

Name of Intern: Ashley Malenfant

Home University: The Ohio State University

Subject: Earth Sciences

Guest institute: Forschungszentrum Jülich

Name of supervisor: Matthias Class

My name is Ashley and I am a third-year environmental science major from The Ohio State University. This summer I had the amazing opportunity to research soil science at Forschungszentrum Jülich as a DAAD RISE intern at the Institute of Bio and Geosciences- Agrosphere (IBG-3). During my 10 weeks, I was fortunate to help with various Ph.D. projects and see the research process from start to finish. Through the combination of field and lab work, I participated in soil sampling, water filtration measurements, biomass measurements, wheat harvesting, data analysis, and many more important steps. For one of my main projects, I worked to measure biomass and chlorophyll to observe how root water uptake strategies contrast between wheat root systems under water stress in monoculture and co-culture systems in climate-controlled column experiments.

Although the town of Jülich was small and a bit separated from other cities, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience. It was easy to find my way around and the small city allowed me to relax throughout the week. With the research center being the central focus of the town, there was a large group of interns in the city. This was fun because I lived in the same house as a couple of them and often a group of us had picnics and got ice cream together. In addition, I thoroughly enjoyed my lab group. We ate lunch together every day and often got dinners together. Also, Jülich had biweekly summer festivals that were entertaining.

Beyond the lab, I seized the opportunity to visit various European countries, my favorites being Switzerland and Portugal. Meeting people from all over the world and immersing myself in a new culture introduced unique perspectives and friendships that I am very grateful for. Navigating a foreign country and language barrier was challenging but it helped me to fortify my personal growth and resilience. One

of the biggest stereotypes that I discovered that was untrue was the German trains. I came in expecting to be in awe of the public transportation. Which in theory was true but in practicality was not. The trains consistently ran late, randomly canceled, or broke. It was especially tough when the train in and out of Jülich only ran once an hour. Often our incoming trains were delayed and we missed the Jülich one by 1 minute, leaving us to have to sit and wait for an hour. That being said, the public transportation was very nice compared to the United States and it was very cool to see how easy it was to travel between different countries. One aspect that was true about Germany is the bakeries. The bread and chocolate croissants are amazing!

I highly recommend the DAAD Rise program! My advice for future interns is to take advantage of the opportunity. It may be hard to adjust at first but you will get used to it! Do not be afraid to talk to people because you never know who you can meet! Travel as much as you can but also take time to sit, relax, and fully take in the culture. You are going to learn a lot of professional skills but most of your growth will be personal as you immerse in new culture.



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.