

# A Fulfilling Summer in Germany

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Can a student study “abroad-abroad”?

I come from Nigeria originally, and my first introduction to studying abroad was when I got on a plane in 2021 and moved over 5,000 miles away from home to study at Bowdoin. I’m therefore no stranger to taking on new challenges, but when first I started learning German in my first semester here, it felt different, almost like a calling, and I knew immediately that I wanted to take this language journey beyond the classroom. Nine months down the line, it happened!

This past Summer of 2022, I had the opportunity to spend two months in the historic city of Hamburg, Germany, thanks to generous grants from the German Department and the Office of Students Fellowships. In my time in Hamburg, I took intensive language classes at the *Goethe Institut* and broadened my technical knowledge of the language. But that’s not all I did and experienced.

From my first day at the institute, I got involved in various cultural immersion programs with other travelling students and the new friends I had made. I visited famous sites in Hamburg like the *Elbphilharmonie*, *Spiecherstadt*, the Hamburg Planetarium, *Minatur Wunderland*, St. Michael Church, and more. Throughout this time, I also immersed myself in the beauty of nature of my host city by visiting several city parks, going canoeing, and taking several trips on the ferry. Hamburg had too big of a biking culture for me to ignore, so I decided I would finally learn to ride the bicycle and with the help of my newly acquired friends, I did!

This visit to Germany meant so much to me and I figured this was a unique opportunity to see other parts of the country, so at every chance I got, I also hopped on a train and visited a new city or state. My favorites were Berlin, Lübeck, Lüneburg, Celle, and Brunswick. In Berlin, I got to see the *Reichstag* which houses the lower house of Germany’s parliament, the memorial of the Berlin wall and that of the murdered Jews, the *Brandenburger Gate*, the Ethnologic Museum which had a variety of African artifacts, Checkpoint Charlie, and more. I’m a huge Disney fan, so no surprises that I got tickets to and saw both *The Lion King* and *Frozen* musicals (yes, in German), in what proved to be exhilarating and beautiful nights of colorful theatre.

In July, I volunteered to work with children at a Fest and a summer art program organized by the *Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund*, a German charitable aid agency. I interacted with children from Germany, Afghanistan, Turkey, and other countries around the world. This part of the trip was perhaps the most fulfilling for me, because it gave me the opportunity to give back to the community which hosted me, helped me practice my language skills in a very fitting environment, and served as a bridge between my interests in community development, childcare, and language.

Looking back at my time in Germany, I am filled with gratitude. My German language skills certainly did not remain the same, and neither did my view of the world. I received an internal transformation that is frankly hard to fully express in just one essay. I now have a deeper love for

the language and its people and look forward to visiting again. This is the kind of education I envisioned I'd get at Bowdoin, and oh, I can't wait to see all that lie ahead.

**Faculty Mentor: Jill Smith**

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**Pictures:**

1. At the Reichstag in Berlin
2. At the Brandenburger Gate
3. Volunteering with the ASB.

