Center for International Programs
Study Abroad Guidebook

BONN SPRING 2018
Bonn Spring 2018
BONN, GERMANY SHORT-TERM SPRING 2018 GUIDEBOOK

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION TO THE BONN CULTURAL GUIDEBOOK ............................................... 3
BEFORE YOU GO... PREPARATION .............................................................................. 4
  BONN, GERMANY ........................................................................................................ 4
  PROGRAM CALENDAR 2018 ....................................................................................... 5
  PASSPORTS .................................................................................................................. 5
  SECURITY MEASURES ............................................................................................... 5
  FLIGHT CONNECTIONS ............................................................................................. 5
  MONEY ......................................................................................................................... 6
  CLIMATE ...................................................................................................................... 6
  PACKING AND LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS .................................................................. 6
    PACK LIGHT! ............................................................................................................... 7
  ELECTRICITY ................................................................................................................ 7
    Recommended Packing List ....................................................................................... 7
  BILLING ........................................................................................................................ 8
  HOUSING BACK AT K ................................................................................................. 8
  FINANCIAL AID .......................................................................................................... 9
  HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES ............................................................................. 9
YOU’VE ARRIVED! ........................................................................................................ 9
  ARRIVAL IN BONN ..................................................................................................... 9
  LOCAL TRANSPORTATION ......................................................................................... 10
  MAIL ............................................................................................................................ 10
  TRAVEL/VACATIONS ............................................................................................... 10
  TIPS ON INDEPENDENT TRAVEL ......................................................................... 11
  SAFETY ....................................................................................................................... 11
    WATER AND OTHER BEVERAGES ...................................................................... 12
  EMERGENCIES .......................................................................................................... 12
THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM ......................................................................................... 13
  UNIVERSITY SETTING ............................................................................................. 13
  CLASSES AND CREDITS ......................................................................................... 14
  ACADEMIC CULTURE .............................................................................................. 14
  LIVING IN BONN ....................................................................................................... 15
Dorms .............................................................................................................. 15
Meals .............................................................................................................. 16
Laundry .......................................................................................................... 16
Leaving Your Dorm and Designated Vacation Periods ................................ 16
ADAPTING TO GERMAN CULTURE: ......................................................... 16
Helpful Hints for a Positive Cultural Experience ....................................... 16
CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT ........................................................................... 17
Doing Without ............................................................................................... 18
GERMANY: THE SECOND CULTURE .......................................................... 18
BECOME FAMILIAR WITH GERMANY AND THE U.S. BEFORE YOU GO .... 19
    Getting to Know Germany: Talk to Your Fellow Students! ................. 19
    Know What is Going on in the U.S. ......................................................... 19
    Speaking German .................................................................................... 20
GENDER RELATIONS IN GERMANY .......................................................... 20
    Sexual Health .......................................................................................... 20
YOUR RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES .................................................. 21
PREPARE FOR YOUR RETURN .................................................................... 21
READJUSTMENT ............................................................................................. 22
RETURNING HOME ....................................................................................... 23
    BIBLIOGRAPHY ...................................................................................... 23
    Books ....................................................................................................... 25
    LGBTQ RESOURCES ............................................................................. 26
ADVICE FROM PAST-PARTICIPANTS ......................................................... 26
    RECOMMENDED THINGS TO DO .......................................................... 26
    LIVING IN BONN: CULTURE AND CITY LIFE ...................................... 27
    RECOMMENDED PLACES TO VISIT .................................................... 28
    TRAVEL ADVICE ................................................................................... 28
    COURSES ............................................................................................... 29
    FOOD ...................................................................................................... 29
    GENERAL ADVICE FOR STUDY ABROAD .......................................... 29
INTRODUCTION TO THE BONN CULTURAL GUIDEBOOK

With your departure for Germany fast approaching, many of you have lately begun to wonder what it's really going to be like spending the next three months in Bonn. What will you experience living and studying in Bonn, and in traveling to other parts of the country? Will your German be good enough to allow you to do well in your classes, and to meet people outside of class? Have you completed everything necessary before you go? And just how much should you plan to pack in your suitcases? Hopefully, this guidebook can begin to answer these and other questions.

The information that follows is a collection of advice from returning students. We in the Center for International Programs have added practical information as well. All information was accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of printing. We recognize that there might be some necessary changes in the program made on site. When you return, we would greatly appreciate it if you could help us update this guidebook for the next year's participants.

The best piece of advice from returning students continues to be: "Expect the unexpected." Ultimately, no written materials or any other preparation will fully prepare you for what lies ahead. The best preparation you can do is to commit yourself to keeping an open mind, remaining flexible, and being patient with yourself and others as you're adjusting to your new environment.

We would like to thank the returning students who have spent hours talking about their experiences and helping with the editing process!

This document represents the most accurate information available at the time of publication. Statements contained herein are not contractual obligations, and verbal or other representations that are inconsistent with or not contained within the document are not binding. Kalamazoo College reserves the right to change, without specific notice, programs and the conditions under which they are offered. Please refer to the Kalamazoo College catalogue for complete details.
BEFORE YOU GO...PREPARATION

BONN, GERMANY

Germany is located in the heart of Europe, bordering 9 other countries, covering a total area of 137,782 square miles with 82.6 million inhabitants. Germany is a Federation that consists of 16 individual states that are united under a common constitution that was signed on May 23, 1949.

Music is the national passion, covering the classics to rock and pop, from opera to jazz. Annually, there are more than 100 major local or regional music festivals for visitors and German residents alike. This is not surprising, as many famous musicians, including Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven and Georg Friedrich Händel were born in Germany and are remembered in museums and festivals throughout the country.

Bonn, the former capital of West Germany until the Reunification in 1989, currently has about 290,000 inhabitants and is located along the West bank of the Rhine River, in the Nordrhein-Westfalen (North Rhine-Westphalia) state. This state covers 13,154 square miles with a total of 17.8 million inhabitants. This area is the industrial heartland of Germany, but also is covered with green fields and cool forests.

Bonn is best known for its musical and intellectual history. In 1770, it became the birthplace of Ludwig van Beethoven, and the house in which he was born still exists and has been turned into a museum where his musical instruments and personal mementos are exhibited. Visitors are attracted to Bonn, Germany from all over the world for the Beethoven Festival, held every two years in the Beethovenhalle, a modern concert hall renowned for its acoustics.

The University of Bonn, where you will be living and studying, is where the famous Karl Marx and Heinrich Heine studied long ago. There is plenty to do in the city of Bonn, including visiting one or more of the many museums and points of interest (Beethoven’s House; the Rhineland Museum, which houses the first skull of a Neanderthal man ever discovered; and the Alter Zoll, an ancient fortress whose ruins make a wonderful viewing point from which visitors can see across the Rhine to the Seven Mountains).

