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My name is Noelle Reyes, and I am a fourth-year biochemistry student from the University of Alberta. This summer, I had the privilege of working at the Forschungszentrum Jülich as a DAAD RISE intern in the Institute of Neurosciences and Medicine group. Jülich is a charming town in east Germany, and is near the border of Belgium and the Netherlands. My research focused on the effects of isoflurane, a general anaesthetic, as an antidepressant treatment for major depressive disorder. My time in Germany was the most memorable 3 months of my life.

I can still remember the day I received my acceptance letter for the RISE DAAD program. It was 3 am and I had been sick for a few days. The subject line read "Congratulations, you are successfully matched!" Due to my illness, I recall thinking that I must've been dreaming. I woke up that same morning and it slowly began to dawn on me that I would be in a new country in just a few months and I had much to do to prepare myself for this new journey.

I was ecstatic to not only have the opportunity to research a topic that I was passionate about - but also to have a chance to explore a new place and learn a different language. I generally worked 9am to 5pm during the weekdays. On the weekends, I would travel around Germany and other neighbouring countries. It took a fair amount of planning, but I was lucky enough to visit seven different countries during my internship.

There are many things that I wish I had known before I began my internship. First and foremost, I wish I had begun looking for accommodations and booking my flight tickets earlier. Finding a place to live in your city is incredibly difficult; searching for a room in a different country is a much larger challenge. I would recommend that future RISE interns ask their supervisors for support when finding their accommodations. Secondly, reach out to other RISE interns before you begin your internship! I was lucky that my cohort included several organized people and that they created a Discord group chat before the summer began. Because of this platform, I was able to meet fellow interns in the same town before I flew to Germany. Additionally, it was much easier to organize trips during the weekend with other interns. Finally, don't hesitate to step outside of your comfort zone and try something new. As a shy person, it was incredibly intimidating to practice speaking German with strangers. Thankfully, every person I spoke to was incredibly patient and encouraged me to continue with my efforts to learn a new language.

Overall, I would absolutely recommend the RISE program to any undergraduate student since it has been a terrific experience. I hope that future interns can make unforgettable memories while gaining valuable research experience.



Jülich, Germany