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 six 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!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION TO THE BONN CULTURAL GUIDEBOOK**................................. 1

**BEFORE YOU GO...PREPARATION**................................................................. 4  
BONN, GERMANY........................................................................................................ 4  
PROGRAM CALENDAR............................................................................................... 5  
PASSPORTS AND VISAS......................................................................................... 5  
FLIGHT CONNECTIONS............................................................................................. 5  
MONEY...................................................................................................................... 6  
CLIMATE.................................................................................................................. 7  
PACKING AND LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS........................................................... 7  
PACKING LIST.......................................................................................................... 7  
GIFTS........................................................................................................................ 8  
HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES........................................................................... 9  
VEGETARIANISM.................................................................................................... 9  

**YOU’VE ARRIVED!**............................................................................................ 10  
ARRIVAL IN BONN................................................................................................. 10  
LOCAL TRANSPORTATION...................................................................................... 10  
TRAVEL/VACATIONS............................................................................................... 11  
TIPS ON INDEPENDENT TRAVEL......................................................................... 11  
SAFETY.................................................................................................................... 12  
WATER AND OTHER BEVERAGES........................................................................ 13  
MAIL....................................................................................................................... 13  
EMERGENCIES....................................................................................................... 13  

**THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM**............................................................................ 14  
KALAMAZOO COLLEGE CONTACT – INTERNATIONAL OFFICE....................... 14  
UNIVERSITY SETTING............................................................................................. 14  
ON-SITE ORIENTATION.......................................................................................... 15  
CLASSES AND CREDITS....................................................................................... 15  
ACADEMIC CULTURE............................................................................................. 15  
INTEGRATIVE CULTURAL RESEARCH PROJECT............................................... 16  
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR ICRPS......................................................................... 17  
LIVING IN BONN..................................................................................................... 20  
DORMS..................................................................................................................... 20
MEALS

TELEPHONE USE

LAUNDRY

LEAVING YOUR DORM AND DESIGNATED VACATION PERIODS

ADAPTING TO GERMAN CULTURE

HELPFUL HINTS FOR A POSITIVE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

DOING WITHOUT

GERMANY: THE SECOND CULTURE

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

GETTING TO KNOW GERMANY: TALK TO YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS!

KNOW WHAT’S GOING ON IN THE U.S.

SPEAKING GERMAN

GENDER RELATIONS IN GERMANY

SEXUAL HEALTH

YOUR RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES

PREPARE FOR YOUR RETURN

READJUSTMENT

RETURNING HOME

ADVICE FROM PAST-PARTICIPANTS

RECOMMENDED THINGS TO DO

LIVING IN BONN: CULTURE AND CITY LIFE

COURSES AND ICRP

FOOD

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

LGBTQ RESOURCES
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 81.9 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 17.7 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.
### PROGRAM CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 3, 2017</td>
<td>Depart U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 4, 2017</td>
<td>Arrival in Bonn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 5 – October 6</td>
<td>Orientation Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25 November</td>
<td>Berlin excursion (have to sign up and pay a minimal amount separately)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 9</td>
<td>Classes begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 23 – January 06, 2018</td>
<td>Winter Break (estimated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12, 2018</td>
<td>Last day of Lectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12-18, 2018</td>
<td>Exam week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 20, 2018</td>
<td>First day available for departure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(housing will be available until February 28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PASSPORTS AND VISAS

It is necessary to have a passport for your stay in Germany. Instead of obtaining a visa prior to your departure, you will have to register with the local city authorities when you arrive, which involves completing some paperwork in Bonn. You may also be required to obtain a residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis). The University of Bonn staff will give you instructions about this process. You are responsible for paying the fee for the Aufenthaltserlaubnis (estimated at 150 E) and the CIP has provided a stipend for you to do this.

You should carry a photocopy of your passport with you at all times (the first page with your photo and personal information). You’ll also receive a university ID card (Studieticket) that should enable you to receive discounts for museums, bus tickets, etc. 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.

If your passport is lost or stolen while you are abroad, you will need to reapply at the [U.S. Embassy Office in Berlin](https://www.usembassy-berlin.de/).

### 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 Timpernagel (see contact information in the MAIL section), the Bonn staff contact for your program, so that she knows of your delay and can give you new arrival instructions. If you are unable to contact her, call 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 occasional meal out, night life, personal travel, etc. Different people spend money differently, whether in Kalamazoo or in Bonn. Returning students report spending varying amounts of money during their stay, from $2,500 to more than $4,000 (not including a Eurail pass), with an average of $2,600. So the best piece of advice is to know yourself and your spending habits. 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. Some costs are unavoidable; as is the case on nearly all study abroad programs, you may need to buy textbooks in Germany. You may spend around $35 - $50 per class for books and other educational materials.