According to a former participant, “Bonn is a nice, little town. It's often described as "sleepy," and I'd agree: bars close early and things get quiet by 1 AM. But during the day the whole town is bustling with open markets and street vendors.”
PROGRAM CALENDAR 2018

Depart United States: April 2, 2018
Arrive in Bonn: Tuesday, April 3rd (arrive in the am)
Berlin Excursion: check Uni Bonn calendar
Program ends: July 27th, 2018
First day available for departure: July 28th, 2018

PASSPORTS

It is necessary to have a passport for your stay in Germany. You should carry a photocopy of your passport with you at all times (the first page with your photo and personal information). Carry your actual passport with you only when you need to change money or travel out of the city. We also suggest that you leave a copy of your passport in your dorm room and with your family in the U.S. in case your passport is lost or stolen.

U.S. citizens are legally allowed to enter Germany without a visa. Upon arrival in Bonn, you will be required to complete the student resident permit process. A staff member from the Dezernat Internationales will explain the procedure and be available to answer questions.

SECURITY MEASURES

The heightened measures require more time to properly screen travelers. You should contact your airline to find out how early you need to arrive at the airport. You should also double check on luggage and carry-on restrictions when you re-confirm your flight. Currently, carry-on bags must follow the “3-1-1” rule: contain only liquids/gels 3 ounces or less in 1 1-quart Ziploc bag. All electronic items, such as laptops and cell phones, may be subjected to additional screening. If you bring a laptop, be prepared to remove it from its travel case so that both can be X-rayed separately. For further information on security measures, see the Federal Aviation Administration website at www.faa.gov.

FLIGHT CONNECTIONS

Please take care not to miss connecting flights. It is your responsibility to be in the boarding area at the appropriate time. Should you miss a connection, please note that you must be re-routed by an airline representative at the airport. Travel Leaders and/or Kalamazoo College can do nothing to alter your airline tickets at that point. Once you have had your airline tickets altered, you should contact Frau Christina Timpernagel (see contact information in the CONTACT section), so that she knows of your delay and can give you new arrival instructions. If you are unable to contact Frau Timpernagel, contact the CIP or a member of the CIP staff (contact information can be found in the EMERGENCIES section), and we will try to assist you in informing the on-site personnel of your situation.
MONEY

How much spending money should you bring? You will want to budget some personal spending money for the same items you tend to buy yourself in Kalamazoo. Returning students report spending varying amounts of money during their three month stay, from $800 to more than $2,000. So, the best piece of advice is to know yourself and your spending habits. On average, students seem to spend between $1,200 and $1,500. As one returning student said, "Take half the stuff and twice the money" that you think you'll need.

In general, prices in Germany tend to be more expensive than in Kalamazoo. So come prepared with a good supply of necessary items if you don't want to spend the money there.

Most students report using their ATM card to retrieve cash, as the majority of money machines in Germany accept American ATM cards. Check with your bank about ATM fees and currency rates. Also, MasterCard credit cards (this includes ATM cards with a MasterCard symbol) are not widely accepted. In addition, several businesses may not accept credit cards as a form of payment. Should you choose to rely on a credit/ATM card as your main source of obtaining local currency, be sure to have a back-up plan ready in case an ATM machine "eats" your card! You will want to have all the money you plan to bring with you in either cash or ATM and credit cards. It is best not to put all your eggs in one basket, thus a combination of cash and ATM/credit cards might be best.

Once you arrive in Bonn, you will receive your meal stipend (approximately 280 Euros per month), which will be transferred to your local German bank account in Bonn (the international office will provide guidelines on how to do this). Please be sure to budget for those first weeks until the stipend.

At the time of writing, the exchange rate was 0.84 Euros to the dollar. You can check the most recent exchange rate on the web at www.oanda.com. It's a good idea to get some Euros here before you go (maybe $100 or so), just so you have something in the airport.

CLIMATE

You can expect a relatively mild, pleasant spring with some rainy and overcast days. Temperatures in the spring range from 38° to 55° F in April and 46° to 65° F in May.

PACKING AND LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS

You will need to check with the airline or your travel form from Travel Leaders (269-925-3460) to determine your luggage restrictions. Even if you're willing to pay overweight or excess baggage charges at the airport, we strongly encourage you to resist doing this and to pack as little as possible. Few things are as disheartening as dragging around excess or overloaded suitcases while traveling.
abroad, especially when you could have done without most of it. You may also want to save some room in your bags for things you plan to buy there.

PACK LIGHT!
The best rule of thumb when packing is to pack everything you think you’ll need, take out half, and then half again. If you can’t carry it all, you’re bringing too much!

NOTE: Never pack your passport, money, or valuables in your checked luggage! Keep those items in a money belt or pouch on your person. Keep your carry-on with you at all times.

You should have few problems fitting into the role of a German student, stylistically speaking. German students do tend to be slightly more formal, though. Casual wear is essentially the same as in the U.S. Jeans are everywhere, but they should not show signs of wear. Shorts are not at all common, so you probably will only need to bring one or two pairs. Apart from that, returning students report that you can pretty much wear what you would wear here and fit right in. The key is layering. Whatever shoes you bring, try to break them in before you go.

Many Germans don't keep the heat turned up very high (and turn it off completely at night), so you'll need to pack clothing suitable for being indoors as well, especially clothes that you can wear in layers (sweaters, and pullovers are especially useful). This will also serve you well when traveling as you can adjust to other climates by adding or removing the appropriate layers.

ELECTRICITY

German electricity is 220 V/50 Hz. Check your personal computers, iPods, and other electrical items to make sure they can handle 220 V (most of them can). You will need to bring an adapter plug with you (easy to buy at Meijer).

Recommended Packing List

- One or two “dressy casual” outfits, the rest may be more casual – keep in mind most Europeans do not wear shorts – and the weather will be cool when you first arrive;
- Raincoat (not a must, but a waterproof pull-over is a great idea!);
- Folding umbrella;
- Sturdy walking shoes;
- T-shirts (good for layering and to reduce the amount of laundry when you travel);
- Warm pajamas and slippers;
- Backpack (If you buy a backpack for traveling, buy one that has an attachable daypack. Don't buy one that is too wide – you might need to get through train doors quickly!);
- Toiletries (bring enough to get you started);
- Towel & washcloth (if you plan on traveling, as most hostels don’t provide them);
Plastic baggies (larger Ziploc or freezer bags are great for wet towels/dirty laundry);

Money belt or neck pouch;

Luggage locks;

Extra passport photos (you'll never know when you'll need these – you will receive these from the CIP);

VISA, MasterCard, or American Express credit cards and an ATM card;

Contact solutions/glasses. (It's a good idea to bring a copy of your prescription with you in case they are lost or stolen);

Journal;

Prescriptions (in original containers) and other medical supplies (see suggestions below);

Flashlight;

Bathing suit;

**GIFTS**

You may wish to bring some typical American gifts to share with friends that you meet while in Germany. Here are some suggestions of items to bring:

- T-shirts, sweatshirts, or other clothing items with Kalamazoo College logos
- Baseball caps
- U.S. style items (i.e.: things from Disneyworld, Warner Brothers, Mt. Rushmore, World Cup, NBA, NFL etc.)

