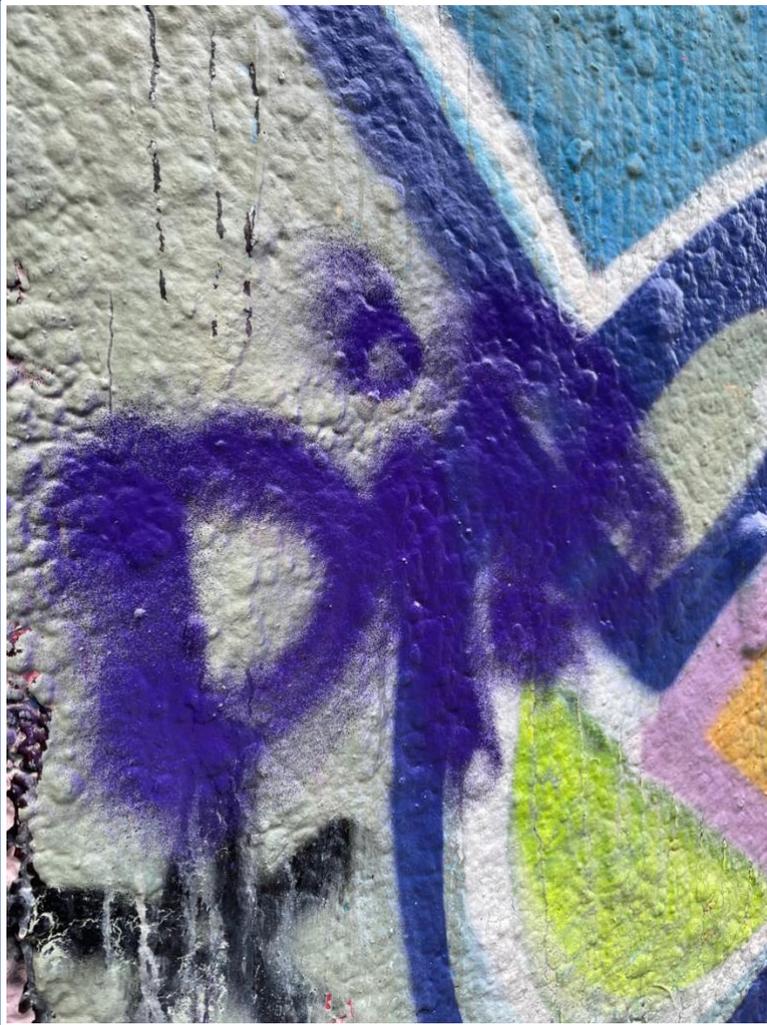


# The Blue Bear

Newsletter #7  
October 2022



*DiB got tagged in Berlin by an anonymous faculty member*

Greetings from Duke in Berlin... and from all over Germany and Europe!

While we are all enjoying a beautiful fall here in Berlin, we are also happy to report that our current cohort of seven students has been taking advantage of some longer weekends we built into our academic schedule to explore places near and far. So far, the impressive list of travel destinations includes: Rome, Prague, Budapest, Bratislava, Vienna, Oberstdorf, Berchtesgarden, Allgäu, Lindau, Barcelona, Costa Brava, Dresden, Weimar, Bamberg, Würzburg, and Munich – including going to the Oktoberfest. And our 10-day fall break is just around the corner, so more travel is on the horizon.

We will turn over the mic to three of our students, Morgan Fletcher, Talya von Planta Newman, and Jess Stevens (all Class of 2024) to share a little bit about their travel experiences. And to make sure that you don't think we are all fun and no work, we asked Grace Sorensen (also Class of 2024) to tell you about her internship experience in Germany prior to having started our Duke in Berlin Fall Program at the end of August. Grace did her internship through [DAAD RISE](#) which is a prestigious program funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. For any

questions about this particular internship, feel free to contact Grace at [grace.sorensen@duke.edu](mailto:grace.sorensen@duke.edu).

Anyone interested in wanting to see photos of some of our program-led excursions should check out our Instagram site [📷 dukeinberlin](#).

Mit herzlichen Grüßen

Tin Wegel (Resident Director)

Lina-Sofie Raith (Program Assistant)

## Saved by the Taxizentrale

by Morgan Fletcher

“For the five-day break, Grace and I took a trip to the Alps in southern Germany, which turned out to be one of our favorite experiences so far during our time abroad. Our initial train out of Berlin Hauptbahnhof to our first destination, Obertsdorf, left at 8:05am. Despite giving myself extra time, I sprinted onto the train like a classic Berliner with one minute to spare. Little did I know that was a warm-up for the amount of running around that

Grace and I would get ourselves into. Panting, I sat down on the train with Grace and our adventure began.

Obertsdorf, our first destination, is a small town in the Allgäu Alps best known for hiking and skiing. We spent our time there hiking Nebelhorn Mountain, walking around town, and admiring the beauty of the Breitachklamm, the deepest rocky gorge of Central Europe. The views from Nebelhorn Mountain were breathtaking, both literally and figuratively, because we climbed eight miles and around 700m in elevation on our hike.

