

DAAD RISE Germany 2023 Internship Report

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After receiving the news that I was selected to be a DAAD Rise participant I was filled with conflicting emotions. Of course, I was elated to be able to work on my chosen project, but I was also consumed with anxiety. This felt eerily familiar as it was the exact same mix of feelings I experienced after being accepted into my current college, the University of Missouri. I can draw many parallels between attending college and flying overseas as they both were completely new territories for me. Being the first in my family to do both of these things has been challenging, but these challenges have assisted me in becoming a well-adjusted adult and have prepared me for peculiar opportunities such as DAAD RISE. Having no one to offer me advice on things like getting a passport, booking a plane, opening a bank account, and finding housing is tough, but I had completed many daunting tasks independently before such as filling out scholarships, applying to research opportunities, finding my own housing in America, and paying for my tuition. Endeavors in which I assume many future DAAD scholars have faced before. I hope my report can help others like myself who have very little to no guidance on going overseas as well as communicate my own individual experience.

When going overseas it is vital that you apply for your passport as soon as possible. I applied for mine by contacting my local passport services through my college's international programs division. Of course, your college may have something different, but your best bet is contacting someone involved with international affairs at your college and asking them how/where to apply for a passport. You will also need to secure housing, this was a bit of a challenge for me, but it is possible. I suggest contacting places on <https://www.wg-gesucht.de/en/> as well as putting out a personalized ad on their site. I got a lot of traction/offers that way. If you do find an offer look at it through google street view to make sure it is what is being advertised. When booking a plane make sure to get a round trip. I made this mistake myself. I didn't know that they are cheaper and that many airlines don't want you to fly to another country without having a planned trip back. For my phone service I used e-sim.net for the first month and then switched to a physical sim through Vodafone for the rest of my internship. I used N26 as my bank account and they have worked flawlessly. I suggest having all bank affairs dealt with before you come to Germany. Getting your money transferred from one bank to another is harder than it looks when you have a German phone number. It is best to have ~200 euro in cash just in case your bank

card doesn't work right away. As for packing, a week and a half of clothes works fine for me. Don't forget your technology, hygiene products, and passport. I was able to make it to Germany with one medium suitcase and a backpack. This of course is just general advice. If you have any specific questions, I suggest emailing DAAD, and any contacts associated with overseas travel at your home university. I know all of this may be understandably overwhelming, but it is not nearly as panic inducing as not doing these preparatory measures and then exploring a whole new country.

One reason I was a bit surprised to be offered an internship was the fact I only applied to one. I have not met anyone else that has done this, but my philosophy was that if I'm going to travel 4,719.00 miles (7,594.49 km) for work I'm going to work on something I'm passionate about. When selecting an internship, I applied for something with aspects I was familiar with but still dissimilar enough to challenge me. In my project I assisted in comparing the carbon allocation and drought tolerance mechanisms within four ecologically/financially important tree species growing in areas varying in temperature and precipitation. Like my lab job at my home university, I was looking at roots and carbon allocation but unlike my previous job this project focused on trees and contained a fieldwork component. This internship was much more hands-on than any of my previous projects. It was especially exciting as I was stationed in central Germany but was able to study forests in both southern and northern Germany. I couldn't be happier with this internship as it allowed me to gain a whole new set of skills while still building upon previous ones. I highly suggest attending the conference in Heidelberg as it is fully funded, and you get to meet a ton of people! As a bonus there is a beautiful castle and usually a firework show on Saturday night after the conference ends.

Overall, I am so glad I pushed myself and pursued this opportunity. I have learned so much more than I could have imagined in the short time I have been here and made many friends along the way. I am so grateful to everyone working through DAAD as well as my colleagues in the lab. Everyone was so welcoming and supportive. I will cherish this experience and the lessons that came with it throughout my future endeavors however challenging they may be. Here are some of my favorite quotes that I think sum up this wonderful adventure.



“Bravery is not strength in the face of a far lesser foe. Bravery is the exact opposite of that.”
— Hank Green



“Sucking at something is the first step to being sorta good at something.”
— Finn the Human (Adventure Time)



“We have come as far as we have because we are the cleverest creatures to have ever lived on Earth. But if we are to continue to exist, we will require more than intelligence. We will require wisdom.”

— David Attenborough, A Life on Our Planet: My Witness Statement and a Vision for the Future



“Being silly is still allowed, not excluded by adulthood. What’s excluded by adulthood is thoughtlessness, so be thoughtful and silly.”

— Hank Green

“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.”