**BILLING**

The Center for International Programs does not handle the billing for the program. As on campus, the Business Office issues the bills. You will receive your bills for the program costs at your home address just prior to the beginning of each quarter that you are abroad just as when you are in the United States. The cost of your mandatory health insurance will be billed directly to your account.

**HOUSING BACK AT K**

You will need to submit a housing contract and proxy form to housing@kzoo.edu prior to your departure. The designated proxy will choose a space on your behalf during the Fall Housing Selection Process. This process occurs during late Spring Quarter.

If you are interested in a living-learning house when you return, you must coordinate with the group you are hoping to live with so they may account for you during the LLHU Selection Process. This process occurs in Spring Quarter prior to the general Fall housing process. Should the proposal not be
accepted and you are not offered the opportunity to live in a living-learning house, you will need to make alternate arrangements.

For specific questions regarding housing, please contact Stephen Sanney, Director of Residential Life, at Stephen.sanney@kzoo.edu or 269-337-7520.

**FINANCIAL AID**

Those of you receiving financial aid may have to take care of some items while you are in Germany. If you have any questions, you may email the Financial Aid office at finaaid@kzoo.edu.

**HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES**

You need to be up-to-date with your standard immunizations such as measles and tetanus. Please refer to the *Study Abroad Handbook* for the information on required and recommended immunizations. If you have any questions the college Health Center (337-7200) or your personal physician. Of course, be sure to make a doctor’s appointment if you are concerned about any other particular problems (i.e. make a dentist appointment for that sore tooth, etc.).

Bonn program participants are required by the University of Bonn to purchase German medical insurance. The cost will be approximately $150. You will be responsible for paying this fee, which will be directly charged to your Kalamazoo account.

You will find that what are considered prescription drugs in the U.S. are often sold over the counter in Germany. So if you are feeling sick, normally you can explain your ailments to the pharmacist and he or she will provide you with medication. Make sure you know the generic names of the medications you request.

Common medical complaints include sore throats and stomach aches. Bring aspirin or Tylenol, yeast infection creams, Midol, cold medicine, laxatives, Pepto-Bismol, vitamins, and other medications you generally use. These items will be more expensive in Germany. The University of Bonn staff will provide you with names of doctors in town during orientation following your arrival.

**YOU’VE ARRIVED!**

**ARRIVAL IN BONN**

When you land in Europe, you will be required to pass through customs. Be prepared to present your passport and your admission letter from the University of Bonn.

Directions to the Dezernat Internationales from the Bonn Hauptbahnhof:
You can walk to the International Office from the Bonn train station. The walk takes about 10 to 15 minutes. When you leave the station at the main entrance, turn right and walk parallel to the train tracks until you reach the end of the bus terminal. Behind the bus terminal and to your right you will find a pedestrian underpass that leads directly into Poppelsdorfer Allee. Walk straight along Poppelsdorfer Allee until you reach Argelanderstraße - a narrow street - on your left. The house on the corner is the International Office (Poppelsdorfer Allee 53).

**LOCAL TRANSPORTATION**

Most of Bonn, including the university, is easily navigable on foot. Those of you living in the city center probably won't need to take buses or taxis very often, but those of you living further out will be using public transportation frequently. After your first month in Bonn and once classes begin, you should receive a student ID card (Studieticket) which will allow you to ride all buses and local trains for free. There are also Mehrfahrtkarten. These cards give you several punches at a cheaper rate than buying each ride separately. There are also taxis, but those tend to be quite expensive. Past-participants have rated the public transportation very highly and report using a combination of street cars, the subway and their own two legs.

Another option is to rent or buy a bike while you're there. Bonn has many cyclists, and you will probably be able to sell a bike at the conclusion of your program. Check into special deals on used bikes once you're over there. Be sure that your light works, or you may be stopped by the authorities. Always use a bike lock.

**MAIL**

You can expect letters to and from the States to take about a week to arrive. Packages can take longer. Your mailing address is:

Your name  
c/o Junior Year Abroad Program  
Dezernat Internationales  
Universität Bonn  
Poppelsdorfer Allee 53  
53113 Bonn  
GERMANY  
Telephone: 011 49 228 733056 (at the University)  
Fax: 011 49 228 735891

Please remember when calling that Germany is 6 hours ahead of Michigan. You may choose to use the address of your dorm instead, which you'll know after your arrival.

**TRAVEL/VACATIONS**
When you travel in or out of the country please inform Fr. Timpernagel of your plans, indicating where you are going and approximately when you will return. If you are planning on being gone for more than 48 hours, you must also notify Frau Timpernagel. Leave addresses where you can be contacted at approximately 48 hour intervals. Be sure to check in at the addresses you’ve given, with the director, or with someone at home during your travels. If an emergency should happen at home or with you, this information will make communication possible.

**TIPS ON INDEPENDENT TRAVEL**

- Avoid traveling alone. This will ensure that you don’t have to deal with illness, theft, or emergencies by yourself. Definitely don’t travel alone on trains at night, especially if you plan on sleeping. If you’re traveling with other people, it’s a good idea for someone to be awake when others are sleeping in order to be able to keep an eye on everyone's things.

- Take some kind of pouch for documents, money, and tickets. The best rule is never to remove it. Sleep with it and take it in the shower if you have any doubts (especially for those of you planning to stay in International Youth Hostels). Be sure to use luggage locks.

- When traveling, keep documents with you, not in luggage on a train rack or in a checked bag.

- Make sure you know where you're going. When you arrive at the train station or airport, know your plan for getting to the hostel or hotel.

- Returning students strongly suggest the Eurail Flexipass. If you haven't made arrangements to purchase one before you leave, you can arrange for someone in the U.S. to purchase one and send it to you while you're there. It's cheaper to have someone send it, rather than buy other tickets there. Be sure to certify or validate before you start using it.

- Look into a "Bahn-card": buying one for $50 or so will enable you to get a 25% discount on all train fares for travel in Germany.

- Students also report using the “Fernbusse” (similar to Greyhound or Megabus) and used by Germans to travel because it can be less expensive than the train.

- Plan an itinerary and email a copy to the staff in Bonn.

- Text home at regular intervals, especially if there is an itinerary change.

- Talk to experienced personnel concerning where you will enter boarding areas, which plane, train, or bus is yours, etc.

- Be wary of complete strangers who approach you and offer you rides. As is expected here in the U.S., never accept a ride from a stranger when you are alone.

- Always carry your passport with you while traveling.

- If you feel uneasy or uncomfortable in a situation – trust your instincts – and exit the situation as soon as possible. It is better to be safe and risk offending someone.
• Make sure you are staying at a hostel or hotel that is safe – make sure the door to your room locks. If the deal seems too good to be true, find another place, your personal safety is not worth cheap accommodation. We strongly discourage students from using sites like “Craigslist” to find overnight accommodation. This is extremely risky!

• Always check and see what kind of discounts you can get with your International Student ID Card: usually there are discounts for museums, bus rides, and who knows what else!

