

DAAD FINAL REPORT

What is your impression of research in Germany?

Research in Germany is very high-caliber, and places a large emphasis on collaboration, both within the lab and with other research groups. As it turns out, my research lab back home and my research lab in Germany are familiar with each other's work and actually met at a conference in Venice this summer and commiserated over the world cup. It was amazing to see how internationally collaborative research is. Also, working for a government funded project, and hearing about government-funded institutions like the Max-Planck Institutes made me appreciate the high premium placed on research and education in Germany.

What did you find particularly interesting about your research?

My research was interesting because I got an introduction to a whole host of methodologies I hadn't used before, and I got to experience more of the creative side of research. I think helping troubleshoot a psychology paradigm was particularly interesting because I had never realized how much meticulous detail went into making sure the participants did the task you wanted to ensure you were studying the proper neural effect. Also, we were given the ability to come up with our own hypothesis and carry out an analysis, which again required creativity and also introduced me to more facets of the research process, from devising a hypothesis to statistical analysis in R.

Highlights of your stay

One of the highlights of my stay was going to a conference in Salzburg, Austria. It was interesting to see the wide array of research and methods in the field, and how it all connected and worked together. The topics were all on cognitive neuroscience, but there was one that talked about using machine learning in fMRI, and it was fascinating to see an example of how the two things I'm studying (neuroscience and computer science) can come together. Also, since pretty much everyone else there was a PhD student or higher, it was interesting to talk to them during poster sessions and garner some insight into how people come up with ideas for PhD theses and to see a thesis/research topic at different stages of development, since I'd never been to a conference before.

What is your impression of Germany in general?

The learning curve is steep in any study abroad program, especially one where you are afforded a large amount of independence. My first day in Germany, I stepped out of the airport, rocking a look I like to call "drowned rat chic," having just discovered the 20 minute, 90 degree weather thunderstorms not found in my native California, and carrying a salmon bagel instead of a muffin after my first (failed) foray into the German language. However, Germany, and in particular the RISE program, is a remarkably good place and program for such an adventure. People here are friendly, helpful and remarkably forgiving of my butchering of the German language. Living in Munich, in particular, with its proximity to the Alps and a diverse array of neighboring countries, allowed me to explore and travel during the weekends, and still have a home base where I could go to the English garden and get harassed by a swan, pretzel in hand, when need be. The RISE program really allows

you to immerse yourself in living and working in Germany while still providing a community of other students to travel and explore with, something unique among many study abroad programs, and this makes working abroad a much less intimidating prospect, and opens the door to future work within the international research community.

Do you have helpful tips on the Visa or residence permit application, opening a bank account, on traveling, on finding housing?

Finding housing in Munich in particular can be challenging (especially if your German knowledge comes exclusively from what Google translate has to offer), so if you do have connections, use them! If you've checked and even your uncle's third cousin's dog's nail cutter's pizza delivery man doesn't know anyone near Munich that can help you, then you really have to plunge into what the internet has to offer. As early as you can (a semester in advance of your arrival in Germany is what they recommend, but that's probably not possible), it might be worth it to get on the waitlist for the dorms. I would recommend starting *very* early, and joining Facebook groups. Also, it is helpful to have a proper (non-Google translated) introduction in German to who you are, what you are looking for, and why you are in Germany to post on housing sites or send to potential landlords (ask your supervisor!).

In terms of the residency permit, in big cities, it takes a long time (there came a point in time where I briefly considered just registering my address at the KVR when there were 80 tag numbers ahead of mine), but it's a well established procedure (it was much more pleasant than the DMV, I promise) and everyone there was very kind and accommodating. However, if your land lord is not there for the summer, make sure you get a copy of the registration of residency signed before you get there – you need to be registered in your city.

Open an N26 account – it's really easy to get cash at the local drugstore/supermarket and also works to withdraw other currency using the card when traveling to other countries. Also, it should be coming to the states by 2018 so it might be able to be just carried back over to the states (don't quote me on that – I'm not entirely sure)!

This is a fantastic opportunity, and I would recommend it to anyone looking to do research in the sciences! It truly is an eye-opening experience, and it will improve not only your technical/academic knowledge, but also your ability to communicate (across cultural and language barriers), be independent, and argue passionately about the World Cup.

“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.”