Along our hike, we met friendly natives who owned huts selling food and drinks to hikers, and we were greeted, and licked, by cows



*Friendly Cows on Nebelhorn Mountain*  
© Morgan Fletcher

roaming the hillsides. From the halfway point, we took the Nebelhornbahn to the very peak of the mountain where we were surrounded by clouds, rocky terrain, and snow which we were definitely underdressed for. A summary of our Obertsdorf adventures would not be complete without a sincere “thank you” to Taxizentrale Obertsdorf for saving our lives - not once, but twice. After having dinner on our first night in Obertsdorf, Grace and I raced through the streets to catch a bus that only took us halfway back to our hostel. With our GPS, two phone flashlights, and a mini flashlight that barely turned on, we started to walk to our hostel that was thirty minutes from where the bus dropped us off. Within about five minutes, both of us realized that a trek through the forest on a dark, rainy night was not the best idea, so we turned around and called a taxi to come to our rescue.

On the second night, Grace and I returned to Obertsdorf from our visit to Lindau-Insel around 10pm, and the busses were unfortunately not running. Huddled under an umbrella in the pouring rain, Taxizentrale came to our rescue once again.



*Peak of the Nebelhorn Mountain*  
© Morgan Fletcher

After saying goodbye to Obertsdorf, we arrived at our next destination: Berchtesgaden, a small, mountainous town in the Bavarian Alps. When we arrived at Berchtesgaden Hauptbahnhof in the evening, there was no public transportation that would take us directly to our hostel, so we hopped on a bus that dropped us off halfway there. Our GPS said that it would only be a ten-minute walk to our hostel from where the bus dropped us off.

However, what we did not realize was that the walk would turn out to be a hike up a mountain. It was dark, it started raining, and we genuinely had no idea if the path was taking us to the right spot. Finally, we reached the entrance to our hostel. To make the evening even more comical, as soon as we opened the door, we were greeted with a warm welcome from twenty, flirty men in Lederhosen who were hanging out in the lobby.



During our stay in Berchtesgaden, Grace and I took a boat tour through Königssee, walked around the historical downtown, and rode the Jennerbahn cable cars 1800m above sea level to the summit of Jenner Mountain where we hiked, enjoyed the amazing views of surrounding mountain peaks, and ate some of the most delicious Kaiserschmarrn we have ever had. After descending Jenner Mountain, we waited for a bus to take us to the Berchtesgaden Hauptbahnhof, so we could make our train home to Berlin. Unfortunately, as we quickly learned during our trip, the public transportation in the southern, rural regions of Germany is not as consistent as it is in Berlin. Because the bus did not show, we had to call an old friend, Taxi-Zentrale Berchtesgaden, to save us once again.

While planning our trip, Grace and I had no idea how many friendly cows we would meet, how much Brot we would consume, how many steps we would take, and how many memories we would make in only five days. I never thought that the phrase, "Ich brauche ein Taxi" would be so engrained in my brain, I would fall so deeply in love with Kaiserschmarrn, and the Alps would become the most beautiful thing I had ever seen."

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## The Roads Less Travelled

by Jess Stevens and Talya von Planta Newman

„Oktoberfest is a staple of German culture and one which we looked forward to greatly once we decided on studying abroad in Berlin. After all, a 5-hour train or car ride (or so we thought) was probably the closest we would ever be to this culturally iconic event.

So, with great excitement, along with two friends of ours from Berlin, we rented a car and headed to Munich for the opening weekend of Oktoberfest. Our trip started with a visit to Schloss Neuschwanstein, which was the original castle that the Disney castle was based on. Since it is just outside of Munich, it seemed a great way



to keep us occupied while we waited in anticipation for the tents to open the following day. Until it started pouring on us, it was magical.

Our first night in Munich gave us quite the introduction to this new German city. Just strolling through the streets, you could see the gorgeous old architecture, and the beautiful churches and monuments which had survived the brutal bombings of the second world war. The four of us dipped our toe into Munich nightlife, but ended our night relatively early to save ourselves a painful morning before the real festivities began. Unfortunately, this did not go to plan and we both felt terrible the next morning.



Saturday morning was full of excitement. The Wiesn was buzzing, and women wearing dirndls, accompanied by men wearing Lederhosen, filled the streets. We excitedly sipped our coffee, while learning which side of our dirndl to tie the bow of our apron on to signify that we were single (god forbid all of Munich thought we were married). We made our way to the Wiesn, and were greeted by a giant festival-like set up with the smell of Wurst and beer wafting through the (unfortunately rather cold) air.

We spent the rest of the day dancing, singing along to German songs we didn't know the words to, eating Wurst and drinking copious amounts of German-brewed beer (exclusively for the purposes of true cultural immersion). We would go on to describe that day as a time-warp, because the 8 hours spent in one tent felt like 2, and next thing we knew it was nighttime and we were headed home in sleet, cold rain.

Since we were staying with a family friend, we were greeted in the morning by a wonderful typical German breakfast of mostly bread. We had an early train back to Berlin, but still got to see

some parades through town. This is when the real fun began.