SAFETY

Just as you would expect in a different city here in the U.S., you will find it necessary to become well acquainted with your new surroundings in Bonn in order to feel safe. You will need to find out which means of transportation are reliable and safe, and what time of day is safe to be walking around. Use of normal common sense and caution will serve you and your money well in this regard. For example, women should get used to holding on to their purses while they walk, and men should not carry their wallets in their back pockets.

Returning students report feeling pretty safe in Bonn, but you will still need to be aware at all times. Be smart, use your common sense, and don't take any unnecessary risks. When you are walking around the city, and in other areas, be sure to walk assertively and as if you know where you're headed. A strong and confident posture will let people know that you're not a tourist. Please make sure that you have read the “Responding to Physical or Sexual Assault While on Study Abroad” section in your Study Abroad Handbook at https://reason.kzoo.edu/cip/student_resources/study_abroad/abroad_health_safety/#Emergency to be prepared in case you or a friend are in such a situation. It is always best to be prepared.

If you are drunk or otherwise impaired, you are much more vulnerable to potential safety hazards than when you're sober. Drinking (even 1 or 2 alcoholic drinks) impairs cognitive function and your ability to judge your surroundings. Drinking may also negatively affect your ability to make appropriate, safe decisions in response to these surroundings. As most of you will be able to legally drink alcohol for the first time, we encourage those of you who choose to drink to exercise this privilege responsibly.

WATER AND OTHER BEVERAGES

Tap water in Germany is safe to drink and many Germans fill their Nalgene bottles water just as students do here. The milk is UHT (ultra high temperature), meaning it has been heated to a high temperature and no longer needs refrigeration. This may upset a few stomachs, so try to be careful about how much you drink at first. In general, it might take a little time for your stomach to adapt. The other kind of milk, frische Vollmilch, is similar to what we drink in the U.S., meaning that it has not been heated and requires refrigeration.

EMERGENCIES

In case of an emergency, you should first contact Frau Timpernagel. She will notify the appropriate people on site. However, when you first arrive, you should definitely find out the local numbers of the police and fire departments and the equivalent of "911" in Germany. For example, "112" is the number for the fire department. Although emergencies rarely happen that would require you to call one of
these numbers, they can and do happen, and you'll feel better if you are prepared. Ask program staff members for this information when you arrive.

In case there is an emergency that requires you to get in touch with us in the Center for International Programs, call one of the following numbers:

**Center for International Programs**
Voice: (269) 337-7133
E-mail: cip@kzoo.edu
Web: http://reason.kzoo.edu/cip/

Margaret Wiedenhoeft, Bonn Program Manager
Cell: (269) 267-5800
E-mail: mwieden@kzoo.edu

**Local Emergency Numbers**
Police 110
Fire Department 112
Ambulance 112

Telephone counseling for psycho-social emergencies: 0800 111 0 444
Emergency and counseling in case of sexual abuse/assault: 0800 120 1000
Psychological telephone counseling: (0800) 1 11 01 11
Gay and Lesbian telephone counseling: (0228) 737041

---

**THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

**KALAMAZOO COLLEGE CONTACT – INTERNATIONAL OFFICE**

Frau Timpernagel is the Assistant Director of the Dezernat Internationales. Once you are in Bonn, she and the staff of the DI will act as your academic adviser and oversee all other aspects of the program. Your teachers will also help you, and they can be approached with any questions. The DI organizes weekly events, such as the “Kaffee stunde” and Kalamazoo students are encouraged to use these times to meet with local staff to discuss any particular concerns or questions.

**UNIVERSITY SETTING**

The Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universitaet (The University of Bonn) has a long history dating back to the early 1800s. It is rich in tradition and enjoys a widespread international reputation through research and training. The University buildings are scattered throughout the city. The program courses are taught in university classrooms usually located in just one building on Adenauer Allee 10. 37,000 students attend the University of Bonn and 4,500 of them are international students. Most of your classes will have students who are learning German, just like yourself.
Students are also welcome and encouraged to participate in the many musical groups and clubs associated with the university.

**CLASSES AND CREDITS**

For the short-term program, students will arrive at the University of Bonn just before the “Summer Semester Program” for exchange students has begun. Students will enroll in a German language (2) and one social science courses offered through the Auslandsamt. Kalamazoo students are eligible to receive 3 K units for the spring short-term program in Bonn: two units in German language and one unit in Social Science: German Culture and German History. Students may not underload or overload. In order to be counted as one K unit of credit, a course must have 40-45 total contact hours for a unit of credit; both courses must be from the same discipline, e.g., history with history or art with art.

Grades from all study abroad courses will appear on the Kalamazoo transcript but are not included in the Kalamazoo grade point average. The transcript will list the title of the course, the appropriate discipline, and a translation of the local grade in the Kalamazoo “A, B, C” grading system. Students must earn the equivalent of a “C” in the local grading system to receive credit for course work completed abroad. All course work must be completed and turned in before the end of the academic program or no credit will be given. If you would like to arrange for a tutor (and pay a fee) to help you with your coursework, contact Frau Timpernagel. To receive the credit for which you are eligible, you must attend and pass all classes. Regular class attendance is required. Classes will meet Monday through Friday.

Grades must be appealed in writing within five weeks of their submission by the Center for International Programs to the Registrar's Office. When the grades are finished, the Registrar will post them by the Registrar's Office and at the mail hut. It is your responsibility to obtain a copy of your grade report from the Registrar's Office, regardless of whether or not you are on campus.

**ACADEMIC CULTURE**

In general, German students are more independent and expect less structure and support while at University. In fact, you may perceive German professors as being less accessible, while at the same time having high expectations for your academic performance at the end of the term. While you will be in class for fewer hours per week than at Kalamazoo (because of the semester system at Bonn), you need to prepare and participate to the fullest while you are in class. There is a great deal of independence and maturity expected of all students at a German university. You will not necessarily receive a detailed syllabus with a reading list; rather, the professor may mention several authors during the course of a lecture. It is assumed that you will take the initiative to read these authors and understand how they relate to the course. If you are unsure about course content, which books you should be reading, or your comprehension of the lecture, you may seek out the course tutor.

As Kalamazoo students, you are adjusted to a rigorous and busy academic schedule where your time is determined by coursework explicitly detailed and assignments with varying due dates throughout the quarter. It is not uncommon to “cram” at the last minute all the information for that mid-term or final grade or to stay up all night to write a paper. However, if you take this approach in Bonn you will most likely fail. The most important skill you can develop during this time is time management. It will be
very important that you develop a schedule that includes course preparation and study (1-2 hours per day per class) throughout the entire semester instead of just waiting until the last minute. While your schedule in Bonn will seem very relaxed, do not mistake this feeling for a vacation and neglect your German language study.

LIVING IN BONN

Dorms
Please familiarize yourself with the "Housing Definitions and Regulations" as stated in the Study Abroad Handbook.

