

Spotlight



Interview

*Warnung: Auslandsaufenthalte können süchtig machen!
Diese zwei Studentinnen erzählen, warum sie immer wieder ins Ausland wollen!*

SCHWER by Clare Maas

KSENIA NIKOLAJCUK

Can you tell me about your experiences studying and working abroad?

I have been interested in travelling and exploring new cultures from an early age and I started taking part in short exchange programmes and international projects when I was about 15 years old. My first longer stay abroad was a High School Exchange Program in the United States when I was 17. I was placed in an American host family in Pennsylvania and I was able to experience what it was like to be a high school student in the US for five months. I had a superb time and I think this experience abroad led me to my decision to study English and American Cultural Studies at university. During my studies, I decided to go back to the US and study at California State University in Los Angeles with a **PROMOS** scholarship. My host university offered excellent classes for both of my majors and I got a great “college experience” while also taking fascinating classes in business and African American literature. Now I am on my third adventure abroad, doing an internship in the UK, working at the German Embassy in London.

What exactly is the PROMOS programme?

PROMOS is run by the German Academic Exchange Service and administrated by individual universities. It basically provides financing for students to spend up to six months studying in another country, anywhere around the world. It helps to cover your living costs and tuition fees. The application process at my home university is fairly easy, as long as you already know where you want to study. I just had to submit a letter of recommendation, a transcript and a letter of motivation stating my plans for my study abroad and how it would fit in with my degree. A committee then chooses the best applicants and offers them the scholarship.

What made you interested in studying and working abroad?

Being originally from Russia, I think growing up in two different cultures is one key factor that motivated me to explore other cultures as well and to study abroad. After having a wonderful first experience in the US, my desire for travelling and learning about

other cultures was unstoppable, like an addiction! Even before starting my university studies, I was always looking for options and opportunities to go abroad. I also volunteered quite a bit for exchange organizations and took part in international projects at school and university, which furthered my interest in studying and working abroad.

How is studying in the US different from studying in Germany?

I think that the educational systems at high school and at university in the USA are very similar to each other. The US school system prepares the students for a very similar working atmosphere, which universities and colleges later offer to students. Students are required to do homework, hand in papers and assignments, or work on group projects and can earn extra credit through extra projects. This way of studying is found in universities as well. Homework was something that I was used to doing at school, but I certainly did not expect it to be part of my university experience in the US. University in Germany requires much more independent study and there is usually only one chance to influence your final grade — one massive exam after sitting through a semester full of lectures. University in the US also offers students a very basic general education in the first two years of their undergraduate degree before they have to pick a major, while students in Germany usually specialize in one or two subjects right away.

What benefits have you gained from your time abroad (either personal or career-related)?

Besides improving my language skills and learning about other cultures, I've also learned quite a bit about my own culture. When you're living abroad, you realize what distinguishes your own culture from others, and you notice trivial things that are surprisingly different. Of course, living abroad has also helped me to become more independent, flexible and understanding, and I think the most important benefits gained from my times abroad are the lasting friendships with people from all over the world.

How was your English before you studied in America? How is it now?

As I was already studying English at university, my English was already pretty good even before I went to Cal State. My year abroad in California helped me to bring my English up to date, converse more fluently and improve my academic English skills.

Did anything surprise you in LA or in London?

I was surprised by how many cultures I was able to experience during my stays abroad. Of course, I knew and expected cities such as Los Angeles and London to be very multicultural, but I was still surprised to find so many different people, cultures, traditions and languages in one place. Besides learning a lot about American and English life, I was also able to get a peek into many other cultures through friends, food, music, cultural events at school and my classes as well.

What's your top tip for people who would like to either study or work abroad?

Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. To enjoy and experience it to the fullest, you have to give yourself a push and do more than you ever saw yourself doing: try new foods, take up a new hobby, talk to more people, ask more questions, explore places

you wouldn't usually pick and remember to speak the native language of your host country as often as possible! I think this motto helped me to experience some more peculiar things during my stays abroad and made these adventures unforgettable.

MARINA MARQUES

Can you tell me a little about your experiences studying and working abroad?

Since I left school in 2012, I've spent about two and half years abroad. First, I spent a year in the city of Derby, near Nottingham, as a Twinning Ambassador for my hometown of Osnabrück. I worked as a team member for two departments there: Tourism and Economic Regeneration. After this experience, I wanted to delay going back to Germany, so I moved on to Angers in France, coincidentally another one of Osnabrück's twin cities, where I helped out in an Irish pub for five months. And lastly, I've just come back from a year of studying abroad with Erasmus+ at the University of Chester in the UK.

What exactly is the Erasmus programme?

