

My Stay at DHBW Stuttgart

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January 24th, 2018

Preparation of Stay

Traveling from Canada to Germany can seem a little intimidating when looking at a world map. When I found out that I would be studying in Germany I was very excited, but also nervous; however, with a little preparation moving to a place so far away can be made easy.

I began my preparation by buying a Rosetta Stone online German language program. I didn't expect to be able to speak German from it, but I knew that knowing simple things such as how to ask for directions or how to read public signs would be very handy. Sure enough, using this program made my first few days in Germany when I was still getting used to traveling and living in Stuttgart much simpler. This program never made me fluent in German, but it gave me helpful bits of knowledge that not only let me ask directions, order food, and read signs, but allowed me to be a lot more confident when interacting with Germans in the first few weeks.

While doing that I also began doing general research about Germany and living/traveling in Germany. Here I researched things such as:

- The places in Germany which I wanted to visit
- Countries/cities around my area which I wanted to visit
- Differences in day-to-day living between Canada and Germany
- Cultural customs in Germany
- How to meet/interact with peers while studying abroad
- Festivals/activities in Germany
- Sights and events within Stuttgart

Doing research such as this gave me a great general knowledge on what to expect living in Germany would be like, while also giving me ideas on things that I wanted to do once I was there (places to travel to, things to go see, etc.). I believe doing some simple research like this really allowed me to make sure that I did not miss anything while in Europe, as well I think it allowed me to become good friends with quite a few of my German classmates by giving me a general idea of how to act with peers in Germany.

Study

Studying at DHWB was very different from my university back home, mainly in terms how the semesters and classes work. Back home, September to December is one semester, however while I was at DHBW there was multiple semesters begin and end while I was there; meaning there was a lot of new German students coming and going. The class schedule for me was great except for the first month or so of my stay, during that time I often had classes overlapping at the same time; usually these classes were in different buildings meaning I needed to take the U-bahn to get to them. Due to this I missed many classes during that time.

Before coming to Germany I was told that all of my classes would be with German students; however upon arrival I found out that only 2/8 of my classes were with German students, the rest were only for exchange students. I enjoyed my time with the other international students

although it would have been nice to take more classes with students from Germany. Also, most of the classes with just international students had very few students in them, making them difficult at times.

All in all, the study in Stuttgart was great, the two classes I had with German students were fantastic (I met a lot of people, and the classes/instructors were perfect) and the classes with international students were not bad. The professors/instructors at DHBW were great (far more qualified than the professors I was used to) and the classwork they gave was interesting. Difficulty-wise the study was perfect, for two of my classes I really had to work, however the rest were quite relaxing and left me with a lot of spare time which I used for traveling and learning more about Germany.

Stay

I stayed at the International Student Hotel (Neckarstraße 172) and I have to say that I was very pleased with it, it was modern, clean, and simple. As well, it acted as the perfect place to meet German students and make friends. If you were ever bored you could almost always find a group of students hanging out in the kitchen area or outside in the courtyard/catwalk areas.

I found living in Stuttgart was great; it was very simple to get around the city, where I'm from in Canada we need to drive everywhere due to lack of public transportation (and when we do have public transportation it is often not on time) so going to a city that had great public transportation was fantastic. It would never take me more than 20 minutes to get to most of the places in the city which were important to me (grocery stores, school, bars, etc.). I can really see why Stuttgart is currently ranked as the least stressful city to live in worldwide (according to CNN).

There were a lot of extracurricular activities planned for international students in the first month, however after the Wasen there was not much at all. I wish there could have been a little bit more planned; something like going to a professional football match would have been fantastic, but there was always plenty of activities for us to find on our own. As well, parties put on by the school usually kept us busy on weekends.