The dorms are spread out throughout the city so it is very likely that there will be a few K students or other Americans near you, however, you will mostly be living around other international students. The proximity of other German students will be an added incentive and opportunity for you to practice and improve your German. Some dorms are close to the city center and public transportation, while others are located on the outskirts of the city. Dorm rooms are singles, and while some may have private baths and kitchens, most rooms will require you to share a communal bathroom and kitchen (where cleanliness cannot be guaranteed and depends on the cooperative efforts of the residents, i.e., you!). You do not need to bring or buy your own linens. The best plan is to check with the former participants for specifics on what to bring or buy.

Most European universities do not have a “housing” office like we have here at Kalamazoo College. The Studentenwerk, an independent housing association affiliated (but not a part of) the University of Bonn, assigns all University of Bonn students to housing placements. Neither the CIP nor the Dezernat Internationales may influence or alter the housing assignments given by the Studentenwerk. These housing locations range from the city center to the suburbs surrounding the outside of Bonn. Kalamazoo students will most likely be placed in different housing locations. Each building has a “Hausmeister” who may do minor repairs and, depending on the arrangements at the location, may be able to let students in if they lose their keys. Students should introduce themselves to the Hausmeister and learn how, who, and when to contact in the event of a “housing” emergency. Additionally, the University of Bonn may have “tutors” who live in the housing block. These tutors will be able to answer questions about living arrangements.

When checking out of housing at the end of the program, students should make sure they understand the expectations of the local Hausmeister. The Hausmeister must “sign off” on a form that you will turn in to the international office. More often than not, these expectations will be higher than what one may expect here at Kalamazoo College. If you do not turn this form in prior to your departure, there will be a significant delay in receiving your transcript from Bonn. It is the student’s responsibility to be informed about this process. We recommend that you arrange a departure time that will ensure proper inspection and “close-out” at the end of the program. You do not have to wait until the very last day of departure, but you should do it prior to 24 hours before departure.
Meals
The student dormitories have a community kitchen, which you will share with other students. You will be given a stipend from the University for your meals. You should expect to purchase a few pots and/or pans as well as eating utensils, although it is likely that some will already be there to use. Depending on the arrangement, other students sharing your kitchen may be willing to share.

Laundry
There are washers and dryers available in some dorms. You will need to budget for this expense. You will need to use your MENSA card (a chargeable card) to pay for each washing.

Leaving Your Dorm and Designated Vacation Periods
You'll be able to stay in your dorms only when classes are in session (not counting weekends or vacation periods during the academic semester).

ADAPTING TO GERMAN CULTURE:

Helpful Hints for a Positive Cultural Experience
While common sense will get you through a lot of potentially awkward situations in an unfamiliar culture, you should be aware of a few cultural differences that exist between Germany and the U.S. You should bear in mind that Germans tend to be more socially formal compared to most Americans, but if you're willing to adapt to your new culture by observing some of the German norms you'll run into fewer problems at home, in the classroom, and elsewhere.

- When visiting friends' homes, respect people's privacy: the Germans often regard certain areas of the house as off-limits to visitors.
- Avoid wearing a hat in class.
- Don't take off your shoes in public.
- Be sure to cover your mouth in public and in class when you yawn and/or cough!
- Don't put your feet on furniture, whether in someone's home, in class, or elsewhere.
- When going out in public with large groups of Americans, be especially aware of your actions and behavior. Americans have the reputation of being loud and obnoxious.
- Avoid smiling at people on the street, since it may be interpreted as a "come-on" rather than as a sign of general friendliness.
- Don't be offended if a German doesn't smile at you. Relatively few people in the world smile at strangers as much as US Americans do.
Pay close attention to non-verbal behavior. Communication isn't always direct and verbally expressed.

In greetings, men shake hands with other men. Women might give each other a hug.

There is of course no guarantee that if you do fail to observe some or all of these norms, you'll be openly criticized for it. However, many German people will regard a failure to acknowledge these sorts of norms as proof that you aren't particularly well-mannered. As their culture is one which places great value on exhibiting proper degrees of respect and self-control in socializing, they won't be as inclined to want to meet or to spend time with you if you seem unwilling or unable to observe what they regard to be normal standards of conduct.

**CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

Over the period of your stay in Germany you will probably learn the most from daily living in a different culture. In the day-to-day experiences -- the morning trip to the university, a trip to the market, a meal with German friends -- lie the real challenges, frustrations, and joys of living in a new cultural environment. It is an immensely rich and rewarding experience, and one that you can anticipate with pleasure.

However, everyone has bad days once in a while, and some people have them more than others. It is normal to feel like you just want to go home -- everyone has felt that way at some point in his or her travels. Students who have been abroad in the past offer the following advice:

- First of all, be prepared to have unhappy days and know that they will pass.
- Remember that the Germans have bad days, too. If someone is having a bad day, don't take it personally and automatically think they're unhappy with you.
- Accept that you're going to make mistakes.
- Keep yourself open to making friends with different kinds of people, including the people in the K group.
- Talk to others in your group, perhaps with someone who's having a good day but who can relate to your feelings.
- Germans are unlikely to approach you first; they'll be polite and respectful, by and large, but not as outgoing as U.S. students. Don’t be afraid to approach them and be a little outgoing.
- Try doing something that will involve you in the present; simply doing something can work wonders. For example, if you have nothing to do one Saturday and are feeling homesick or miserable, give yourself a task that will help you to get to know the host culture better -- like going
to a local church, searching for a specific item in the market, going to a café in a different part of town, etc. Immerse yourself and keep busy.

- Sometimes, though, you might find that you need to be away from people and/or the local culture for a while, so you might choose to hole up with a book, listen to music, or write letters.

- Keep a journal -- even if you never have kept one before, it's a great way to release tension and let things spill out, and it's one of the best mementos you'll have when you return to the U.S.

- Be patient with yourself. There will be times when you feel you are the only one who is miserable and having a bad day -- you're not!

- Lastly, just tell yourself that you can do it. You can survive in a different culture.

- You'll learn that everyone has her or his own way of coping in a different culture, and what might help some people some of the time won't help everyone all of the time. But this learning process, coming to really know yourself in a way you haven't before, is part of the adventure.

**Doing Without**

In addition to adjusting to the conditions mentioned above, there are things you will have to give up to live in Germany -- and this may be hard at first. Eventually, though, you may realize that you don't necessarily "need" what you thought you did. Not everyone misses the same things and different people react differently to the sacrifices they must make. For some people, not having their own car may prove frustrating since possibilities for travel will be limited. For others it might be the unavailability of certain foods, or not being able to maintain a vegetarian diet. For some people it's hard to find clothes or shoes that fit or suit their taste.

You will also have to adapt to a new city and a new community. This means using a map to learn where things are and making use of public transportation. In a new community where you don't know anyone, your usual support systems will not be available. It's important to consider beforehand how you will cope in such circumstances. Your routine will be different. You may find structure where you don't want it and none where you do. This is a normal part of cross-cultural learning and adaptation.

