

## My Baden-Wurttemberg Experience

To call this study-abroad experience a worth-while investment undermines its value. As a Canadian citizen who shares European parents, my father originating from Greece, and my mother from Germany, this past year abroad has allowed me to accomplish what I could have never back home. Countless times, I was faced with events, traditional gatherings (such as Oktoberfest & Christmas markets), and cultural priorities that made me feel proud to be German. It had always been a dream of mine to study abroad. Throughout my senior years of high school and junior years of University, it was common to hear the ambitions of others to travel; to backpack across Europe. However, I had to question how many actually pursued their dreams. I am proud of myself, to put it quite simply. I have experienced and lived Germany. I finally have that understanding of what it means to be German. I cannot express my gratitude enough to my family, friends and the Lord my God for providing me with this opportunity.

To recount my academic experiences, I will begin by expressing how much easier it is to register back home. Putting those frustrations aside, I will continue to share how wonderful it was to meet other international students. The bond created between many of us was reinforced by our shared interest in Germany: in its people and their culture. One should never fear making friends, for one attracts those that share common interests. Personally, I am not a strong party-goer, and I originally became anxious when thinking of all that I would miss out on, but these fears were quickly extinguished by the desire to seek others who shared my interests. And indeed, I found many.

It was in fact in Germany that I found the courage to take other language courses; those that I found applicable towards bettering my life in Canada. I enrolled in Greek and French, for both personal and academic reasons. I enrolled myself into an art class as well, something I had always wished to do. Perhaps this allowance of new courses was due to the open boundaries of my course selection, but I could have just as easily enrolled myself into courses that did not prove as beneficial. I found a job working as a cook in a pub. The decision to approach the manager is not one I regret. However it is not as easy as it may sound. I was easily intimidated by my incapability to speak German. The urgency to find a job within my first two weeks in Tuebingen was encouraged by the rational that if I had not found a job soon, native German

speakers would take my place. And so it was determined that I would work in the kitchen, an experience that taught me many valuable abilities: to cook German cuisine, to better my vocabulary and to meet other German students. And of course, besides the personal values gained, the money earned was extremely helpful in paying off groceries and any other expenses I incurred, such as travelling.

To recommend this adventure to my fellow Canadians is what I will seek to do. I will not repeat what has already been said (having the chance to open one's horizons, etc.) but instead just say, "Don't you dare think you already know what it means to live life. Not until you've gained a better understanding of how others live theirs. And remember, such things as victory, wisdom, and experience are not given, they are sought out and taken for one self."