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If the slightest aspiration to study abroad has ever entered your mind, then you have already caught it. It's not an illness or the cold, what you have now is curable by only one thing – to do what your heart desires! Traveling abroad to study at a foreign university is the single best experience you will ever have to this point in your life, but it will test you. As with anything worthwhile, you must work to get there and it begins now. Start thinking hard about what language you enjoy learning and speaking, what part of the world interests you, and what type of curriculum you want to study. I insist that you strongly consider Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW) because of so many things the university, city, and people offer. From internship opportunities to German culture to the friends you will make, it will be an unforgettable semester.

Academics are an imperative factor in choosing a university, as it was in selecting your home university. Hamburg is the only university in Germany (with a bilateral exchange with my home university) to offer an entire semester of interesting aeronautical courses in English. So if your German is lacking (as mine still is), then HAW is the place for you. The courses are completely different from what is taught at home – where we learn general aeronautics, HAW focuses on a commercial design curriculum. I have thoroughly enjoyed my courses, specifically Dr. Konieczny's Architecture of Aircraft Cabins module. Aside from the material taught he also organized a class trip to Airbus Hamburg, which was great to see firsthand that which we learned about. Dr. Gleine, who instructs the Mechanical Fluid Cabins Systems course, also led the class on a trip to Airbus Hamburg in the same week.

Dr. Konieczny's Architecture of Aircraft Cabins taught about the general requirements and specifications for interior design of commercial cabins, from seat width and seat pitch to emergency exits and galley/lavatory placement. I enjoyed this lecture the most because it was interactive – nearly every week we had an in-class practice problem to simulate what we learned. This made retention of the material taught much easier.

Dr. Gleine's module, Mechanical Fluid Cabin Systems, taught information that was foreign to me, not the language but the material. Fluids broke down into air conditioning, water/waste, supplemental cooling air, oxygen, and a few other systems onboard commercial airliners. This was my least favorite course because I am not interested at all in fluid systems specifically, but I love fluids engineering – aero- and hydrodynamics. This course title was a bit misleading for me because I thought we would learn about fluids engineering, not the architecture of fluid systems onboard aircraft.

Dr. Scholz taught Aircraft Design, which builds on the Introduction to Aerospace Engineering and Aircraft Performance course at Virginia Tech. Again this course is tailored specifically to commercial aircraft, and we learned about national and international design regulations and specifications. I very much enjoyed this course because of the material and because Dr. Scholz brought in two guest speakers from Airbus who spoke about Airbus-specific designs. An added bonus of these Airbus guest speakers was that I talked to them about internship opportunities.

Lightweight Structures was taught by Dr. Baanan, which very much mirrored the Thin-walled Structures course at Virginia Tech, but the ways of solving thin-walled problems was very different. I have never heard of virtual forces, but we worked extensively with them at HAW. As with many problems, you can take different paths to come to a solution, and knowing

multiple ways of solving the same problem is very beneficial. I myself did not do well in the course because I took it too lightly, so if you take this course at HAW I vehemently insist that you take the class seriously.

Dr. Konieczny, or Gordon as he asked internationals to call him due to his unpronounceable name (I think it's Clingon), was by far my favorite professor because of his enthusiasm towards the students about aeronautical engineering – from the class material to the Airbus visit to offering aid on obtaining internships. Gordon was more than just a professor; he hosted a barbeque after our final exam and offered me help in a difficult situation. Early in the semester while traveling I was attacked in Greece, and Gordon was genuinely concerned. He recommended doctors, explained the German health system, and in every lecture asked how I was doing.

The bonds you form with professors and other students, whether they are from Germany or they are also internationals, will stay with you the rest of your life. Currently, I am visiting friends all over Europe from Edinburgh and Stockholm to Valencia and Milan. Some of my friends I have not seen for over a year, while others I hung out with just last month, but the moment my friends and I come together again it is as if it were just yesterday that we said goodbye. We pick up just where we left off, from humor to story-telling and everything else. Being so far from home, you have two social paths from which to choose: shut nearly everyone out or be open-minded and meet new people. If you end up living in a dorm residence or something similar, then keep your door open to invite others in to at the very least say hello, start a conversation, and maybe a friendship. Do this everywhere and be open to talking to new, interesting, exciting, and excited people. That is why you chose to study abroad – to experience something unknown, thrilling, and diverse. You may not have a very diverse group of friends

back home, but this is the chance to really reach out and understand why people are different. But accept it, relish it, and then you will be able to see how seemingly diverse people are also similar to each other in so many ways. My most prized possessions from studying abroad are the friendships formed with people from all over the world – Spaniards, Belgians, Germans, Italians, Turks, Chinese, Koreans, Australians, Americans, Brazilians, Egyptians, Ghanaians, Ivorians, Japanese, Scots, Swedes, Indians, Russians, Chileans, South Africans, Ecuadorians, French, Brits, the list goes on and on. I could write an entire 100 pages on the friends I've made, they are that valuable.