**GERMANY: THE SECOND CULTURE**

In addition to adapting to Germany as a country, you will be learning to adjust to a second culture. Learning to live in a new culture requires a great deal more than a list of do's and don'ts, or a brief description of the cultural traits of a society. For one thing, any culture is much too complex to narrow down to a definitive description. Descriptions can describe general characteristics, but they will not explain each specific encounter. Secondly, and more importantly, adaptation has as much to do with understanding oneself and one's own culture as it does with understanding a different culture.

As individuals, we are cultural beings with ways of behaving and perceiving which we do not always identify as springing from our culture. It is when we attempt to understand or become a part of another culture that we come to see that many of our values, beliefs and behaviors stem from our own cultural background. Interaction in a new cultural environment can cause conflict both within oneself and between oneself and the new culture. Some of this conflict is inevitable. However, by understanding
yourself as a product of your own culture and of your own personal background, you will have a much easier time observing your interactions and learning to adapt to a new set of behavioral ground rules.

The task of culture learning requires a high tolerance for ambiguity and a patient willingness to work through culture shock in a constructive manner. Students must be willing to learn from situations where they may have mis-communicated or failed at communication. They will be expected to examine how their own cultural expectations may have interfered with interpretation, to use their observation skills to pick up on other clues as to what may be happening, and to reserve judgment while remaining tolerant of ambiguity until they reach understanding.

Learning a second culture not only affords students an understanding of the new culture derived from first-hand experience, it, at the same time, gives them an awareness of their own culture that they never have had before. With familiar surroundings and friends taken away, students are led to examine not only their culture, but themselves as well. One student participating in an intensive study abroad program wrote, “I'm learning to enjoy being with myself, independent and alone from lifelong cultural props. It's great!”

Such awareness of one's own culture and self ultimately allows students to live more responsibly as members of the global community.

---

**BECOME FAMILIAR WITH GERMANY AND THE U.S. BEFORE YOU GO**

**Getting to Know Germany: Talk to Your Fellow Students!**

One of the best ways to start preparing for your experience is to do some background reading and research on Germany. Familiarize yourself with the current political situation and educational systems, historical background, current events, customs, and cultural norms. Arrange to talk with one of the students who have been there in the past. You’ll have had the opportunity to do this during your orientation, but oftentimes individual conversations are more helpful. Returning students and the current German students on campus will be your best sources of information. They know what it’s like to be in your shoes as you try to imagine what in the world the next six months will hold. To meet a past-participant, contact the CIP (cip@kzoo.edu) or a CIP Peer Adviser (cippa@kzoo.edu).

**Know What is Going on in the U.S.**

Some people have had the embarrassing experience of learning that people abroad seem to know more about U.S. history and politics than they themselves do. You can expect to be asked your opinion about current events and U.S. politics and to hear the opinions of others—not all of which will be complimentary of the U.S. Should such a situation arise, the best advice is to remain respectful, even when disagreeing, and to resist the temptation to criticize Germany, as you are a guest. Start keeping abreast of current events and continue to do so while you’re in Germany.
By the same token, don't feel you have to be an expert on everything about the U.S. You don't have to assume the role of the "defender" of U.S. culture. If there are things you don't know or don't feel like explaining, just say so.

Speaking German

Probably all of you are feeling German-language anxiety -- relax! Everyone who has been abroad where another language is spoken has lived through that experience. There are, however, some great opportunities to practice your German before you go. Some ideas for practicing German include watching German movies, listening to German music, and practicing the language with German-speaking students.

However, it you don't end up doing as much as you would have liked, don't panic. Regardless of how comfortable you feel about your German, the thing everyone has to get through is the fear of making mistakes. Remember, especially at first that the goal is to get your point across. Proficiency will come with time and practice. You are in a position to really make significant gains in your language skills. Try to avoid speaking English with the other students except at designated times when you need to "unwind." Speak German with the staff members at all times. You must be your own immersion monitor – you must leave your room at least once per day and interact with native German speakers, even it’s just going to the store. Seek out an interest group, sports team or music/drama group that will facilitate your meeting native Germans.

There are notable differences in accents in different regions of German. You'll hear a different accent and even dialect in each town you visit. Adjust to the dialect by forcing yourself to get out and about as early and as often as possible. By the time classes begin your major adjustment period will be over, and life will be MUCH easier.

GENDER RELATIONS IN GERMANY

If you are interested in women’s issues, you may contact the local Frauenzentrum (women’s center). They usually have a café and discussion groups as well as workshops. The level of sexual harassment in Germany is considered to be low and single women in restaurants, bars, and cafes are nothing unusual. People will come and sit at your table if there is limited space, but that doesn’t mean that you are expected to make conversation with them.

Dating patterns and social norms for couples differ in Germany. To go out as a couple is a much more serious step in a relationship than it is here in the U.S. If you do get involved in a relationship, it's a very good idea to talk to a German friend and ask what kinds of norms and behavior you should follow. It can be very confusing, especially with the language barrier.

Sexual Health

Issues of sexuality can be complex in your own cultural environment, and much more so in one with which you are less familiar. While living in a culture that is not your own, it is more challenging to evaluate situations and to assess risks for emotional distress, disease, and assault as a result of intentional or non-intentional sexual contact. Sexually transmitted diseases are prevalent everywhere in the world, and the HIV virus can lead to death. We strongly recommend that students educate
themselves on safe sex practices, pack condoms from the U.S. when they are traveling abroad, and be cautious about their sexual activity while abroad. For further information regarding HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, please consult with Kalamazoo College’s Health Center or your physician.

Learning about your host country’s culture with regard to acceptable and safe sexual behavior is one of your many responsibilities as you prepare for and experience study abroad. It is also very important that participants understand the local norms and cultural patterns of relationships between genders. What are the local dating patterns? Is it the custom for females to have male friends (or vice versa) or is that considered unusual? If you accept a drink or some other “gift”, are you tacitly consenting to sexual activity? If you invite a member of the opposite gender into your living space, is it culturally and/or legally acceptable for him/her to expect intimate contact? Is the legal definition of “consent” different from the definition in the U.S.?

At a minimum, you must be aware that some behaviors that may be culturally and legally acceptable, and seemingly safe, at home may not be in your host country – and vice versa. Certain behaviors will also communicate different messages in your host culture than they do in the U.S. Resident Directors and other program staff members can give you guidelines to the local cultural norms for relationships between genders and laws regarding this issue.

YOUR RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES

PREPARE FOR YOUR RETURN

As the end of your program approaches, you will likely experience a wide range of emotions and reactions. Just as you needed to prepare for your stay in Bonn before leaving the United States, you will also need to take care of many important details as your program comes to an end. As you are preparing to leave, please remember the following:

1. Do not take back items made of animal hides or any agricultural products (including sausage); you will not be able to pass through U.S. customs.
2. Don’t forget to set aside some U.S. cash for the trip home.
3. Remember: when completing customs forms, a trip to the country does not constitute time spent on a farm. Answering otherwise on the customs form when re-entering the U.S. will make for a long chat with immigration officials concerned about parasites and such!

Also, the Center for International Programs’ Peer Advisers – seniors who have returned from studying abroad that organize campus events and help advise students on their study abroad experience – put together a list of recommended things to do several weeks BEFORE you leave for the U.S., and before
you do any post-program travel. These are great things to do to prepare yourself for the end of the program and for the reverse culture shock you may experience when you return to the United States. The Peer Advisers, who have experienced the reintegration process, wish that they, themselves, had done the following:

- Take photos of your campus, living space, neighborhood, and surrounding areas so you can remember them and share them with your family and friends back home.
- Definitely set time aside for thorough ‘last’ goodbyes with friends and host families.
- Enjoy some of your favorite foods that you may not be able to get in the United States.
- Re-visit a place you went to when you first arrived and reflect on how that place feels differently now.
- Start thinking of ways to be upfront with your family and friends back home about how you are feeling – write emails or make phone calls to share what you will miss from study abroad and ask them to be patient with you when you have ups and downs as you reintegrate.

READJUSTMENT

Going home is usually a very exciting prospect. Most students look forward to seeing family and friends they have missed, eating food they haven’t had for so long and enjoying activities that may not have been possible during study abroad.

Remember that returning home is also a transition very similar to your arrival in Germany. Just like your arrival, you can expect to feel frustration, anxiety and confusion at home, on your campus and with your friends. Craig Storti puts it this way in The Art of Crossing Cultures:

“The problem is this word home. It suggests a place and a life all set up and waiting for us; all we have to do is “move-in.” But home isn’t a place we merely inhabit; it’s a lifestyle we construct (wherever we go), a pattern of routines, habits and behaviors associated with certain people, places and objects—all confined to a limited area or neighborhood. We can certainly construct a home back in our own culture—just as we did abroad—but there won’t be one waiting for us when we arrive... In other words, no one goes home; rather we return to our native country and in due course we create a home.”

At the foundation of this transition is the task of determining what to do with the changes that have occurred while you were away and the changes that have taken place within you as a result of your time in Germany. Life for your family, friends and teachers probably will not be the same as when you departed, and you were not there to gradually adjust to those changes with them. And they have not been able to get used to the things that are different about you.

Hardly anyone avoids the discomfort of this period of growth, but the good news is you will eventually find a way to include your new ideas, skills and outlook in your life back in the U.S. Here are a few questions to consider before your return. Your answers may help you recognize the changes that have occurred during your sojourn.
What have I learned about Germany’s culture that I did not know previously? In what ways has this changed my view of Germany?

By being abroad and able to compare my culture with a different culture, what have I learned about the history, values and traditions that make up my home culture?

While I was away, what significant events have occurred in my country, my family, in my hometown, among my friends and on campus?

How have my personal values changed because of my study abroad experience?

In what ways have my stereotypes or biases changed?

What new skills have I developed (e.g. adaptation skills, second language proficiency, sensitivity, etc.) and how might I maintain them?

How can I express these changes to my friends, family and teachers?

What might I do to continue to deepen my understanding of Germany?

RETURNING HOME

Contrary to popular belief, returning from an extended period abroad can be equally or even more stressful and difficult than beginning your study abroad experience. You will find that you have changed in several ways during your experience. Coming home can be difficult, as life has continued for family and friends while you have been gone. Just as when you were struggling with adaptation to German culture, it is wise to give yourself some time to adjust when you return.

All of the members of the Center for International Programs staff have also experienced this challenge, and we encourage you to feel free to talk with us, or someone in the Counseling Center if you are having problems adjusting, or if you just need to talk. In addition, we provide many opportunities for students to continue their study abroad experience through activities and functions on our campus. We welcome your participation.

As when you were abroad, be patient with yourself! Continuing to write in your journal about your feelings and experiences will help you to weather this difficult time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

You will want to take a guidebook with you—perhaps one from the “Let’s Go” series, “Lonely Planet” series or a Rough Guide.
http://allabroad.us/resources.php - Contains resources to help find funding opportunities, information about making study abroad support career development, reasons to study abroad, information to support diversity in study abroad, and information about discrimination abroad.

http://www.diversityabroad.com/ - “…connects talented diverse and underrepresented students and graduates to international education and career opportunities that prepares them for leadership in an interconnected world.”

http://www.purdue.edu/cie/learning/global/toolkit/ - includes 8 modules designed to help students learn about cultural worldview frameworks, intercultural openness, intercultural empathy, and cultural self-awareness.

https://travellatina.org and @TravelLatina on Instagram


https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/lgbt.html - U.S. Government’s resource guide for travelers who identify as LGBTQ


https://baniamor.com/ - Bani Amor
Blogs, interviews, and posts that revolve around identity, place and the colonial nature of travel culture; Has a series of interviews with travelers of color and an article listing travelers of color to follow

http://matadornetwork.com/bnt/7-things-latino-travelers-understand/ - Luis Guillermo
7 Things Only Latina Travelers Understand

http://www.browngirlsfly.com/ - “A Melanin-Infused Perspective on Travel”


http://www.expatica.com/nl/moving-to/Moving-home-Reverse-culture-shock_104957.html - Article on Reverse Culture Shock

http://www.ediplomat.com,np/cultural_etiquette/cultural_etiquette.htm - Cultural etiquette by country
Things I Wish I Knew Studying Abroad as an African American

Books


Gass, Susan. “*Women Studying Abroad*” in *Transitions Abroad*,


Sanders, Christa E. “*Voicing Concern about Discrimination Abroad: The History and Experience of Voices of Change in Working with US Students in Spain*” in SAFETI On-line Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 2, Spring-Summer 2000.
http://globaled.us/safeti/v1n22000ed_voicing_concern_about_discrimination_abroad.asp

Various. *Diversity Issues in Study Abroad*, https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/special-programs/international-study/student-resources/while-abroad/diversity-while-abroad

Collection of quotes from study abroad participants from Brown University who are from historically disenfranchised communities.

LGBTQ RESOURCES

http://overseas.iu.edu/living/glbt.shtml - NAFSA’s Rainbow Special Interest Group’s website. Includes numerous web links and a bibliography.


https://www.outrightinternational.org/ - The Outright Action International is an association of individuals and organizations dedicated to building a free and peaceful world, respect for individual rights and liberties, and an open and competitive economic system based on voluntary exchange and free trade. They currently have members and representatives in over 100 countries.

http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/forms/glbt.html - Covers some of the issues a LGBTQ student may wish to research before departure.

http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa - Includes both general travel information and a special discussion section (Thorn Tree Forum) for LGBTQ travelers.

ADVICE FROM PAST-PARTICIPANTS

RECOMMENDED THINGS TO DO

“Go to the Markt at the Marktplatz. There are fresh flowers, food, and some craft items”

“The Promenade along the Rhine River is a great place to walk, run, or bike.”

“Go to Museummeile: A group of several museums including Haus der Geschichte and Kunstmuseum Bonn.”

