

School Resources Task: Blog Post

Why I chose to do a language as part of my degree

Before we get into the ins and outs of the trials and tribulations of living in a different country, why did I choose to study a language in the first place? The Year Abroad as part of my degree was definitely the most appealing aspect of my studies – not only would I be free to roam around the land of Gummy Bears and Currywurst, but I would finally have a proper experience of living and studying in a city, made doubly exciting by the foreign atmosphere. A campus university can be a tad stifling at times, so I thought a year out would be the perfect chance to break out of the bubble.

Studying in Cologne

I'd been to Cologne once before on a school trip once before, but most of that day was spent in the Lindt Chocolate Museum – all the more reason to return and truly discover the city!



One really good thing about the Erasmus+ programme is that you have a lot of freedom in choosing what you want to study. My degree at the University of Warwick is English and German but seeing as all the English Literature modules were taught in English, I decided to take up two foreign languages from scratch – Swedish and Portuguese. In these lessons, I have met more native German speakers than in my Erasmus student orientated German Literature classes, and I received a lot of support and understanding from my classmates and lecturers.

That's not to say my German Literature lectures were a hindrance to my German – it's amazing to be in the same boat as so many other foreign students, and you can very easily

bounce off each other and have conversations without stressing that someone will judge your language level.

Cultural Activities

Karneval fever hits Cologne in November and February-March, so it was really important to don our best fancy-dress costumes and take to the streets and celebrate a four-day long party. Rosenmontag is the main day in March, with floats of people dressed in traditional garments and marching bands parading through the streets and throwing flowers and sweets down at the onlookers below. It was absolutely brilliant to be part of such a huge party so specific to the city's heritage.



There is of course an abundance of other activities during the calmer months. There is a whole range of museums, the very famous and very tall cathedral, as well as meandering through the picturesque cobbled streets through the Altstadt. On the other side of the Rhein, you will find huge concrete steps, where many people spend their afternoons and evenings socialising, playing music and having picnics whilst sinking up the glorious views. Weekends and public holidays are also home to food and music festivals.



If you have a hobby, it's very easy to continue with your extra-curricular interests. As I've been a member of orchestras for many years, I was eager to join the university orchestra here in Cologne and was lucky enough to win a place. Not only could I still pursue my hobby, but it was another opportunity to practice my German. Next week, I will be performing in the Kölner Philharmonie, Cologne's main concert venue.

Travel

My favourite part about studying in Cologne is how easy and cheap it is to travel to other countries and German cities. Situated in north-west Germany, the city is very close to the Dutch and French borders, meaning you can be in Amsterdam, Paris, and Brussels in a matter of hours. You also save a lot of money on travel if you study, because the semester fee paid to the university includes all of your travel costs not just in and around the city, but in the



whole of Nordrhein-Westfalen. This means you can essentially travel on almost every train line to cities such as Bonn, Düsseldorf, and Aachen. If you'd like to travel further afield, you can also take a coach to other German cities, for example Frankfurt and Mannheim. The main coach company, Flixbus, is



very affordable and easy to travel with. Other companies such as Studifahrten specialise in 2-3 day long trips and provide student discounts as well as lots of freebies, including maps, snacks, and postcards.



Social Life

As an Erasmus+ student, you meet loads of different people from many countries. I've now made friends with people from Italy, Spain, Ireland, France, and Mexico. It's so enriching being surrounded by such a huge variety of languages

and cultures, and everyone is really open-minded and friendly. Whatever you do, wherever you go, with the right people your host country will soon feel like a home from home.