It's one of the most well-known exchange programmes in Europe that allows university students to study and research abroad at any university their home university has an agreement with. I think you can get money for work placements, too, but you have to organize them yourself. For a university exchange, the application process is pretty straightforward, and you get money each month to help you pay for food and living. Also, you don't have to pay the tuition fees at your host university, but all the classes you take can be accredited when you get back!

What made you interested in studying and working abroad?

After school, I didn't really know what to do next. I've always enjoyed learning about new cultures and languages, though, and I knew about the Twinning Ambassador programme that Osnabrück runs with some of its twin cities. So I tried applying and I was lucky enough to get the position in Derby, in northern England. From then on, I've just kept on wanting to go back!

How is studying in the UK different from studying in Germany?

I think the main difference is how you are assessed. In Germany, you go to class and write one long term paper at the end of each semester. In the UK, it was different because we wrote several essays throughout the year in each class and I also sat two exams in that year. I personally prefer it that way. It means you're not dependent on a single grade but rather an average of a whole year's work. Also, the atmosphere was different because the University of Chester has numerous student societies, as do most British universities from what I heard. These can be sports clubs (tennis, hockey, rugby, even pole dancing!) or just based on a common interest (e.g. Manga Society, Catholic Society, or, my favourite, the Harry Potter Society). This made it incredibly easy for us exchange students to meet actual British people! It was great fun; it isn't compulsory, but you'll always have something to do that's entertaining and affordable.

What benefits have you gained from your time abroad (either personal or career-related)?

The personal benefit was definitely a boost in confidence. When you go abroad and can't run to mummy with every issue, you



learn how to rely on yourself. I was surprised by how much I had picked up about organizing a household from my mum that I could apply to my own little flat. I also learned how to ask for things I didn't know. I remember being rather reserved before going abroad, but I quickly "unlearn" that attitude when I ran into issues with my wages and phone line etc. I also learnt how to meet new people. This might seem daft, but at the beginning I was ridiculously bad at small talk. I'm still not overly great at it, but at least I can avoid awkward silences, so I guess that's something. Career-wise, I made some valuable contacts in the UK that I am still in touch with, so if I go abroad again after university, I might have an easier start. I even met a few Russians during my year in Derby who have offered me work in their office in Tver, so who knows where I'll end up in the next few years!

How was your English before you spent time in the UK? How is it now?

I think my English was passable back then. I got by, but I lacked crucial vocabulary and confidence. Once I stopped caring so much about how I sounded to the British, and got my new friends to correct me, my English improved a great deal. Now, when people try to guess where my accent is from, they often say New Zealand or South Africa. I don't believe I sound like either, but at least they classify me amongst native English speakers, which makes me insanely proud!

Did anything surprise you in the UK?

Before going to England, I expected to be proven wrong on all the stereotypes we see about the British in the media, but as I was queuing for a bus that wasn't there yet, sipping on my tea and dunking a biscuit, I was most surprised by how warmly the British behaved towards me. I saw nothing of the stiff upper lip and cold distance I had previously associated with the UK. I felt very welcome wherever I went. When my relatives ask me why I love the UK so much, I like to tell them that it's the perfect mixture between German efficiency and Southern European *savoir vivre*, and that is certainly not what I had expected.

What's your top tip for people who would like to either study or work abroad?

My top tip is to just go for it. And always choose the option that will make for the better story. Even if you hit a few bumps along the way, you'll either be laughing at them or learn something important for next time. And as they said in *Doctor Who*, "We're all just stories in the end. So make it a good one!"

a great deal ▶ sehr viel

accredited

▶ anerkannt

awkward

▶ unangenehm

coincidentally

▶ zufälligerweise

credit

▶ (hier) Leistungspunkte

daft

▶ albern

embassy

▶ Botschaft

Erasmus+

▶ European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students

major

▶ (hier) Hauptfach

peek ▶ kurzer Blick

pole dancing

▶ Stangentanz

PROMOS

▶ Programm zur Steigerung der Mobilität von Studierenden deutscher Hochschulen

stiff upper lip

▶ emotionale Kontrolle

term paper (papers)

▶ Hausarbeit

tuition fees

▶ Studiengebühren

undergraduate degree

▶ Bachelorstudium

The words you need

Wie können Sie als Lehrer oder Lehrerin den Text in Ihrer Klasse bearbeiten?