Trip to Bremen with Spaniards, Brazilians, Mexicans, Dutch, Americans, Czechs, and Polish

There is another lesser, but still great, benefit to studying abroad (Europe specifically) over studying in the States, and that is the ease of travel to even more countries and continents. There are travel options including planes, trains, cars, buses, and ferries which can take you anywhere in Europe within just a few hours. Entering my fourth semester abroad (which may seem excessive, but I cannot get enough of it), I have visited twenty-four countries in the past

two years from Sweden to Morocco and Ireland to Turkey. By no distinction is there a pile of money funding all of my travels, on the contrary I travel when traveling is cheapest. The web site I use most for flights is skyscanner.net. This site is like Orbitz or Priceline, but it sources all the cheap charter airlines such as Ryanair and EasyJet which offer round trip flights for as low as 10 Euro (about \$15). I flew from Hamburg to Pisa one way for only 6 Euro. Search flights early and be flexible on dates. Also keep your options open and you can travel cheap to a place you never thought to visit – I flew from Bremen, Germany, to Riga, Latvia, in January for \$30. It was -18° F but I made friends in that hostel (Friendly Fun Franks Backpackers Hostel) whom I still speak with and plan to visit in Brazil in summer 2014.

I enjoy taking trains all over Europe because rather than flying over countries, you ride through them and see all the spectacular scenery from the Rhineland to the Alps to the Mediterranean coast. It can get expensive to travel by train in Europe, but again look for deals and cheap routes. Germany has two such deals to travel within the country – each region in Germany has a one day, round trip, weekend pass that allows up to five persons travel within the region for 37 Euro; the second is a one way, weekend pass that allows travel anywhere in the country for up to five people for 39 Euro. For both of these passes you can only use local trains, so it takes a bit longer but saves oodles of money. And there are usually discounted deals for certain city pairs – I just paid 19 Euro for a train from Munich to Salzburg. They have deals like this in every country, but you have to search for them or ask a local.

The best way to travel by train over extended periods is a Eurail train pass. They have 1-, 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-country passes as well as a “Global Pass” which includes all 22 countries in the Eurail system. The Global Pass spans from Portugal to Romania and Finland to Greece. You can research it online at either eurail.com or ricksteves.com, which is the American site and it is a

little bit cheaper due to postage. I will buy a 3-country pass for ten days of travel within a two month period this fall to travel to Munich, Paris, Lyon, Amsterdam, and Ghent. The pass will already be paid for after the trip to Munich, so the passes are great deals.

You do not have to leave the city to really experience Europe. Hamburg is one of the largest port cities in Europe, is the greenest city in Europe, has a great entertainment scene, is one of the largest cities in Europe by land, and has an infamous red light district called the Reeperbahn, or the Kiez. The river Elbe runs straight through the city center and Hamburg is a unique city in that it has a fairly large lake, called the Alster, directly in the middle of the city. With your metro card, you are allowed unlimited public transport on trains inside Hamburg, buses, and certain ferries along the river. There are numerous parks in the city and the favorites are Stadtpark and Planten un Blomen – these are the two larger parks in the city with lakes and ponds throughout.



Friends in the Stadtpark

My friends would usually visit either park on weekends when not traveling; they are great places for lazy Sundays or to kick around a football. Hamburg is the third largest musical city behind New York and London, has a philharmonic orchestra, two professional football clubs in St. Pauli and HSV, and attracts artists and musicians from all over the world. In fact, The Beatles had their first big gig in Hamburg, and Snoop Dogg performed this past July.

The Reeperbahn has bars, dance clubs, and restaurants as well as strip clubs, sex shops, and other wonders of the night. It will be hard not to find something to do each weekend and almost every weeknight. You have your pick of student bars, city bars and clubs, the Reeperbahn, and the Sternschanze district. The Schanze, for short, is a residential district of the city with many popular pubs, bars, clubs, and restaurants. The nightlife in Hamburg has definitely been the best of anywhere I have lived, which spans Washington DC, Melbourne (FL), Rome, and Sheffield (UK). One of my favorite weekends in the city was when a university bar hosted Beerfest. There were six teams total – Brazil, Bolivia, Italy, Belgium, USA, and Ecuador. Each team played nine games from beer pong and quarters to thumper and volume chug. Going into the finals, Ecuador was undefeated at 9-0 and USA was 8-1 with our only loss to Ecuador in thumper (it was the last game and one teammate was “practicing” in between games, so yeah we had no chance). Ecuador rose victorious, but I am out to have redemption this fall.



