



PERSONAL REPORT

SANTIAGO BARAS

Universidad Austral
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Reutlingen University

PREPARATIONS FOR THE STAY ABROAD

When I was analyzing the different alternatives for doing my exchange semester, looking for a scholarship was an important decision factor because otherwise, for me it would have been almost impossible to have the financial resources to live this experience. My home university, Universidad Austral, from Argentina, had made a publication about the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM in the international section of our campus page, and right from the beginning it seemed like a really interesting and big opportunity for me. Then I started to investigate more on the website of the scholarship, and finally decided to apply to Reutlingen University, which was one of the universities that offered the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM.

The preparation implied several things, but one of the most important of them was to start practicing and using English much more than I was used to, since in my home university we do our study and classes in Spanish. I decided to do this in advance with a lot of preparation time because I did not want the fact of using a different language to hinder my learning experience here while doing the exchange. I also had to prepare a lot regarding the challenge of being so far away from my loved ones for so much time, which was completely new for me. Finally, of course I also had to do more practical things regarding my preparation, such as getting a VISA for my stay in Germany, finding accommodation, etc.

STUDYING AT THE HOST UNIVERSITY

As I said before, I decided to spend my semester abroad at Reutlingen University. First of all, regarding why I have chosen Germany as the country where I was going to do my exchange, I think that the overall culture of the country matches a lot with my personality and my core values. I have always seen Germany as a country where discipline, effort, resilience and excellence are very valued, and those are things that I value a lot as well, and that form the principles that define my lifestyle, not only academically but also personally. I am also a big fan of nature and doing outdoor activities, and I think that Germany is one of the ideal countries to be really in contact with nature and doing a lot of different outdoor activities such as hiking, running or biking, which I have been doing a lot during my time here. Secondly, from the different universities I had the chance to choose, Reutlingen University was the one that finally convinced me because of its international atmosphere receiving so many exchange students every semester, but also because

I got some really good references from teachers and students from my home university who knew Reutlingen University.

I think that, although there were some challenges that I had to overcome, it was not so hard to getting used to living in Germany. Maybe one of the things that surprised me the most was how educated and gentle most people are. They might be a little bit colder than in my country (Argentina), but everyone literally everywhere was really kind to me, and I really appreciated that.

In terms of my studies here in Germany, and particularly in Reutlingen University, there were not so many differences compared to my home university. The dynamic of the classes and different assessments were already very familiar to me. In both universities the classes are conducted in small groups with a maximum of 50-60 people, which allows a lot of interaction between the professor and the students. Both universities have different evaluation methods as well, such as exams, presentations or papers. I would say that a minor difference was that Reutlingen University focuses on research and the academic field of our studies a little bit more than my home university, which focuses more on the professional and practical side of our career.

One of the things that I will never forget of this experience is the day that I arrived in Reutlingen. I had arrived in Frankfurt in the afternoon and had to take a connecting flight to Stuttgart, and then a bus to Reutlingen. This meant that I arrived in Reutlingen at night, and of course my accommodation's office was closed, and the caretaker was not there, so I did not have any place to spend my first night. Then, fortunately, my buddy picked me up with his car and allowed me to stay with him that night at his place. In the time-lapse of 1 hour had gone from being completely desperate and not knowing what to do, to feel incredibly received and welcomed. I will never forget this because even though I was really far away from my house, it really felt like home from the beginning.

PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS

- Make sure that you have everything you need for coming to Germany, especially regarding residence permits like the VISA.
- Make use of the public transportation. Is really cheap and generally pretty reliable.
- Try to make time to visit Berlin and Munich, which are two of the most important cities of the country and offer really interesting places from a historical point of view.

- Try to learn at least some basic words or expressions in German if you don't know the language. A lot of people here know English, but sometimes it is very useful and necessary to know at least the basics.
- Understand cultural differences. Germans value punctuality, efficiency and direct communication. Be prepared for experimenting this in social interactions, academic settings and everyday life.
- Take good care of your finances. It is really useful to register your incomes and expenses in tools like Excel to manage your money efficiently and avoiding spending too much.
- Be Open-Minded and Flexible. Embrace the experience with an open mind. Be ready to adapt to new situations and learn from the challenges and opportunities that come your way.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

When deciding to embark in this program, my main expectation was to grow and live a broad learning experience. After more than three months, I can totally say that this expectation was met. Not only have I learned a lot from an academic point of view, but also from a personal or day-to-day point of view. In Argentina I live with my parents. I think it is easy to imagine how much I have learned living by myself, which was also even more challenging given the fact that it was a step that I took in a completely different country. I also had the expectations of getting to know the German culture a little bit more, and I can say that now I know a lot about not only Germans but also another cultures of friends that I made here, such as the Mexican, Romanian, Australian or Italian cultures.

Overall, I can say that the most important lessons that I learned are:

- Sometimes it is completely worth it to take risks and do things you have never done before.
- There is nothing more satisfactory than learning something new, whether it is a place, a culture, a language, a subject at university, or even food.
- Our essence, what we are, is the people we love, and the people we spend most of our time with.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF BADEN WÜRTTEMBERG

