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Host Institute: Institute of Aerodynamics & Gas Dynamics, University of Stuttgart
Home University: University of Arizona
Field of Study: Aerospace Engineering
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I give consent to publish the report on the webpage of Burkert stiftung and U of Stuttgart

Signed: Varun Patel
My name is Varun Patel and I was hosted by the University of Stuttgart as a summer research intern in the summer of 2014. My host institute was the Institute of Aerodynamics and Gas Dynamics. The two months I spent in Germany during this time will go down as one of the highlights of my life. Immersing myself in the culture and formalities to gain the personal impressions and experiences that I gained would not have been possible without the decision to go study abroad for the summer. This paper will cover the aforementioned in more detail, introduce comparisons between Germany and USA, and include some hands-on tips that may be of interest to future participants.

As soon as I got off my flight at the Stuttgart International Airport, I went to baggage claim and saw my assigned buddy from the buddy program at the University of Stuttgart through the glass. His name was Stefan, which I would find is a fairly common German name, and I could tell he was a friendly guy from the start. I would find this to be a common characteristic among Germans during my time there. Everyone from the professor I worked under, to the supervisor of my project, to our program coordinator all had a helping characteristic about them. The supervisor of my project specifically told the other student on the project and myself to have a good balance of work and life while we are in Germany. He emphasized that we are here to learn the specifics of the advanced topic corresponding to our project, but what is also important is that we learn what Germany is all about. He told us to experience the country as best as possible. I found this to be somewhat of a standout mentality when I thought about life in Germany. It could be possible that my time there was in conjunction with the idea that I am in a foreign country and thus I had more energy reserved to experience something I had not before. But, I found that it was not just me and the other interns, but the balance between work and life was something the country as a whole seems to structure well. The grocery stores closed, pharmacies closed, restaurants closed, and their respective workers thus did not worry about graveyard shifts or getting to home later than expected. There were two national holidays in the span of three weeks following my arrival.

The closing of stores and services earlier than they do in America in my opinion brings out one of the defining German formalities. That is, to be punctual with a task, errand, or when meeting someone somewhere. This sense of responsibility and respect can be spotted in other aspects of German formalities. I found that alcohol had a much more cultural placement in society rather than a placement to engage in over indulgence.

![Picture 1. Beer Vending Machine](image)
This is both similar and dissimilar to America. In the states it is often seen that alcohol can have a placement without over indulgence, but in college that is hardly the case. Freshmen (1st year college students) almost exclusively use it to engage in over indulgence.

The host university was very different from my university back in America. It was definitely more research-heavy than the University of Arizona (UofA). The structure of the diplomas was also quite different, but that may go hand in hand with the finances dealing with tuition. It turns out that tuition is far cheaper than it is in the states, and I always got a kick out of how baffled a German would get when I mentioned UofA’s tuition was approximately $10,000/year and even more if you were an out of state student. Just before I arrived at University of Stuttgart, their diploma structure was that of a master’s student here in America. To get a diploma in engineering, one had to do a bachelor’s thesis and a master’s thesis. But they have since changed that and made three separate diplomas as we have in the states. My personal impression of the school’s curriculum and diploma structure is positive. I like that the curriculum requires a student to do an internship before graduating, and requires a student to write a thesis for bachelor’s as well. At the UofA, the engineering program instead has a senior design project associated with a bachelor’s degree.

Germany is a beautiful country with a lot of history and living culture. I noticed that quite a lot of the country’s beauty is overshadowed by the bordering country of Switzerland. Though Switzerland is also beautiful, the South of Germany also featured some breathtaking beauty with chunks of history attached to it; that is where I felt Germany differed from Switzerland. From the different cities I visited during my stay, I was able to see that the Germans actually cared about their history. For instance in Frankfurt I would see skyscrapers, but only a hundred yards away would be a very old looking building; whether it was a church or part of a castle.
In Munich, I saw many people wearing lederhosen on the streets.

Visiting small cities also showed how these cities kept their history afloat, whether it be still selling wine from historic palaces, or keeping an old brewery going. I think this is a brilliant tradition, because history is something to cherish. This can be seen in parts of the US around areas during the time the first colonies were formed. In Boston, similar old and new structures can be seen as in Frankfurt. In Georgetown near the Washington D.C. area, the whole strip contains stores and restaurants that are integrated in old buildings. I understood however that the German structures were a lot older because obviously the country is older.

My experience in the SUPER program was definitely one I will cherish for times to come. There are things I did correctly and there are things I did not do correctly. Firstly, I am glad I brought a waterproof shell and an umbrella. It rains in Stuttgart week in and week out, and future SUPER participants should be aware of that. One of the things I did not do correctly was I did not spend extensive time befriending the locals. The SUPER participants were all very friendly and fun to get to know, but when in Germany I feel like I should have made more German friends. I did often have lunch with people from my institute, and often even played soccer with them, but I did not take very many opportunities to go any farther than that. I think it would be a great experience if future SUPER participants create those opportunities more than I did. I also think that for anyone without prior German language experience, it can be beneficial to spend anywhere from a couple weeks to a month prior to their arrival to get to know the language a bit better. Knowing the language allows you to engage locals without the locals having to leave their comfort zone. And my final tip, which is most important to me, is to explore the country and surrounding countries on your own. I traveled to a few cities on my own, but most of my travels were with friends I made through the SUPER program. Traveling alone is a different experience altogether, and chances to do such a thing are slim. I found that the SUPER program had an ideal structure to accommodate something like this, and the trips I took alone were unlike ones I have ever taken in the past; meeting people at hostels, using a couchsurfer app, and figuring things out on your own are just as good of an experience as anything. The SUPER program provides an opportunity to form personal impressions, experiences and indulge oneself into a culture.
that they may not be familiar with, and I think taking advantage of this opportunity is one of the best decisions I have made.