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What awaited me during my exchange in Freiburg, Germany, was above and beyond my expectations. In my initial opinion, I saw this year as a chance to immerse myself



Picture 1 My first day snowboarding with the ski fields of Feldberg behind me

in the German culture and language. Little did I know that as well as experiencing the life of German university students, their ideals, history, and culture, I would also be rewarded with something just as valuable – an expanded understanding of the whole world through the multi-cultural friendships I formed. This was due to constant and unavoidable interaction in groups where at least three languages were thrown around, where no majority existed sharing a similar heritage, and where the interest of each person in the other's background overcame any barriers. Furthermore throughout this time I learned an even deeper understanding of what it meant to be an Australian.

Freiburg could not have been a better place to choose to study International Relations. My classes were led by lecturers who encouraged the ideas of the students while guiding them with their own practical and theoretical experiences. The students were interesting, intelligent and influenced by the environmentally 'green' surroundings of Freiburg. I had the opportunity to take study trips that linked theory with practice and built lifetime bonds with other students from around the globe.

Freiburg is set in the beautiful Blackforest an hour from the borders of France and Switzerland. To spend a day in a different country was simple and easy. The International Club and the University offered diverse activities and sports including weekend trips away, hiking tours, sports etc. One of my particular highlights was joining the uni swim group, with whom I learned plenty of German slang during our swimming camps and competitions. During the winter, to shake the blues, inhale fresh air, and acknowledge the breathtaking views of the Blackforest, I took up snowboarding in Feldberg, only an hour away by train and included in my semester ticket. Afterwards I would consume the best \$1.80 spaghetti at Brennessel and then drink Gluehwein (mulled wine) with friends at the Christmas Markets. As soon as spring set in, riding around on my bicycle each day, swimming, and grilling (bbq) outside became regular activities.

I would not hesitate to recommend studying in Freiburg, and my advice to those who wish to go would be simply have an open mind to the many different experiences that await you each day.

Picture 2 My farewell party. This included: a Swiss, a Canadian, an Italian, a Russian, a Bulgarian, two Germans, and two Australians (myself included)