“Check out the castles with a boat tour (free with Eurail pass), or you can go by bike (there are nice paths that hug the river between Koblenz and Bingen, where you’ll see at least 15 castles).

“There are tons of concerts in Bonn and neighboring cities (Dusseldorf, Köln, etc)”

“At the beginning of the program, in the first month, the international office took a lot of trips in chartered coaches. I recommend going on them, because it’s a great way to get a free trip around the region, which is gorgeous in the autumn. My favorite was the wine-tasting trip and trips to the old cities and castles. There was another trip that was like a German Greenfield Village. They tended to do something for everyone.”
“I highly recommend eating at one of the smaller brauhauses in Köln—it provides a very authentic German dining experience and it is a lot of fun. I had a great conversation with an elderly man who was there by himself once.”

LIVING IN BONN: CULTURE AND CITY LIFE

“Bonn is different from the rest of the country in that it used to be the capital of West Germany, so it has retained a bit of international flair. The majority of the buildings were destroyed during the war, so they rebuilt in the original style, even though they’re probably 60 years old. It has a pretty small downtown area for a once-major city, although I managed to get lost several times at the beginning.

“Few stores are open on Sundays and holidays except the Bahnhof and some restaurants. Instead, everyone goes window shopping, visits another family, or goes for walks.”

“The best thing about the city is its location to the rest of Europe: it is a 3 hour train-ride to Paris from Köln (which is a 20 minute Regio train ride away), there is an international airport in Köln, a 5-hour high-speed train ride to Amsterdam, and you can take a train to almost anywhere from Bonn or Köln.”

“Public transportation is clean, efficient, and fun”

“The dorms were scattered all around the city. For example, I lived on Ferdinandstrasse, which was in a little village called Ippendorf that was well outside of the city center. Another student lived cross town at the end of the Streetcar line. I had only bus access to get us anywhere from where we lived, but the other student had access to the streetcar and buses. The bus system is very comprehensive, though, and goes absolutely everywhere around the region.”

“Late at night they reduce the transportation service and have the Night Bus, which takes a long time to ride and comes only once an hour. They also had a subway system for getting up and down along the river.”

“Most of the people who lived in the dorms were international students. We had an all female flat, but that was rare in my building. The 5 of us shared a kitchen which was tricky b/c it was small with a tiny fridge and limited shelving. We all had our own individual rooms, though, and you’ll not have to share a bedroom, because Germans love their privacy. Other flat members had left things from years past, so there wasn’t much required to purchase”

“DO NOT PUT YOUR FEET ON FURNITURE, mostly in public. I got yelled at on the Subway and the bus by 2 policemen, and it was terrifying.”

“One of the most noticeable differences for me was the fashion. People dress more formally. No respectable German would ever go outside with sweat pants and a sweat shirt unless they were jogging or working out. Pajamas pants are not acceptable attire for example.”

“Most of the German students have their own apartments throughout the city, or continue to live with their parents who are generally from the area/surrounding areas.”

“Bonn is fairly similar to the rest of the country, but residents seem to enjoy a slightly higher standard of living than other parts of the country, I witnessed almost no poverty in the city.”

“Because Bonn is a college town, there are quite a few night life locations throughout the city.”
Thoughtful Responses:

“If your German ability is low, don't be afraid because it is a very accommodating program for low-level speakers.”

“I miss shopping in German super markets. I learned a lot about German culture and had quite a few conversations with other Germans shoppers at the supermarkets. For me this was the only time I really got to meet older Germans other than my Professors.”

RECOMMENDED PLACES TO VISIT

- Kaufhof - a large department store in the center of the city
- A trip to the Siebengebirge ("seven mountains") on a sunny day is a wonderful experience. The mountains are located on the other side of the Rhine, in Königswinter. There is an old castle on one of the mountains called the Drachenfels ("dragon's rock"). You have a wonderful view of Bonn from there!
- Rheinaue - a park on the Rhine - it’s a good place to hang out when the weather's nice (it has places to barbecue, too).
- The Haribo Factory -- this is where gummy bears are made.
- Birkenstock Factory Outlet Store
- Kaiser-Kaffé -- on the Kaiserplatz, next to the university. In the spring, many students go there to sit under the trees and enjoy the Bavarian beer and lasagna.
- Café Göttlich -- across from the big bookstore at the main entrance of the university. Another student bar with a good atmosphere.
  - Bayrische Botschaft -- "Bavarian Embassy." A Bavarian-styled bar with German food and an atmosphere like Oktoberfest.
  - Die Zone -- near the Stadthaus. A small place with great music if you like R&B. The owner is a great guy who speaks English and helps with German.
  - Check out Kaffé -- off of Friedensplatz. Dark wood, good cappuccino and the best American music in Bonn.
  - La Boulangerie has hot fresh sandwiches (reasonably priced) on Kaiserplatz

TRAVEL ADVICE
“Your student ID lets your ride the buses, U-Bahn, S-Bahn and the RegioBahn (the slow one) for free.”

“If you want to travel, get a Eurail pass. It saves you a huge amount of money and can take you most anywhere you want to go in Western Europe. I used mine for several weeks at the end of the program to travel.”

“The train from Rome to Bonn was the most beautiful train ride I’ve ever taken in my life— it went through the Italian, Austrian, and Swiss Alps, and up through southern Germany. Gorgeous.”

COURSES

“You attend classes with tons of other international students from all over the world, so you have to speak German with them inside and outside of class since many do not speak English; at first, I was a bit hesitant to speak German with Germans, but practicing German with international students boosted my confidence in my German language skills.”

“They will hold your hand a little more if you go through the international office, which is a HUGE help. It was really hard figuring out how to navigate the university’s system, mostly because they didn’t have much of a system in place (according to an American perspective).”

“The Uni has classrooms/buildings located all around the city, so look into where your class is located before your first day just to be sure where you’re going.”

FOOD

“The food I miss the most is the simple street food. The bratwurst in rolls was my favorite, along with the currywurst and pommes, and Doners. The potato pancakes are wonderful, especially with the applesauce.”

“Each region of Germany has its own specialty, and often times each region names the same dishes differently. They were big into large portions of pig in the north and French fries and a lot of seemingly-French and Dutch inspired cuisine. In the south is where you would find the more stereotypical German meals – bratwurst, sauerkraut and potatoes.”

“I miss the bakeries soooo much. I cannot find a good roll, rye bread or croissant anywhere in the states. The schokocroissants were a favorite.”

GENERAL ADVICE FOR STUDY ABROAD

“I recommend trying anything that you would not have tried before.” Suzy Boyce K’08

“Keep in mind that everything in Europe and Germany especially is very expensive for Americans now. Take more money than you think is needed if really want to experience Bonn to the fullest extent.” Benjamin Buckley K’10

“Try to be present where you are; I spent the first month or two in a computer lab writing e-mails to people back home when really I should have been out experiencing the culture and getting to know people.”
“In branching out, make as many connections with people from that culture, don’t stay in the safety net of fellow Americans.”

AUF WIEDEREHEN UND ALLES GUTE!