modern world, relationship with nature, and international science exchange. I'm grateful for the support from DAAD and the Fonds der Chemischen Industrie, as well as the people who helped make my summer in Germany so memorable. I'll be back!

I agree that my report and accompanying pictures may be used by the DAAD in printed materials, presentations, and on websites in order to inform funding organizations, sponsors, and students about the RISE program.