



My internship at the KIT in Karlsruhe, Germany

Eve Zabronsky

Eve Zabronsky is enrolled at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis in Chemistry as major and in German as second subject. Eve gives us a report on her experiences “from the U of M to KIT” at the Karlsruher Institut für Technologie in Karlsruhe

I've been taking German since seventh grade, and went to Bavaria with a short three week exchange program in high school. Ever since the plane landed back in the US, I've been looking for an opportunity to return to Germany, preferably for a longer time, and I found that chance with the **Steuben-Schurz-Gesellschaft**.



Eve says:
“This was the fumehood I usually worked at in our laboratory”

I picked the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities to complete my bachelor's degree because I was able to easily fulfill my major requirements in chemistry while also getting a great German language education. I first learned of this internship program through a tiny link at the bottom of a college update email that said that science and engineering internships in Germany were available through communication with *Adam Pagel*. Naturally I was very excited and emailed him straight away, and he was able to tell me all about the *Steuben-Schurz-Gesellschaft* as well as set up meetings with me to help with the application process. Eventually I got an offer from *Frau Alina Berger* from the *Karlsruhe Institute for Technology* and I was placed in an internship there in Karlsruhe, Germany for the summer of 2015.

Truthfully I was not nervous at all about going to a foreign country alone or completing my first scientific internship in a laboratory, which everyone around me seemed to think was strange. Really I was only concerned about the legal steps I needed to take to make sure I could get in and out and work without any problem. *Frau Juliane Adameit* with the SSG helped immensely with that, I can't thank her enough.

I arranged to arrive a week before my internship started so that I could register with my city, set up my bank account, and have some time to get accustomed to the new culture. Some of the best things about Germany that I will miss are the church bells that ring every quarter-hour (great if you don't have a watch) and the fresh baked pretzels that are available at every grocery store and bakery. The language barrier was immediate and striking, but I quickly learned about the bottle recycling programs and local supermarket customer cards and how to work the local tram system.

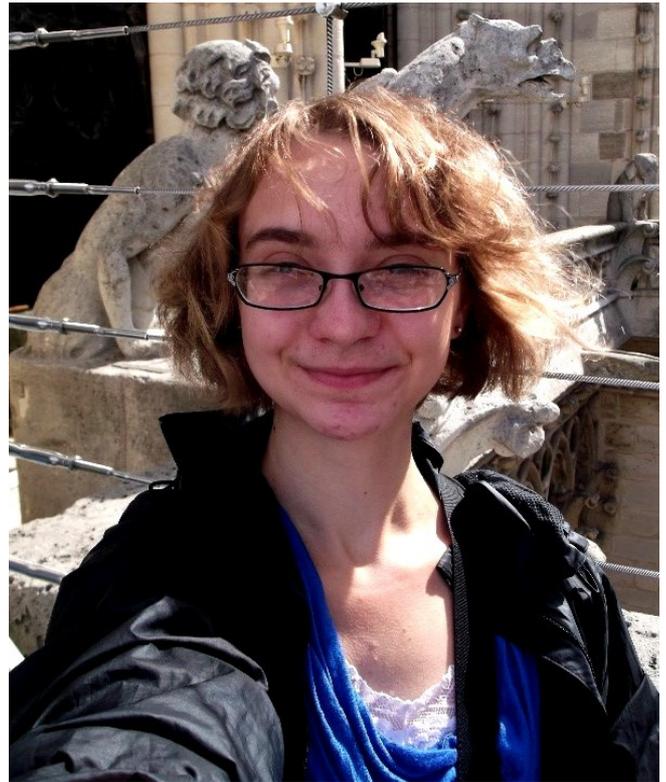
My first day on campus was difficult with all the paperwork and technical German vocabulary, but I was assured that I would never have a problem asking for clarification on something, and throughout the whole summer, all my questions were answered patiently and thoroughly, whether they were about a word I didn't understand or the science behind a piece of analytical technology. My research group was focused on the synthesis and testing of magnetic nanoparticles and nanoparticle catalysts for many different uses. I got the chance to perform different kinds of reactions and use all sorts of equipment I'd never seen, such as a rotary evaporator and a glovebox. Some of the reactions were a bit boring and took many hours to cook over a hotplate, and some were exciting and slightly frightening in how violently they reacted. I learned how to handle these sorts of reactions safely, how to minimize risk of injury or damage, and how to have confidence in what I was doing. During lab in college, I was usually nervous that I would break the glassware or mess up the reaction, but my summer in the research lab gave me a new sense of self-assurance that I have no doubt will greatly help in my next lab courses and internships, as well as my upcoming position as a teaching assistant.

Eve Zabronsky: Internship at the KIT

I planned trips for the weekends, usually taking trains connected to the Deutsche Bahn or the bus system *Meinfernbus* to travel. I traveled to Stuttgart, Heidelberg, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, Freiburg, and even Paris during my stay in Germany. I usually planned on which museums I would go to and what concerts or plays I wanted to see, and marked everything down on a map I printed off. However, as I walked through the city itself, I often got sidetracked and sometimes didn't even visit the places I intended to! But the spontaneity definitely wasn't bad, since some of the places were spectacular and away from the tourist hotspots, and thus were more authentically German. For example, while in Freiburg I went to the city gardens to enjoy a breakfast I got at a bakery and intended on going to a museum after but instead decided to shortly investigate a trail into the woods.

The trail actually ended up going up the mountain and I followed it all the way to the top in what ended up being a three hour adventure leading to an incredible view of the city from above, as well as some interesting castle ruins. I think the museums were a good fallback in case I couldn't find something else to occupy my time, but I would take that hiking trail and breathtaking view any day. As mentioned, I also took the opportunity to visit Paris, which isn't in Germany but is a place I've also wanted to visit nonetheless, and it seemed like the perfect chance since I don't know when I will be in Europe again. Compared to the US, Europe is so compact and public transportation is absolutely amazing, so traveling is relatively easy.

Living in a country where my first language is not the main language spoken helped me realize how difficult it is to communicate solely in a foreign language. I am lucky since English is my mother language because English is usually regarded as the universal language to know, but many if not most of the people in the United States know a different language as their first. I will always respect and admire their ability to be fluent in multiple languages to a degree that I can only hope to achieve.



Eve visiting Paris and climbing the towers of Notre Dame de Paris to get a spectacular view of the city from above!

I will be flying home soon, and I'm sure that as soon as my plane lands, I will again be wondering when I can return to Germany. But I also look forward to using all my new knowledge, both scientific and cultural, in the upcoming year and probably for the rest of my life.

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