

Sebastian Quintanar Reynoso
squintanar10@gmail.com
SLP. México.

Personal Report

Coming to Germany was a highlight experience to say the least, in this report I'm going to try to explain how I lived it and try to give you some advice on german survival skills for beginners.

Leaving your home country and arriving in Germany.

Arriving in Germany already represents some challenges for us non EU members, the visa process, the blocked account and everything can seem a bit overwhelming but remember that those are just the easy steps, once you arrive here you are going to have to do a lot more bureaucratic processes. Lucky for you, the kind ladies at the international office of DHBW are here to help you (or should I say "save you"). Here I'm dropping a list of what you will have to do as soon as you get here:

1. Get you registered in the city, you are going to have to do the Anmeldung first because with that you will be able to get a registration number, or a tax number that it's going to help you later on.
2. Now you will realize that your home currency is only going to get you so far, so you will need to open a european bank account if you don't have one yet, I will advice you on opening a German bank account because to pay the rent and a bunch of other stuff later on you will need a German IBAN code.
3. If you are like me and come from a country where public transport is not as it is here in Germany you could find yourself wondering which subscription or how to pay for public transportation, your best option is going to be the "deutschland ticket" this you can get in any office of public transportation around the city, if you are a student it will cost you around 30 euros per month and this will allow you to use all public transportation around Germany (yes, the whole country).
4. To get all of this done you will also need mobile data that your current service provider may not cover here in Europe, there are a lot of options out there just choose a company and ask about their prepaid monthly rates, so you can have a European SIM card and therefore internet in your cell phone.

These are some of the essential points that I had questions at the beginning, lucky for us that are in the DHBW international program. They have an excellent buddy program that will assign you some German student that will most definitely help you with any problem you may have.

Your first days in Germany.

As I said before I am very grateful for the international program that DHBW offers, because they make this first days feel so special and the activities that they plan for everybody makes the integration very smooth and easy, these first days is where you will meet some of your

best friends for the next 6 months and probably for life. I strongly recommend to be very opened minded and to come to the events with the best attitude possible, and also just try to relax and enjoy the experience.

I took the first month of my stay in Stuttgart to get to know the city, to hang out with friends every opportunity that i got and to travel around germany getting to know the country and the culture.

The class portion of the exchange.

Of course, after all, we are here to study but take it easy, the classes in my experience were just great, all of the faculty were very prepared to teach their subject and they try to make a great experience out of their classes for the students, if you really want to you can take a lot of advantage of the teacher that DHBW has for your classes and learn a lot, this will be some of the tips that i would recommend:

- Make a detailed calendar of all your courses in advance as soon as you get the time table, most classes won't have any changes at all. This calendar will allow you to plan trips, activities or leisure days.
- When in class take notes of what the teacher is pointing out in the presentation, especially when the class is test-graded, you don't want to get to the end of the semester and have to study all the content of the class because you didn't take notes.
- Assistance and punctuality are key, be very careful of your assistance because you can only miss so many classes before you fail the course (that is why the calendar is useful). Also be punctual, it is better to be 5 minutes early than 5 minutes late to class.

Traveling with friends.

The moment we were all waiting for, traveling is probably of your utmost interest during your stay here and don't be afraid to make it with friends or alone, both modalities have their unique charm. Some of my best memories during my stay are in my adventures with friends, you are going to be traveling across europe and around Stuttgart, so as a non-european student here are some tips or tricks that you may want to look out for:

- Familiarize yourself with the companies Ryanair, flixbus and DB.
 - The first “Ryanair” is one of the cheapest if not the cheapest airline in europe, unfortunately their planes don't depart from the stuttgart airport, but you can find nearby alternatives in Memmingen and in Karlsruhe it would only depend on the destination.
 - The second “Flixbus” is an easy, comfortable, cheap way to travel by land in europe, as their name suggest they are a company of busses that also has some trains that for a cheap price will take you wherever you want to go, it is always worth checking out this alternative, it could be better than a train or a flight.
 - The third “DB” is the most important, you are living in germany and DB (Deutsche Bahn) is the train company that manages all the trains inside the country, they have a discount for people under 25 in their fast trains (ICE trains) and if bought in advance it could also be very affordable, also a tip is that all the regional trains are included in the previously talked “Deutschland

ticket” so you could also travel the country free of an extra charge, it would only take longer.

- Have a good backpack to travel for a couple of days with, this will come very handy when you want to make some weekend trips or generally small trips.
- BONUS. If you are like me and skiing is something you want to do here stay alert for the student trips, skiing can be a very pricey activity but sometimes there are student trips that come out very cheap because they are events organized in bulk.

Overall experience.

I feel so good that I can look back into my experience here in Germany and have so many great things to say about the country, the people and the culture. Of course this was a challenge but also an opportunity to outgrow my previous self, every little thing that happened in this exchange has helped me to develop character, from having to live with other people, to being responsible for paying all of the bills that need to be paid. Definitely the Sebastian that is leaving is not the same one that arrived here, it's a better, much improved version of myself and I have this experience and everyone involved to thank for.

Here are some of my favorite pictures on this adventure, because they are full of the lovely people that became my family for these past months:



