

ERFAHRUNGSBERICHT SOMMERSPRACHKURSE IN BAYERN 2017

[Report on summer course in Bavaria in 2017]

Herkunftsland [county of origin]:	Kosovo
Heimathochschule [home university]:	University of Prishtina
Studiengang [course of study]:	Computer Science
Sprachkurs in Bayern [course in Bavaria]:	von [from] 01.08. bis [until] 29.08.2017
Bezeichnung des Sprachkurses [name of the course]:	DaF Sommerakademie
Kursort in Bayern [place of the course]:	Würzburg
Sprachkursniveau des besuchten Kurses [course level]:	B1+

We want our good experiences to last as long as possible, but the short duration of this one, makes us appreciate it even more. After it ends we are left with a wish to go back, a wish to meet again with the people that we spent most of our time together and of course, to seize every opportunity that enables us to better our German. An expanded horizon is the first thing that comes to mind when describing this experience, therefore I feel very lucky and grateful to have been given this scholarship by BAYHOST. This has been the case with my story, but I don't want to heighten your expectations, so I will try to be as factual as possible now.

The visa process

Firstly I booked an appointment for a short-term business (Schengen) visa at the website of the German Embassy in Prishtina. You could choose the date you wanted, so I set the appointment on the nearest date available, which would be a month later. When the date arrived, BAYHOST and the course organizers had already sent the necessary letters and I had prepared all the other documents required for the visa application as well. There was no visa fee, and all I had to pay for, was the travel insurance for the duration of stay (mine was 33 days). Finally, a week after the appointment, I got my visa and couldn't have been happier.

(Note: I wrongly applied for a touristic visa at first, for which I would have gotten an appointment 4 months later. Luckily, I found that out on time and immediately applied for a business one.)

Journey and arrival

I had friends who I wanted to visit in Vienna, so decided to go there first. Thus, I took a bus to Vienna and stayed there for two days. In the wee hours of August 1st I traveled to Würzburg, and arrived there in the morning. Soon I met with one of the tutors, at the main train station, where we were supposed to meet. All the tutors were very helpful and even went out of their way to make sure we had no problems and enjoyed our stay.

Stay in Würzburg

On the arrival day we got a bus pass (20€) valid in busses and trams in Würzburg for the whole month of August and a student chip card which allowed us to eat in the canteens and cafeterias at discounted prices. The deposit for the card was 10€, which was refunded when we returned the card.

Accommodation - We (the BAYHOST scholars) were accommodated at "Internationales Haus" on Friedenstraße 2. We lived in single apartments with our own bathrooms and kitchens (no oven, but only cook tops which I never used, mostly because of the lack of pans and pots). There was also a common room, music practice room, and other ones where all of us could hang out together. We washed the clothes at the basement using the washing machines, while paying 1.50€ (+50 cents for detergent capsules/tablets) with the student card.

There was no Wi-Fi in the dormitory, but we had Ethernet cables in our rooms, hence I used my laptop to access the internet and also created a mobile hotspot from it. Still, I bought a prepaid SIM card with internet data plan, so I could use mobile data at any place. For navigation I mostly used offline maps on applications such as MAPS.ME, which has many cool features and is open-source.

The deposit for the accommodation was 320 euros, so on the second day of our stay we received the money that was left from the scholarship. If we left our rooms in a good condition, we got refunded after the end of the course.

Transport: Würzburg is not a big city, so you can get easily anywhere you want. The city center was about 15 mins away by foot, whereas we took the bus daily to the University. We walked around 5 mins (<2mins run) through the park to the bus stop, and then arrived at the Z6 building in about 8 minutes by bus.

Lessons: In June we had a non-obligatory online placement test, which would help the course organizers get a better idea of our language level. The first day at the course was like a trial lesson and if we didn't feel comfortable on the level we were put on, we could easily change it. My class consisted of 14 students from 9 different countries. We had classes from 10:00 to 13:30 with thirty minutes break, and from 14:30 to 16:00 had electives, which actually were mandatory for the scholarship holders. We could attend two from the nine electives and each of them lasted 5 days. The first one I took was "Deutsch (lernen) mit Musik", where we learned songs in German, and the second was "Wie ticken wir Deutschen?" which dealt with the German culture and stereotypes.

The teachers were excellent and always made the classes fun, so the hours went by swiftly. We would sometimes split into groups and play games, listen to songs and discuss their meaning or have one-on-one conversations with different class members. But of course we also had homework every day and needed to do a lot to keep up with the lessons. I have to mention that we only finished the first part of the level, meaning 5 chapters of the Aspekte book we used. I think this way of teaching was very effective and it gave us time to grasp the grammar and vocabulary steadily. For learning the vocabulary I mostly used Quizlet, which already had collections of flashcards for every chapter of Aspekte.

Food: During the one hour break we went to the cafeteria and ate lunch. It usually cost me around 4 euros, but of course it depended on what and how much I ate. After the course we usually went to a supermarket near the University to buy the groceries we needed.

Cultural program

Before arriving in Würzburg, the course sent us a brochure with every possible relevant information you can think of. The course had prepared lots of activities for us already, and there was always something interesting and exciting to do. From having the typical Bavarian breakfast, to tasting different flavors of beers, we were slowly immersing ourselves into the German way of living.

The course program included many guided tours and trips, where we not only saw the beauty of these places, but also got to know how they reached their current form while hearing about their history. The first guided tours were around Würzburg, where we familiarized ourselves with the city and its jewels. On the first week we took a boat on the Main River to Veitshöchheim, while on the second one we took the train to the medieval town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber.

Our next destination was Nürnberg, but it wasn't part of the course program. Me and a group of friends also visited Stuttgart, Heidelberg and Frankfurt. There are many DB offers for groups of people traveling for a day like the "Bayern-Ticket" and "Schönes-Wochenende-Ticket" which we bought. Besides the train, I used other means of transport like Flixbus and BlaBlaCar which were really worth it.

Our nights were also fun and diverse. There were times when we went to the old bridge and drank wine while enjoying the music of local street musicians, other times when we would go to a beer garden, a pub, a party, or a club, but also times when we just got together and played games.

There were 91 course participants, so there was a great possibility to find your kind of people and make valuable friendships. There was always something new to learn about Germany and almost 30 other countries where the students came from. You could see the differences, but also understand how similar we are after all. It was the best way to learn the language, and prepare myself for the next time I'll be in Germany, which I hope will be very soon.