

## Personal Report

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Host University: Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg

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Germany is a country well known for their strong and famous culture, for their strong industry and automotive industry specifically and also for the special behaving way of the Germans. Before coming to Germany as a student I didn't know what to think about my stay here, I didn't know if I should worry about it or if it was going to be difficult because of the stereotypes. After 4 months living in Stuttgart, I can affirm that it exceeded my expectations in every single way.

To start I want to emphasize on how good is the public education in Germany and how much they support their students. I wasn't even in Germany when they offered a scholarship to support my studies and my stay in Stuttgart and I think it's very honoring and an incredible way to support and improve education there, and subsequently the country itself. The Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM was the organization that offered me the scholarship and I want to thank them for this opportunity and also, I want to mention that they were really helpful, understandable and kind the whole process and the whole time of my stay abroad, it was a pleasure having your support.

The first thing I did when I knew I was going to Stuttgart for my semester abroad was searching about the city of Stuttgart of course, my host university DHBW-Stuttgart and about Germany in general. I always knew I wanted to go to study to Germany but I wasn't sure why. My second task was to know at least the basic German to not be that lost when I arrived in Stuttgart, so I made a 3-month course back in my home country and I learned the really basic things but actually I really loved going to those classes because German language is so difficult but also very interesting, that once you start, you want to finish to learn the language as much as you can.

The date of starting my semester at the DHBW was getting closer and the next step was to fill in my application with my host university. My process was really fast and simple, I just had to fill in an application document with my information as a person and as a student and after that, I was in communication with the International Office of the DHBW to have all my courses registered and they were very easy going and helpful. Also in my home university, they helped me to see which courses matched with the DHBW's courses and it was perfect

because I could revalidate a whole semester content in my stay in Germany, and sometimes it is difficult because of the differences of subjects and courses.

During that time, I also had an invitation from my home university to assist to a gathering with German students that were studying in my home city to get some advice from them and I got to talk with students from the DHBW and it was very helpful because I could ask them if I had some questions about the university and the environment there.

It's important to mention that I was in contact the whole preparation time with the international department of my host university and they also helped me to find a dorm using the Studierendenwerk Stuttgart website and it was really fast and easy to apply for a place to live, and they have lots of information about the student life in the city, where to eat and other different things.

Later on, I received an e-mail from the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM, regarding that subject, offering me a scholarship for my 4 months abroad, a great help for covering my expenses in Stuttgart. The only thing I had to do was to apply by a website attaching some documents like a motive letter, my curriculum, a recommendation letter and the transcript of my courses back in my home university.

The last part of my preparation was that I got a Buddy from my host university, it was a German girl and I was in communication with her to get some help with my dormitory keys, my arrival day to the dormitory, or whatever I needed help with.

The day arrived and I got to a plane to Germany, I was very excited and happy. My Buddy welcomed me going with me to my dormitory and telling me some tips for shopping and eating places. As soon as I got to Stuttgart I could notice that it was a beautiful and big city, maybe because it has different heart quarters of really big international companies. Also, I was impressed with the transportation system because back in my home country I never use it because it's not that good but here in Stuttgart it worked really well and I could get everywhere using it.

Our first event was the welcome week where we had different activities with the other international and German students to get to know each other. We had gatherings, we

explored the city of Stuttgart going to the TV Tower and to the Mercedes-Benz Museum, also we went to an excursion to the climbing gardens and other different funny activities. One of the most important things that we did that first week was to put everything in order with the university, register ourselves in Stuttgart and also, we bought out transportation ticket which was very helpful.

The first weeks of my stay in Stuttgart were very interesting because every day I knew more people and also, I learned different spots of the city, places to visit, in summary I was getting used to this new country and this new way of living.

Going back to the Germans stereotypes, it was really interesting meeting German students and actually becoming friends, and recognizing that the stereotypes aren't true at all, they are really open and welcoming with other people. Of course, there are the true stereotypes like the punctuality, rules and directness but I think that helps them to meet their objectives and actually I think those are great characteristics that makes them really special in a positive way.

Another surprising fact that I learned was that in Germany they don't open all the supermarkets and stores on Sundays, and I found it really weird and random because in my home country everyone tends to go out with their family on Sundays, but also, I think it is a good idea to have the Sundays free for all the workers as well.

I got used to living in Stuttgart really fast, I think that is because of the people and because of the cool city that it is. You can do a lot of different stuff like going to museums, to a lake, to different festivals like Wasen for example, that you never get bored.

Now talking about Wasen, I found it very interesting how the Germans celebrate their traditions and holidays, I think it is very unique and very different than what I am used to. I loved wearing the Drindls, drinking beer and eating their typical dishes like maultaschen, currywurst, spätzle, schnitzel and delicious desserts like different types of cookies and cakes.

One of the best things about my stay in Germany was that I could travel a lot as this country is in a very good location with different European countries nearby. It was very exciting knowing different countries and traditions just a few hours from distance. But I didn't just

travel to other countries, actually I traveled quite a lot through Germany and it was the best part, going to Berlin, to the Black Forest and other beautiful cities like Cologne and Heidelberg.

I want to mention as well, that with the DHBW we could travel as well to different cities like Frankfurt and Strasbourg as daytrip excursions of one of our courses and it was excellent because it made the course more interesting and interactive.

The weeks passed and the time for the finals arrived. I liked a lot that in the DHBW courses, the final exams are in different weeks, so you don't get stressed one week because you have to present 5 finals, it gives you time to study and concentrate in each course to get good grades. Also, at the end of my stay, in December, Stuttgart was transformed into a more beautiful city because of the Christmas season. We had the Christmas market for one month and it is very beautiful and also, I think very typical German. There you can find the German food, drinks and desserts that you prefer and also other different random things.

Moving to another topic, I want to mention that in addition to knowing people thanks to my university, the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM also helped me to meet different persons from different parts of the world as well by the different monthly meetings with the other scholarship holders and even they made different bigger events like workshops for example. It is very nice because you have different options to know more and more people.

If a future scholarship holder is reading this, I would recommend you to, firstly, if you haven't applied yet, apply as soon as possible because it is a great opportunity and also, I recommend you go to the different meetings of the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM network because you can learn from other people that maybe have the same interests as you and you can get more experiences and knowledge with you back to your home country that you can put in practice every day. Don't miss this opportunity of studying abroad because you can learn a lot from it and it will be one of the best experiences in your whole life.