LEICHT MITTEL SCHWER

1. Text comprehension	5
<p>Put the events below in the appropriate place on the correct person's timeline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. exchange student in California b. exchange student in Chester c. finished high school d. work placement in London e. possible job in Russia f. school exchange g. temporary job in France h. twin city ambassador in Derby <p>Ksenia:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">school university now future</p> <p>Marina:</p>	

2 Vocabulary	5																										
<p>Find the adjective in the text that is a translation of each German word below. Then find another English synonym of your own. An example has been done for you.</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">akzeptabel</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;">passable - adequate</td> </tr> <tr> <td>alltäglich</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>äußerst wichtig</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>bezahlbar</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>faszinierend</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>hervorragend</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>seltsam</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>unkompliziert</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>unterhaltsam</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>verpflichtend</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>verständnisvoll</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>vielzählig</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>zurückhaltend</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px dotted black;"></td> </tr> </table>		akzeptabel	passable - adequate	alltäglich		äußerst wichtig		bezahlbar		faszinierend		hervorragend		seltsam		unkompliziert		unterhaltsam		verpflichtend		verständnisvoll		vielzählig		zurückhaltend	
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vielzählig																											
zurückhaltend																											

3. Discussion	5
<p>In groups, discuss what interested you most in the students' interview answers. Was there anything you weren't expecting to read? What are you interested in finding out more about? How has reading these interviews affected your opinion on studying or working abroad?</p>	

4. Research	5
<p>Go online and find out more about anything that interests you. Also look up PROMOS and ERASMUS+.</p>	

Extension tasks

5. Writing 1	5
<p>You have been asked to write a blog post for your school's blog encouraging pupils to spend time studying or working in an English-speaking country. Write about 300 words, including summaries of a couple of options, the relevant application processes and the benefits that can be gained through spending time abroad.</p>	

or

6. Writing 2	5
<p>Imagine you want to apply to study abroad. You need to write a letter of motivation for your application. Write about 300 words, including answers to the following questions:</p> <p>What particular personal and school-related strengths do you have? What interests will you be able to follow in the country you're applying for? What career aims might this exchange help you to fulfil? What previous experience do you have that shows that you are prepared for a challenge and excited about really making the most of your time in that country and/or at that university?</p>	

Notes for teachers

Language level: C1 on CEFR.

Language & skills practice: vocabulary & formal register; reading comprehension; extended writing.

Content aim: to demonstrate the intercultural exchange of spending time abroad, to introduce the concept of urban farms and to encourage discussion on participating in an urban farm project.

Procedure: best spread over 2-3 lessons, with some tasks given as homework.



Clare Maas

Clare is a Lecturer in EFL and EAP at Trier University. Before moving into tertiary education, she taught general English at German grammar schools, and English for Specific Purposes at several language academies in the UK and Germany.

Foto: Clare Maas, Adrian T. Kubica/DAAD

Reading	20 mins	Can also be done at home. Can also be done as jigsaw reading, with some students (stronger ones) reading Ksenia's interview and others reading Marina's, OR with more groups and each group reading both students' answers to one interview question.
Text comprehension	10 mins	
Vocabulary	15 mins	Pupils can share synonyms to enlarge their vocabulary pools. Teacher could introduce use of thesaurus here.
		Check answers in plenum and teach new synonyms.
Discussion	10 mins	Best done in groups of 4-5.
Research	5-15 mins	Can be done in discussion groups, or as homework. May be more efficient to give each group a different point to research.
Writing	30 mins or as homework	Pupils should use the ideas from their discussions.

Answers

Textcomprehension:
 Ksenia: f. a. d.
 Marina c. b. e.
 school university now future
 Vocabulary: (plus possible synonyms)
 akzeptabel - passable - adequate
 alltaglich - trivial - minor/everday/nonessential
 uerst wichtig - crucial - essential/vital
 bezahlbar - affordable - cheap/inexpensive
 faszinierend - fascinating - interesting/exciting
 hervorragend - superb - amazing/fantastic
 seltsam - peculiar - strange/odd/curious
 unkompliziert - straightforward - simple/clear/uncomplicated
 unterhaltsam - entertaining - enjoyable/interesting/fun
 verpflichtend - compulsory - mandatory/obligatory
 verständnisvoll - understanding - considerate/kind/patient
 vielzahlig - numerous - various/plentiful
 zuruckhaltend - reserved - shy/distant/cautious



In funf Schritten zum Studium, Praktikum oder Sprachkurs im Ausland: „studieren weltweit – ERLEBE ES!“ liefert die wichtigsten Informationen, Organisations- und Planungshilfen fur einen Auslandsaufenthalt wahrend des Studiums. Schau dir die Infos jetzt schon an und lass dich von Correspondents - Studierende, die weltweit live von ihren Aufenthalten berichten und Tipps geben - inspirieren!

Hol dir die Infos und Inspiration auf studieren-weltweit.de und auf [instagram.com/studierenweltweit](https://www.instagram.com/studierenweltweit), [facebook.com/studierenweltweit](https://www.facebook.com/studierenweltweit), twitter.com/studieren_www. Informationen zu allen englischsprachigen Landern dieser Welt findest du auerdem unter: daad.de/laenderinformationen.

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