Team Brazil



Team USA

Hamburg is a phenomenally well-known entertainment city, but it is equally renowned as the third largest civil aviation center in the world behind Seattle and Toulouse, France. With Airbus the most famous of Hamburg's aviation residents, the list includes Lufthansa, Orange Engineering, Bertrandt Engineering, and many others. During the first week of June each year, HAW hosts a career fair for the Department of Automotive and Aeronautical Engineering. At the fair I spoke to all the companies above along with several others, and about half were searching for interns for this fall. In addition to the career fair I submitted online applications and spoke with professors, and each gave me contact information for work colleagues. Luckily I was offered an internship position with Airbus in mid-June, but if you want to stay two semesters and intern with any aviation company I strongly suggest you start as soon as you arrive in Hamburg. Approach professors and politely ask for contact information, go online to research and apply yourself, and do not wait as long as I did. While studying for finals, it was extremely stressful wondering if I would have a place to work the following semester. I still have yet to actually sign the contract and the internship begins in less than three weeks, so I insist that you start early.

If you plan to study or intern a second semester, also do not miss the housing application deadline, which I did. But again I am very fortunate and secured the last available bed in a student house. This past summer semester at HAW I stayed in a five person apartment in the Gustav-Radbruch Haus in the Berliner Tor area of Hamburg, just one metro stop from the central station (Hauptbahnhof) and the city center, and only a five minute walk to the HAW Berliner Tor campus. Without comparison the Gustav house was the best student house because of its great location, its 500+ bed capacity, and it has the bar where Beerfest was hosted. The housing situation was incredible: there were private bedrooms, two full bathrooms, a fully equipped kitchen, a balcony, a living room, and being on the 10th floor we had an amazing view of the city,

all the way to the harbor (Hamburg Hafen). I am eager to settle into my new room this fall in Hagenbecks Tierpark, which lies farther north of the center but it neighbors the city zoo.

Not all international students were as fortunate as I was. Three very good friends of mine had to find housing on their own in Hamburg because they were from a neighboring country. They had to deal with a landlord who charged them for already faulty kitchen appliances that broke, who raised the monthly rent without any substantial notification so as to find new housing, and who created a lot of other headaches. It mystifies me that not all internationals are provided with student housing, regardless if they are native to Canada, South Korea, or Belgium. Student housing is not a luxury, it is a basic necessity especially for students coming from abroad who do not know anything about the city before they arrive. That does not mean I am not grateful because I am very grateful to have been placed in the Gustav student house, but all internationals in the future should be given precedence for student housing placement over domestic German students. At the very least, there should be a minimum of beds saved each semester that is around 10% larger than the average number of internationals beds required. Since the housing application deadline is three months prior to move-in, the extra beds can then be disbursed to domestic students. With thousands of German students in Hamburg, I highly doubt the beds will not be filled in three months' time.

Apart from my friends' housing woes, I thoroughly enjoyed everything at HAW and in Hamburg. Generally, Hamburgers (the people, not the food) are polite, courteous, and helpful. In the first few weeks, I practiced my German while asking for directions and they realized I spoke English. They replied in German, but upon realizing I did not understand by the blank stare on my face they then answered in English. One thing I love about the Germans is upon asking one if he or she speaks English, they first say "just a little" and then proceed to converse with nearly no

lingual hindrance. The German culture is one that I can relate to and appreciate starting with football (soccer). This is my favorite sport in the world to watch, and I cannot get enough of it.



Night out to watch Barcelona-Chelsea with friends

Rather than buying an “I ♥ Hamburg” souvenir tee shirt from every city I visit, I buy a football jersey of the local club. Later in life I hope to buy a house and decorate the basement walls with framed jerseys to show where in the world I have travelled. Another part of the German culture that I love is the food – Schnitzel, Sauerkraut, Bratwurst, Currywurst, and potato dishes. Most of these are traditionally Bavarian, but I love them nonetheless. And a good German meal is not complete without a tasty beer, and my preference is almost any Weissbier (white beer), or wheat beer. This is again traditionally Bavarian, but it has such a filling smooth taste that pilsners cannot fulfill.

If you are reading this, then you have amazingly finished my essay which probably means you are also very serious about some sort of study abroad experience. Whether you go for a month, a semester, a year, or more, you made a great decision. You will undoubtedly

experience something unlike anything else. Surrounded by diverse and interesting people in a foreign yet comfortable city, you will form lifelong friends and have stories that you will laugh at fifty years from now (although they may not have been as funny at the time). Whether you spend time partying in Dublin for St. Patrick's Day, Amsterdam for Queen's Day, or Munich for Oktoberfest, or if you take leisurely travel to Mediterranean beaches, do adventure sports in the scenic Alps, or immerse yourself in the timeless city centers of medieval Europe, you will always walk away wanting more.