You'll also need to spend money when you travel. While hotels vary greatly in price and quality, you can obviously save money by planning day trips to nearby cities when possible, instead of planning to stay two or three nights in those cities. A recent participant noted that cash was necessary for some hostels and hotels.

In terms of how to bring money, we recommend you arrange several different methods, including cash, credit cards, and ATM/debit cards. You should bring your ATM card, as the majority of money machines in Germany, and Europe as well, accept American ATM cards (especially those that are Cirrus Plus). There are some places, however, like hospitals, where it will be necessary to have cash. Many places in Bonn only accept German bank debit cards, so have plenty of cash on hand until you set up your local bank account. Credit cards are convenient for travel. You will want to have all the money you plan to bring with you in either or ATM and credit cards, although a combination of the two is best.

Once in Bonn, you will be able to open up a local bank account with a German ATM card. If there's an emergency, have your family or friends send money through an international wire transfer.

At the time of writing, the exchange rate is .88 Euros to the dollar. It's a good idea either to get some Euros here before you go (maybe $50 or so) or be prepared to access it from an ATM upon arrival (which you can do in the airport!). You will need to have some money to pay for the bus to the International Office upon arrival.
CLIMATE
You can expect to have a few hot days when you arrive in the fall, and then it will become quite cold and overcast. Be prepared for rain and cold - a Michigan winter without the snow.

PACKING AND LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS
You will need to check with the airline or Travel Leaders (800-633-6401) to determine your luggage restrictions. Airlines change these restrictions frequently and are very strict in charging for extra baggage. 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.

A good packing tip is to carry a change of clothes and essential toiletries in your carry-on bag in case your luggage gets lost.

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, although German students do tend to be slightly more formal. Shorts are not common (except for tourists!), and with the cool temperatures you'll experience during your stay, you probably will only need to bring one pair, if that. 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 (pajamas, 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.

Jewelry: It is a good idea to leave favorite jewelry items at home. Never pack anything valuable or sentimental. Costume jewelry is more practical than the real stuff, especially in case it is lost or stolen.

Electricity: If you plan on bringing any electrical appliance with you, keep in mind that you will need both an adapter and a converter. For small items, such as hair dryers, think about buying one in Germany. Please remember that German electricity is 220 V/50 Hz.

PACKING LIST
- Sweaters;
- Heavy coat (Thinsulate is great!), scarf, gloves, winter hat;
One or two nice outfits (separates that will mix and match with your more casual clothes);

Raincoat (a waterproof pull-over is a great idea!);

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!);

Underwear and socks (bring plenty of underwear, because in some cases, especially when traveling, laundry access may be limited);

Toiletries;

Towel & washcloth (if you plan on traveling, as most hostels don’t provide them);

Plastic baggies (larger ziplock or freezer bags are great for wet towels/dirty laundry);

Money belt or neck pouch;

Luggage locks;

**Additional items to bring**

VISA, MasterCard 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;

Bathing suit; and

German/English dictionary (or you can save space and buy one there).

Pack for your emotional self as well: bring books, small musical instruments, music, pictures of family, friends and your home and college etc. that keep you happy, or whatever can help pull you through difficult times.

**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.)

HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES
You need to be up-to-date with your standard immunizations such as measles and tetanus. Please refer to your Handbook for the information on required and recommended immunizations. If you have any questions, contact Lisa Ailstock, Director of the Health Center (269-337-7200 or ailstock@kzoo.edu), or your personal Physician. Of course, be sure to make doctor appointments if you are concerned about any other particular problem (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 $65 a month. Kalamazoo College will pay this on your behalf and then charge your student account at the College. If you have any questions, please contact a staff member in the CIP.

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

Common medical complaints include sore throats and stomach aches. Bring aspirin or Tylenol, yeast infection creams, Midol, Rolaid's, cold medicine, laxatives, Pepto-Bismol, vitamins, and other medications you generally use. These items will be more expensive in Germany. Shampoo, soap, tampons, and sanitary napkins are also sold in Germany for little more than their cost in the United States. If there's a brand that you must have, make sure you take them with you. The staff at the Auslandsamt will provide you with names of doctors in town during orientation following your arrival.