We booked the cheapest train tickets, with the tradeoff of four train changes and a 10-hour travel day. The first train went smoothly - but the one-hour layover is where everything went wrong. We decided that it would be a perfect time to have a leisurely dinner of miso soup - but the next thing we know, the train was leaving in seven minutes! We sprinted to the platform with barely two minutes to spare. So without carefully reading the sign, we hopped on a random carriage on the platform.

Two hours later, the train is stopped in Würzburg. One of us is asleep, the other is engrossed in a book, so it isn't until the conductor of the train asks us what we are still doing on board that we realize we have made a grave mistake. The train we got on was a dividing train, meaning that at some point along the way, certain carriages separated from each other and went different ways. We happened to get on the carriage that went to Würzburg, not our next stop, Leipzig.





At this point, we are still both fairly calm because there is another train headed to a town called Bamberg where we could get a train to Berlin. We were mostly upset because we would have to book a more expensive ticket from Bamberg to Berlin. However, the train we were on was running late so we would only have 6 minutes to get to the next train to Berlin. Since it was a lot of money, we both agreed to wait to book the next ticket until we knew we would be able to make the next train (in hindsight, it makes absolutely no sense to book a train ticket after you get on the train...).

Of course, what can go wrong goes wrong. The train we were supposed to get on sold out. So

now we were stuck in Bamberg, less than 150 miles from Munich, closer there than to Berlin after 6 hours of traveling. Our actual last resort option was to take a nine-hour bus that arrived in Berlin at 6 am. There was nothing else to do but laugh. So we waited in a McDonalds to charge our phones until the bus arrived. And of course, we run into another problem: we can't find the bus stop.

The address the company provided on the ticket was about a kilometer up the road from the train station. However, we were told by an employee at the station that the stop was at the back of the train station - but no sign for the stop was there. We decided to go to the address. It was dark, cold and starting to drizzle in Bamberg and there was no one around. The address led to an empty, dead end road at the back of some kind of factory. A road where there was no chance a cross country bus company was picking up people. Now the panic was setting in - this was our last chance to get home. We could not mess this up!

So we panic ran. I mean a silent, hobbling run with luggage awkwardly in hand back to the train station. Adrenaline was pumping - the bus was supposed to leave in minutes! To both of our surprise, as soon as we got back to the train station, we discovered there was a sign for the bus the entire time, we just somehow both missed it.

We did make it back to Berlin, but of course with no sleep because if we missed our stop on the bus we would've woken up in Warsaw.

I think there are many morals to this story. But most importantly, make sure to travel with someone who cares enough to leave time to read signs and addresses. Because we are clearly not those people."



# An Internship in Tübingen

by Grace Sorensen

„This summer I did an internship through DAAD RISE at the University of Tübingen. I worked in a neurodegenerative diseases lab, so I spent most of my summer working in cell culture, running western blots, microscopy, and other tasks similar to what I would have been doing at Duke. One surprise for me this summer was that working in a lab in Germany isn't all that different from working in a lab at Duke, especially given that the working language is English. Despite being the only student from the US, the lab was very international as well as collaborative, so many smaller working groups would share lab spaces and I had the chance to get to know scientists from all over the world. Two of my favorite experiences with the lab were an afternoon spent on a traditional Tübingen Stocherkahn boat on the Neckar river and a trip with the institute to the Black Forest. The transition from working in a US to German research lab was overall easier than I was expecting, which I was grateful for because while moving to a new country is exciting, it could also be quite stressful and overwhelming at times.



From dealing with the language barrier and confusing paperwork to finding an apartment for the summer (which can be very difficult in Germany), I think the experience could be best described as being pushed outside of my

comfort zone every single day. I had never lived so far away from home before, not to mention the 9-hour time difference making it difficult to stay in touch with my family. The positive side of this is that I could see myself becoming more independent and confident as I dealt with so many new and unexpected situations. I was lucky to have other RISE interns from the US and Canada who I could explore the surrounding towns and castles with. We took full advantage of the 9-euro ticket (and the wonderful experience of sprinting to catch each delayed regional train connection) in order to explore Baden-Württemberg from Heidelberg and Stuttgart to the



Black Forest and Lake Constance. I went to Italy, Paris, and Switzerland for the first time and visited family in Munich and Berlin.

I couldn't have imagined beforehand the breadth of new experiences I would have, ranging from my newfound love of traveling to research in Molecular Biology. With the transition into Duke in Berlin, I've been able to compare the two different experiences of working versus studying and gain a broader perspective on life in Germany - Tübingen, a medieval university town in Southern Germany, couldn't be more different from the city of Berlin. I've spent this semester learning about German art, history, culture and language, making my education more well-rounded and reinforcing my desire to major in both German and Biology. I am so glad that I made the decision to turn this semester abroad into a 7-month adventure in Germany, and I would highly recommend combining an internship with a semester in Berlin!"



Feel free to email us at [duke@international.fu-berlin.de](mailto:duke@international.fu-berlin.de) with any questions about the program or to get in contact with one of our current Duke-in-Berliners.

