

DAAD RISE Germany Final Internship Report

Riley Fiske – Summer 2023

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.

Banking and Financial Advice

To figure out how to acquire a European Bank Account and receive my funds from the DAAD, I did independent research online as well as looked at testimonials from former DAAD RISE Interns. One site I found that was highly recommended was N26. I attempted to set up an account with N26, but the process felt overly complicated and did not contain all the features I would have wanted for an international bank account.

I found Wise Banking, which is a company that allows you to open a bank account or balance account for numerous global currencies and easily convert between them at a super small exchange rate. I quickly opened an account for both US Dollars and Euros and had an account and IBAN (needed to receive the DAAD Scholarship) within a few minutes of signing up. I was able to order a Wise Debit Card for under 5 Euro and received it in under a week, and I used this card to pay at restaurants and stores as well as extract cash from ATMs for no fees up to 200 Euro per month. Extracting cash is important because many places in Germany require you to pay in cash with no card option available, so it was nice to have a way to get cash for no extra fees. I would highly recommend Wise Banking to all future interns and continue to use it myself as a secondary bank account to this day.

Travel Advice

Traveling around Europe is easier than one may initially think, especially if you book your tickets efficiently. For daily transit around my host city (Munich), I used the 49 Euro Ticket (Deutschlandticket) which allows use of all regional public transportation services around all of Germany. This means I was allowed to use all S-Bahn, U-Bahn, Bus, and Trams in every city I visited in Germany (Füssen, Augsburg, Köln, Düsseldorf, Heidelberg, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin), so the 49 Euro cost per month is an incredible deal. For traveling within the same region/state, the 49 Euro ticket is also valid for all regional RE trains, which are not as fast or far-reaching as the ICE interregional trains, but it is of no extra cost to you to utilize these trains if you have the 49 Euro ticket for inner-city transportation already.

For traveling to further cities, I utilized the Eurail website and purchased a 10-day rail pass that allows you 10 travel days within 2 months to ride as many trains as you want that are included in their network. This ticket cost me approximately \$380, which math's out to \$38 per day of riding interregional trains. To buy these tickets individually, I saw tickets from Munich to Berlin that were upwards of 100 Euro for one train. The Eurail pass was very much worth it and allows you to modify your train reservations throughout the day as well if you decide to take a later train. The one catch to the rail pass is that many times you also have to purchase seat reservations on trains that can cost a bit. Seat reservations also sort of lock you into your selected time more than trains that don't require these reservations. German trains often don't require reservations, but you may often find yourself wandering around trying to find an open seat,

especially at peak times. French and Italian trains, in my experience, often required seat reservations.

For lodging in cities we traveled to, we used Airbnb or Hostels and were always able to find affordable options. Traveling in groups helps split costs for accommodation, so I always traveled with 1-3 friends.

Housing in Germany

Start looking early for accommodation in your host city. There were 11 interns in my host city (Munich), and all 11 of us struggled to find accommodation. Websites such as wggesehen and HousingAnywhere were recommended to us, and despite numerous requests sent to posts on these websites, we all received next to no responses. The secret I found for getting a response on wggesehen was to sort by posting-date, and only reach out to offers that were under 1 hour old, otherwise they probably already had hundreds of replies, and a message in English is most likely not the first to be responded to.

That being said, I did receive two replies on wggesehen, had interview phone calls with both of them, and ended up selecting one of them as my host apartment. Upon arriving in Munich, I learned that much of the information I was given about the apartment was not factual and the facilities were not what I was willing to live in for 3 months in a foreign country. Thankfully, I was able to amend my contract to a shorter time slot and was lucky enough to find temporary accommodation with one of my dad's work friend's sons who lives in Munich. If it had not been for that, I don't know what I would've done.

My advice in finding accommodation is to first try those websites, sort by posting-date, give a detailed description (in English or German, if you can) that makes you an early alluring candidate, then ask as many questions as you can during the interview to make sure every possible concern that you may have is covered so you know what you're getting yourself into. Luckily, if you are traveling and making the most of your time in Germany, you should not be home in your apartment for very long, so if you are not able to find something incredible, it is not the end of the world.

Research in Germany

From my three months working at Ludwig-Maximilians Universität in Munich, my impression of research is quite favorable and has inspired me to highly consider German institutions for my future studies. The programs are very sophisticated and well-networked throughout the continent which leads to experiences for collaboration with researchers in multiple countries. My lab also happened to be one of the leading research labs in my field of study (Human Computer Interaction) in the world, so I was surrounded by individuals that write the papers to define the things we work with which was very exciting.

Something I learned early on in my young career is the importance of networking, and getting to make connections this summer with reputable researchers across the world was such an invaluable experience. All of the work we did was incredibly interesting, and all the individuals in the office made me feel welcome every day, which was especially helpful with the subpar housing experience I had early on as described above.

A typical day in Germany for me started with waking up in my flat and pouring myself a cup of coffee or making a cup of tea. I then rode the S-Bahn and U-Bahn to the closest station to the office and stopped at the bakery that was right outside of the station to pick up a freshly baked croissant for 1-2 Euro. I then arrived at the office and answered messages on Slack or Email before building an itinerary list for the day and beginning to work on it. Around lunch time, the other researchers would send out a message asking about getting lunch together at one of the local restaurants (some popular choices consisted of Italian, Vietnamese, Döner, Bakery, and Edeka Supermarket), or knock on people's doors to recruit people for a Mahlzeit Adventure. We would either bring the food back to the office kitchen to eat, take it outside at the stone steps in front of our building, or eat at the restaurant. Then, we returned to work for the afternoon, and depending on if it was exceptionally hot that day, we would sometimes go on an "ice cream train". At the end of the work day, I would either go out to eat at a restaurant in the city with coworkers or fellow interns, go back to my flat to cook with groceries I picked up, or attend a music rehearsal (I reached out to local music groups to participate in music activities throughout the summer since I am a musician in the USA). Repeat this process throughout the work week unless there's a public holiday, then on the weekends we would go travel to other countries or explore the city.

Pictures

A collection of photos from throughout the summer are attached in a zip file to this message. A collage of these photos is depicted below.

