

Goslar Scholarship

My Experience — Written by Ayden Mifsud

BEFORE THE ARRIVAL:

As I stood at the airport, the best word to describe how I felt was nervous. Spending 20 days in another country without my family initially sounded daunting, and it seemed impossible not to feel homesick. However, I was determined to enjoy myself as much as I could. I was not alone, as another student was travelling with me, though we barely knew each other and had to represent our country together. As I boarded the first plane to Frankfurt, my nervousness shifted to optimism, and I started to imagine the freedom that 20 days of independence could bring. The flight began, and I saw Malta slowly become a speck in the water. I started to think about how large the world really is. I was going to be hundreds of kilometres away from home, and my uncertainty about what to expect only grew stronger, since living in the same building with over 70 students from 15 countries was completely new to me.

We landed in Frankfurt and still had to board a second flight to Hannover. I was surprised by the sheer scale of Frankfurt Airport, as I had never been inside a single building that felt the size of an entire town. We found our gate and noticed a group of about five teenagers who looked the same age as us. We guessed that they were students from another country who were also going to spend the 20 days with us, and we turned out to be right.

ARRIVAL:

We landed in Hannover after a relatively short flight of less than an hour and were greeted by one of the scholarship leaders. We then met two British students who had arrived some time before us, and we had a pleasant conversation with them about our travels. After a little while, the students we had previously seen in Frankfurt arrived; they were from the USA. It was reassuring to see our group slowly growing, because seeing several people my age reminded me that I would not be alone. Once our group of eight had fully assembled, we put our luggage in the taxi, boarded, and set off for the building where we would spend almost a month of our lives. I spent the next half hour talking with the

British students beside me and admiring the view of the vast, lush scenery outside the window. I was fascinated by the building itself, which had a traditional, warm atmosphere throughout its halls. We introduced ourselves, completed the official enrolment, and ate our first German meal while talking to the leaders about our countries.

Excitement was building among the students as we were introduced to our roommates and our rooms. My roommate was one of the American students we had seen earlier in Frankfurt, and his name was Alex. My first experience with a roommate was reasonably peaceful, as we kept our belongings to ourselves, respected each other's boundaries, and sometimes even shared snacks. It felt strange sleeping in a bed that was not mine, but it also felt adventurous because I was so far away from everyone I was close to.

Routine:

The next day, we were introduced to our daily routine. A typical day involved breakfast at 8.00 a.m. and lessons an hour later. Breakfast was one of the best parts of the day, as the dining room, which was used for every meal, was built in a way that was very similar to a school canteen, with long tables where several students could eat together. The breakfast food was good and there was a satisfying variety of options, ranging from pastries and cereals to cold meats and vegetables. After breakfast, we were introduced to our teachers and placed into classes based on our level of German. I was at A2 level, so I was grouped in the upper beginner class.

Lessons were split into three sessions of 1.5 hours each, with half-hour breaks in between. I was initially confused by the lesson structure, as it was not taught like a traditional class. Instead, we learnt through games such as musical chairs and memory games with German adjectives, as well as projects such as making a music video or a short film. The teacher was friendly and optimistic about our success, and he always encouraged us to practise German in the classroom because it was the only language we were allowed to speak. During the half-hour breaks, we had the opportunity to write our names on the activity charts on the wall, which we did after the lessons of the day. The activities were also diverse: there were relaxing activities such as art and board games, as well as more adventurous ones such as hiking in the nearby forest and playing sports like volleyball and extreme frisbee.

Lunch took place during the second break, and it felt the most traditionally German of all the meals. The

food often included German dishes such as Schnitzel, Currywurst and Leberkäse, all of which were incredibly delicious. Dinner was at 7.00 p.m., and it was relatively similar to lunch, though less traditional and more suited to a general audience. Two hours later, at 9.00 p.m., we had to gather in the main hall to go over the activities planned for the next day and sing an amazing song called "Geile Zeit," which every student loved and sang along to. The final part of the day was called Flurrunde, when all the boys and girls went to their respective hallways to talk about their day. This part was especially fun because I could hear about other people's experiences, though most of our conversations involved joking around. We also had special activities on the weekends, which I really enjoyed. Saturday was the busier of the two days, as it was full of activities such as swimming in a wave pool, hiking, and visiting museums. Sunday was my personal favourite because we were allowed to sleep in, and the brunch we had instead of lunch was particularly delicious.

Länderabend:

The Länderabend, which quite literally means "Country Night," was one of the best activities for bringing us closer as a group. The night included food from our respective countries, along with performances that we had prepared beforehand. My experience was rather unique because, instead of giving a theatrical or musical performance, we created a Kahoot that each student could join to learn about Malta. It honestly went better than expected, as everyone was laughing and having fun with it, and we also received praise from the other students for our creative idea. Many of the other performances included songs, such as the Tunisian and Bulgarian performances, and I became good friends with members of both groups



Exam Day:

Most students, including me, needed to take an exam at the end of the course to earn a certificate for their respective level. Our exam was easier than the

one I took in Malta, especially the writing section, as it was clearer, but everyone still felt anxious throughout it. The most stressful part of the exam was the speaking section later in the day, which had the same structure as the Fit in Deutsch 2 exam back in Malta. My roommate did not have an exam because he was at a highly advanced level, so he slept in while I had to wake up early for mine.

The Final Day:

The final day was filled with emotion, not only because we could return to our countries, but also because we had to say goodbye to the friends we had made. The day before, there had been a party to celebrate what we had learnt and the experiences we had shared along the way. Many of us, including me, went outside to the volleyball field for the last time to talk and look at the sky. I made so many amazing friends there from various countries, including Bulgaria, Tunisia, Slovakia, England and more. Due to a previous agreement with our leaders, we were allowed to stay up until 3.00 a.m., but unfortunately Malta and the USA were assigned to leave for the airport at 2.30 a.m., so we had to say goodbye first. Everybody cried as they watched their friends leave, but I still talk to some of them now through social media. It was an incredible experience full of joy, wonder and discovery, but I am also happy to be home.



My classroom.



The routine chart of the week, with constantly changing activities.

An example of the images shown to us in the hall room about the activities we would do the following day.



TAGESABLAUF SONNTAG	
9:00 - 12:00	Brunch
10:30	Einzelkinderbetreuung
13:00	Einzelkinderbetreuung
14:00	Einzelkinderbetreuung
15:00	Einzelkinderbetreuung
16:00	Einzelkinderbetreuung
18:00 - 19:00	Einzelkinderbetreuung
19:00 - 21:00	Einzelkinderbetreuung
21:00	Einzelkinderbetreuung
21:30	Einzelkinderbetreuung
Ab 22:30	Einzelkinderbetreuung