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My name is Katya Sheridan and I was lucky enough to get a DAAD scholarship to perform research at the Friedrich Schiller Institute in Jena, Germany. I stayed for 3 months working in the chemistry laboratory, performing different syntheses and mechanical tests. I learned a lot about working in a lab and working in close quarters with other people. My impression of research in Germany is that it is more clean and organized than in the United States, however, there is a lot more paperwork that you must go through in order to reach the same goal. I even had to use an approved red plastic tub in order to transport chemicals from one room to another, and finding chemicals for use in my experiment was quite difficult. However, the labs were mostly clean and well organized, with everyone pulling their weight. My typical day at the laboratory would start at 8 in the morning, when I would come into the office and have a large cup of coffee, that either I or a colleague would make. This cup of coffee was a great start to the morning. Then I would read my experiment in order to figure out what the next step of my experiment was. When I first came to the laboratory, my supervisor would help me quite a bit, to show me how to use different machines and where everything was located around the lab. After the first week or two, I was much more independent, and only asked for advice if I was lost or confused. Luckily, everyone in my laboratory had a lot of experience making polymers, so usually if I needed help, I could just ask one of them. I would end my day around 4 o'clock in the afternoon, unless we had a two hour seminar, which we had weekly. During this seminar, different masters and PhD students would discuss their projects and the progress that they were making. I was not very pleased that these meetings were mandatory, because I think that you should only go to these sorts of meetings if you are personally interested in it. Having to sit through a 2 hour lecture every week was simply taking away two hours that I could have been spending in the laboratory, and many of the presentations were too complex or esoteric for me to become absorbed. I think that gaining confidence working in the laboratory was the most valuable thing that I got from this experience. In fact, as soon as I started my next semester, I signed up for a lab course, and I now work in the laboratory at my home university.

I think the most difficult part of my stay in Germany was making friends. I am not sure if this aspect of Germany varies from East to West, however making friends with people other than those at my university was very difficult for me. The only way I was able to make friends was by going to the skate park every day after school and sitting there for hours watching the skaters. After about a month or so, a woman came to talk to me and she introduced me to many others. It simply does not seem that the Germans are as willing to talk to a stranger as they are in the United States. Even after I met some of these people, I still did not feel as though I could really hang out with any of them, so I spend a few weeks just watching Netflix in my room alone. But I became quite close to one person, and we spend a lot of time together for the last month of my time in Germany. I was able to borrow a bike from one of my coworkers and this allowed me to see more of my town. If you are able to rent or borrow a bike, I would certainly advise it,

because taking the bus makes it difficult to stop at random places, and see small things that you may otherwise miss. One of my fondest memories in Germany was when I was riding my bike in Germany, and came upon a blackberry bush. I picked at least a few kilograms of berries. My advisor told me about a website called MundRaub, that tells you where the fruit trees and bushes are located around your city, and from then on, finding fruits was a hobby of mine. I found pears, plums, and many apples.

I have a few tips for those that are looking forward to their stay in Germany. I would advise that you try to find housing through your host university before looking elsewhere, because they will likely have the most convenient locations, as well as the best prices. You will also likely live with people that have similar interests to yours. Becoming close to your supervisor is also a good idea, because they will know how to help you with your paperwork, and other bureaucratic nightmares. I don't know if I would have been able to have such a good time in Germany if it was not for him.

Regarding traveling, the most important and valuable things that you have are your passport and tickets, which you should keep on your body when traveling. I had a special neck purse which I kept around my neck, and this way, I always knew that my important documents were nearby. The German transportation is very expensive in comparison to bus companies such as Flixbus. If you are willing to spend a few more hours on a bus, you can expect to save more than 50% on your fare by buying tickets through them rather than taking the train. I was able to get to Prague and back for less than 40 Euros by taking night trips with Flixbus.

Finding a bank that would allow me to start a 3 month account was not very easy. The only bank I could find that would allow me to was called Deutsche Bank, and I had to prove that I was a current student researcher and that I had a home address in Germany. This was a bit of a headache for me.

Even though parts of my stay in Germany were difficult, I feel so lucky to have gotten the opportunity, and I would absolutely do it again. I have advised many of my friends to take the opportunity and apply.

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