VEGETARIANISM
Most students will be able to find a variety of foods suitable for a vegetarian diet. Since students live in dorms and cook their own meals, students have reported having few problems with maintaining a vegetarian diet. However, please keep in mind that no special accommodations will be made for vegetarians during the various field trips. If you require a vegetarian diet and cannot
eat what is available during such excursions, you will be responsible for paying for and providing your own meals at those times.

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 the boarding card that you will be given on the airplane. You do not need to claim your baggage (unless specifically directed to do so) as it will be transferred to the airport in Köln. It is possible (yet somewhat unlikely) that your luggage will be searched, as immigration officials will be monitoring you as you exit the customs area. In some international airports, guards with trained drug-detecting dogs will be monitoring luggage collection. Do not be alarmed by this; just remember to keep your luggage with you at all times, and do not agree to carry anything that a stranger might try to give you.

You should be able to get some Euros either by exchanging money in the airport or by using the ATM at the airport. You will have to make your way to the International Office in order to be driven to your dorm room. For complete directions and a map, please check out:

http://www3.uni-bonn.de/studium/internationale-studierende/austausch-und-study-abroad/jyp-und-austauschprogramm/vor-der-anreise#section-7

If you are arriving in the late afternoon or evening, you may want to purchase food at the Bonn airport and take it with you, so that you do not have to find food on your first night there.

Directions to the Auslandsamt from the Bonn Hauptbahnhof: You can walk to the International Office from the 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 want to look into a one- or two-month bus pass. 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. Past participants recommend purchasing a used bike. 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.

TRAVEL/VACATIONS
When you travel in or out of the country please inform the staff 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.

 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 $60 or so will enable you to get a 25% discount on all train fares for travel in Germany.

 Plan an itinerary and email it to the staff at the Auslandsamt. Also, make sure that someone in the U.S. has a copy.
Call/text/message 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.

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 areas of town should be avoided, 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 Handbook, to be prepared in case you or a friend are in such a situation. It is always best to be prepared. Try to keep phone credits on your cell phone if you purchase a pre-paid phone, just in case you need to call someone in an emergency.

It is also a good idea for safety reasons not to call attention to the fact that you are foreign (to the extent this is possible). Nevertheless, it will be obvious to many that you are not a host national, so be careful. Foreigners are easy targets for pick-pocketing and mugging. It's not a good idea to
stand in the middle of a public place, loaded down with backpacks, speaking loudly in English. It will draw even more attention to you.

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, but many Germans prefer to drink bottled water instead.

MAIL
You can expect letters to and from the States to take about a week to arrive. Packages can take longer. Make sure "airmail" is specified on all letters and packages. Your mailing address is:

Your name  
C/o  
Office of International Relations  
Auslandsamt der Universität Bonn  
Poppelsdorfer Allee 53  
53113 Bonn  
GERMANY  
Telephone: 011 49 228 735945 (at the University)  
Fax: 011 49 228 735966  
(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. However, please note that if you are receiving a package at your dorm, you (or a roommate) must be present when it gets delivered, or it will be taken to the nearest DHL or FedEx office.

EMERGENCIES
► In case of an emergency, you should first contact the appropriate emergency number (if a medical or fire emergency). For any other type of emergency, you may notify the Bonn International Office (Auslandsamt) at 011 49 228 735945. 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

**Margaret Wiedenhoeft, Executive Director, Bonn Program Manager**
Cell 269.267.5800 | E-mail mwieden@kzoo.edu

**THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

**KALAMAZOO COLLEGE**

**CONTACT – INTERNATIONAL OFFICE**

Once you are in Bonn, the staff of the Auslandsamt will act as your academic advisors and oversee all other aspects of the program. Staff are available to answer any questions and direct you to resources throughout the university. Frau Williams will connect you with your ICRP supervisor. In addition, your Professors will also help you, and they can be approached with any questions. The Auslandsamt 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 program courses are taught in university classrooms, some of which are typically in the Auslandsamt building. There are other international students in Bonn, and they are not predominately from the U.S. Returning students also report that many of the German students tend to be older than the average American student. As the university costs relatively little in Germany, students often take longer than the traditional four years to graduate, and most hold jobs and study simultaneously. International students are welcome and encouraged to participate in the many musical groups and clubs associated with the university. The University also has its own web site available in German and English (just click on the flag in the upper right hand corner to switch between languages):

**ON-SITE ORIENTATION**

The program begins with a four week intensive German language and cultural orientation course. At this time, you will be given orientation materials and tips about Bonn and the University.