Meeting German peers was easy due to living in residence and taking classes with German students, which was important for me. I really like getting to actually know people in the places where I travel to truly get to understand/experience the culture. Some of my new German friends invited me to travel to their home cities with them which took me to places such as Düsseldorf, Berlin, Ulm, and a few other smaller German villages. Many of these new friends are people who I will keep in contact with in the future. I was extremely fortunate to be invited to a good friend's home in Frankfurt during Christmas where I was shown a true German Christmas; the hospitality I was shown, and the experience of a German Christmas are things I will always remember.

To do with travelling throughout Germany and central Europe, I found Stuttgart was the perfect location. Due to Stuttgart being in such a central location in Europe it was easy and cheap to travel to countries such as:

- Austria
- Spain
- Switzerland
- France
- Belgium
- Czech Republic
- Ireland
- Great Brittan

As well, with Stuttgart's location and the travel services offered I was able to go to many cities/villages in Germany, such as:

- Düsseldorf
- Ulm
- Frankfurt
- Berlin
- Hamburg
- Munich
- Karlsruhe
- Heidelberg
- Adelberg
- Ludwigsburg
- Esslingen
- Heilbronn
- Darmstadt

Participation

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to go to any conferences or workshops. However, I did take part of a general business management simulation game which was great. Here we used an online program to make business decisions and try to sell products while competing against our fellow students in real time. It was only two days long but it was a great way to get good insight into how to manage large businesses.

Hands-On Tips

My first tip to someone studying abroad in Germany from Canada would be to make sure to travel as much as possible. When staying in Germany virtually all of Europe is very close (by Canadian standards), on weekend trips you can go to amazing cities whether they be in Germany or in another country. The cost to travel across Europe is extremely cheap compared to traveling across Canada, but even with that I would highly recommend setting aside some money that you will only use for traveling (flights, trains, buses, hostels, etc.). When traveling in Germany I found using an app called BlaBla Car saved me a lot of money and was very convenient.

Another tip would be to simply be open towards all of the new cultures, customs, and people you will meet while abroad. I often found that usually what made a place you were visiting great wasn't the sights or attraction offered, but more so the people you meet and the experiences you have while there. Experiencing a culture and getting to know people within that culture is far better than going somewhere just to take pictures and be a tourist. Meeting a

lot of great people while in Europe was great, many of these friendships I will carry into the future.

Also, I truly think doing your due diligence of things such as customs and cultures can really benefit you when you first arrive to the country where you will be staying. Also learning some of the basic language can be helpful for more than just the reasons I have previously stated. I think when a foreigner comes to a country the people in that country can really appreciate it when the visitor tries to put even a little effort into learning the language, knowing things such as hello, how are you, yes/no, etc. can go a long way.

Personal Evaluation

Studying abroad was one of the best decisions I have ever made. While school and education play an important part in everyone's lives, I believe that travelling the world and experiencing new peoples and cultures can be just as important, if not more important. There are some things in life which you cannot learn from a classroom, these are things such as being open minded and being understanding of different cultures. Studying in Germany not only let me be immersed in the German culture(s), it also allowed me to easily travel to other countries where I could experience even more different walks of life.

Germany was very easy to travel in, and once you got used to how things like buses and trains work in Germany it was rather simple to navigate, and there was no shortage of things to do and see. I found that it was rather easy to meet people and make friends in Germany, and that most people -and especially the students- were very friendly and happy to interact with exchange students. Even though I cannot speak much German I never really had any problems in day to day life, as it was very easy to interact with people on the street through speaking English. There was only a few occasions where I needed help with something and there was no one who spoke English.

The friends I've met and the experiences I had while studying abroad will stick with me for life. Studying abroad is something that every university student should do, and coming from Canada I would highly recommend that Germany (and more specifically DHBW Stuttgart) be the place to go. While I was able to experience so much, meet so many people, and have the most fun I have ever had in University, I was still able to take valuable and interesting classes that will work towards me getting a degree, allowing me to not skip a beat when it comes to graduating on time. To summarize I think I could not have chosen a better place to study abroad; every expectation I had was met while in Germany.