

Stop When The Red Lights Flash

Not only is this title a remarkable song by the US American band "Green Day". It is also one of those particular experiences that will strike you when moving to Germany. Here is some advice on how to make the most of your time in the country of cakes, cars and castles.

Yvonne Ewen

Being asked to write down five tips for international students, I thought I could manage this easily. From A such as "Ausländerbehörde" (Aliens authority) over L (Living expenses) to V like "Visa" there are the obvious issues that foreign students are concerned with when communicating with the HSBA International Office.

But, on a second glance, is living abroad really only about forms and figures? Is it not the small things that make the difference? And yet, they are hard to pin down. To change perspective, I have talked to some of our international master's students to see what they are struggling with when preparing for their stay in Germany. And after their arrival. And, of course, while being in the country.

Do you agree or disagree with the following tips?

Want to add something?

Share your ideas with us on facebook:
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More information & tips on www.daad.de/deutschland/en/

FIVE TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

1

Overload

Whether you are an exchange student or an international degree student, your first week will be overwhelming in terms of how much information you will have to absorb. Studying in a new country, at a new university, surrounded by a(n) (entirely) new language and customs, is sure to make you feel lost at some point. Don't panic. Allow yourself some time before the official agenda starts and arrive earlier to get acquainted with the city and its people. Register with the authorities, do your first shopping in the supermarket, take a stroll around your area. You will be much more relaxed during your first week at the university and benefit from what you see and hear. And don't forget: HSBA students and staff are there to help.

2

Tongue twister

"Never knew before what eternity was made for. It is to give some of us a chance to learn German", Mark Twain wrote in the late 19th century. Well, whatever your opinion is about the German language: When you plan to settle down in the country, it is worthwhile taking it up. In Hamburg, in particular, you will not find it difficult to shop in the supermarket without even knowing how to say "Thank you." However, if you really want to immerse yourself in the German culture and relate to its people, it does make a difference. At HSBA every year we offer a six months' beginners' course to help you make the first steps. Go with Twain and start pronouncing: "Freundschaftsbeziehungen".

3

The German way

Stopping at the traffic lights, waiting for the lights to turn green, this is just one of the situations that are sure to surprise you. If your schedule has your classes start at nine o'clock it means that they will begin at nine – sharp. Not ten past, not five past. The systematic German way of organising and planning ahead every single step of their lives may strike you as strange. And perhaps it is, in a certain way. Be prepared for this special attitude of approaching life, take it with a great deal of humour, and add your own flavour. And, who knows, at the end of the day you may even appreciate it.

4

Wohngemeinschaft (WG)

You are looking for a reasonably priced accommodation? You are open to meet new people? Well, then you should consider moving into a "Wohngemeinschaft". This concept is widespread in Germany. It basically means that you have your own room in a flat, sharing kitchen, bathroom and possibly also a living room with others. Usually they split utility bills, and if you get on with each other, you may even cook, watch TV and go out together. The best website is www.wg-gesucht.de, but there are many more links to be found in our "HSBA International Student Guide" available on our website for international students.

5

Mix and mingle, but ...

Do meet Germans at HSBA events and outside of the classroom. Join one of the numerous groups in Hamburg aimed at helping you to find German friends such as "Speaking German with the Germans". But: admit to yourself that sometimes you need some time off. Make use of the cosmopolitan character of the city and its international networks such as "Internations" or "English Stammtisch". Meet up with people that are in the situation as you are and even are from your own country. It will help to overcome your 'German blues' and put things into perspective. And make you ready for more things to come.