**CLASSES AND CREDITS**

Typically, students are eligible to receive the following credits on study abroad:

- Intensive German + Orientation program = 1 K-unit
- ICRP = 1 K-unit
- German Language during the semester = 2 K-units

Students may select additional courses offered by the International Office (German Landeskunde, German History, etc...) or elect to take a course at the University. For students who choose the latter, you are strongly advised to make sure you understand the evaluation mechanism so that you will receive credit for the course. You must receive a grade (A, B, C) (not just a participation “Schein”) in order to receive Kalamazoo College credit. Students may not take classes on a “pass/fail” basis.

It is important to attend class, especially the orientation German language classes, as class attendance will be a factor in your grade.

Students must enroll in the equivalent of 6 K-units of credit for the long-term program. 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, or 2 courses adding up to 45-50 total contact hours can be combined. 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 into the Kalamazoo “A, B, C” grading system. Students must earn the equivalent of a “C” or better in the local grading system to receive credit for course work completed abroad. Students may not take courses on a “pass/fail” basis. All course work, including the ICRP, must be completed and turned in before the end of the academic program or no credit will be given. Please see the program description for a detailed explanation of the academic program and requirements.

**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 or your university courses.

INTEGRATIVE CULTURAL RESEARCH PROJECT

For your integrative cultural research project you will choose some aspect of German culture that you wish to research in a more direct, experiential manner. Conducting such a project offers you a way to get to know the host culture using a variety of methods in a more intimate fashion. How productive and fruitful your experience is will depend on how much time and thought you put into the planning and how much you choose to commit yourself.

Six distinctive features characterize the ICRP projects, regardless of where they are completed, and should guide you in the selection and implementation of your particular project—

1. **Emphasis on “hands on” human interaction**—your project should allow you to interact with local people outside of the usual academic environment in a systematic, integrated way.

2. **Choice of the Project Topic, Type, and Scope**—the project should reflect your own goals, interests, and skills. Although you will need to consult with the local project coordinator who will ultimately approve your topic, you may exercise wide latitude in selecting the sort
of project you wish to pursue in the host city; however, the project should give you an opportunity to apply what you are experiencing to your academic experience and to interact with a diverse group of people within the local culture.

a. Service and volunteer projects

b. Cultural externships or internships—participation in some facet of the local culture

Life histories

3. **Choice of Methodology**—in consultation with the project coordinator, you have wide latitude with respect to the information-gathering method(s) you choose to employ in your project.

4. **Systematic Research** (cf: Describe, Interpret, Evaluate, Validate, Act)

   a. Consistent journaling

   b. Painstaking interpretation

5. **Cultural Insight** (cf: DIEVA)

   a. Insight into the particular cultural activity or aspect you’ve selected

   b. Insight into the larger culture and/or social structure of the host country

6. **Advising and Mentoring**—from a local project coordinator and also a site supervisor

   a. Selection of topics and methods

   b. Introductions and first contacts

   c. Review of journal notes

   d. Interpretation

**GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR ICRPS**

- What is the main activity of the placement? What was produced?

- What are the goals and mission of the organization?

- Where does this particular organization stand in relation to similar ones in the city? In the region? In the state? In the country?
• Whom does this organization serve?

How do people view this organization and its mission?

• What problems and tasks are to be accomplished?

• How was this done?

• How successful is the organization?

• What are the basic skills and knowledge needed to work for this organization?

• What would be a typical day or week in the organization?

• What were your responsibilities?

• What contribution did you make to help the organization achieve its goals?

The project can consist of a collection of life histories, a study of some facet of the local culture, a service project, or some other form. Start thinking early in the fall about what aspect of the culture you would like to study. In discussing your plans with the ICRP coordinator, you will receive more specific instruction. The ICRP must be conducted in Bonn, and you will be required to keep extensive notes of the time you spend conducting your project.

Each study abroad site has unique conditions, practices particular to the community and specific limitations. Some of the common limitations of this program are that students cannot work in medical setting, and prisons or houses for battered and abused women do not usually accept our students.

You will need to determine the focus of your project in the fall, and it will be carried out over your time in Bonn mostly in November, December and January to be completed by the beginning of February. You will be required to keep extensive notes of your on-site time, and at the conclusion of the experience, you will then analyze, in a final paper, how your project findings reflect German culture as a whole. The paper must be turned into your ICRP supervisor before the end of the academic program in February or no credit will be awarded.

The following pages provide a sampling of recent Bonn ICRPs, including the locations and activities that students performed and discussed in their final papers.
German, Bonn

Placement Limitations: Students cannot work in medical settings. Prisons or houses for battered and abused women do not usually accept our students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ICRP Title</th>
<th>Abstract/Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animax Theater</td>
<td>&quot;Animax: A Theater of Innovation&quot;</td>
<td>For the past five months, I have had an internship placement at Animax Theater. Animax Theater is a “forum for performative media arts and intermedia artworks.” (citation here) The theater is not traditional by any means. Animax’s performances are interactive, energized, and innovative. The main showcase performance for Animax as of late has been Soundbox, an experience where one moves blocks around the theater stage and receives audio and visual feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universität Bonn</td>
<td>&quot;A German’s Best Friend: What Role does a Dog Play in the Life of a German?&quot;</td>
<td>For my project, I volunteered with the dogs at the local animal shelter, Tierheim Bonn. While working there, I observed the relationship between people and dogs in Germany, in addition to my observations outside of the Tierheim. These observations, and my own interactions with the dogs interested me and led me to conduct informal and formal interviews and internet research into these apparently special relationships that I had never observed before. The goal of my project was to uncover the cultural background of the dog culture in Germany and to discover the reason dogs seem to play such a big role in the lives of Germans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität Bonn</td>
<td>&quot;Evenings with Feminists: A Cultural Analysis of the Events of the Referat für Frauen und Gleichstellung&quot;</td>
<td>My project involved working as an intern at the Referat fur Frauen und Gleichstellung at the University of Bonn. I went to their offices three times a week for two hours at a time and assisted with office work and the design of posters and flyers. I was also required to set up and attend the numerous events hosted by my Referat for the students of the University of Bonn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My project was based on my placement at Bodelschwinghschule, a German elementary school, in Bonn-Friesdorf, Germany. Once a week, I spent the morning in a third grade classroom, and in the afternoons I taught English lessons for a class of fourth-graders. The first month, I mostly observed the classes in order to get a better understanding of how German classes normally function, and starting at the end of October, I began to teach my own English lessons. Through this experience, I was able to not only learn about how to teach English as a foreign language to children, but also how to learn from the students while still being in the role of a teacher.

LIVING IN BONN

DORMS

Please familiarize yourself with the "Housing Definitions and Regulations" as stated in the 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 mostly 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 include 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 Akademisches Auslandsamt 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
In the student dormitories you may have a community kitchen, which you will share with other students. You will be given a stipend from the University for your meals. There are student cafeterias (“Mensas”) and canteens. 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.

TELEPHONE USE
Past participants have also reported that cell phones (a.k.a. “handys”) are quite inexpensive and have reasonable calling rates to the United States. If you decide to purchase a German cell phone, make sure you understand the calling rates (both for incoming and outgoing calls) and contract.

LAUNDRY
There are coin operated washers and dryers available in some dorms. You will need to budget for this expense.

LEAVING YOUR DORM AND DESIGNATED VACATION PERIODS
As a matter of policy, 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 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 miscommunicated 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.

Go to your library or ask to talk to a faculty or staff member who has had experience in Germany. Or, 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’S 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 renting 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 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 US, 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.

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 Museummile: A group of several museums including Haus der Geschichte and Kunstmuseum Bonn.”

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

“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).

“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.”

In front of Christmas market
~ Alexis Irons K’11
“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.”

“The Weihnachtsmarkts (Christkindlemarkt) were phenomenal. Great food, great fun, great for Christmas gifts back home. I really miss that activity—it’s a great thing to do on a dark, cold, December night. Go often. They would also feature different performances, like a Water Dance one night and a brass band playing on top of one of the Glühwein stands during another.”

**LIVING IN BONN: CULTURE AND CITY LIFE**

“The international office runs a program called Bonn Buddies. Definitely sign up for it! Not only will you automatically have someone to practice your German with, your Bonn Buddy will also be a great tour guide and resource for your adjustment to Bonn.”

“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 40 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 the world: 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.”

“The post office closes at noon on Saturdays. Banks are closed as well on Saturdays.”

“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 across 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.”

“Going out to bars and clubs was the best way for me to meet other German students and adults.”

“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.”

“There was a bar in the basement of my dorm, which was a fun place to go and really the only way to meet people in my dorm.”

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

“Germans enjoy many vacations in the year (it sometimes seems like they never work compared to Americans) so there are many opportunities to travel.”

**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.”

**COURSES AND ICRP**

“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 fine 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 where a favorite.”

**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](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/](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.”


[https://travellatina.org](https://travellatina.org) and @TravelLatina on Instagram


[https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/lgbt.html](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

https://www.gooverseas.com/blog/6-things-wish-knew-studying-abroad-african-american - “6 Things I Wish I Knew Studying Abroad as an African American

Books


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


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.