

Now my time in the US is already over and I can't believe how fast the time flew by. It feels like just a few days ago when I was full of excitement making my first step into a plane which would bring me to Brookfield: a new city, a new school, a new family, a new home. I just didn't know what will expect me in a country I have never been before, with people who speak a different language and have a different culture. But now when I look back I really don't regret my decision to do the semester abroad! I have learned and seen so many things, which all helped me to grow up and become independent.

Family and Friends

Furthermore, I became more open by having to reach out to people and making the first step in order to build a friendship. And yes it was hard in the first week, but as soon as you see that you have started making relationships with people, you will see that the effort was worth it! Getting to live with two host families gave me the opportunity to have two new homes in America.

Because my first host family wasn't able to host me anymore, I moved into one of my friends' house. And it probably sounds hard, but this was one of the best things that could have happened to me. I had the opportunity to see a different American lifestyle and built up a relationship with a new amazing family. They all supported me in the best way, whether in form of



cheering for me at races or just in helping me to enjoy my last weeks as best as possible and taking the most out of it. Together we went to Basketball games and to the movie theater, explored typical American food no one should miss during a stay in America and played cards. My new host sister and I worked out together, had some relaxing movie nights and a fun time listening and singing to music on our way to school. I still can't believe the kindness of this host family, how my host parents worried about me like I am their own daughter, the boys made jokes on my account like I am their sister and finally how my host sister and I became really close in such a short time. On the day before I left I actually got to see my first family again to say goodbye, which I am very thankful for, because my first family saw me as a part of their family from the moment I arrived in the U.S. And yes, there were some hard times, especially with little kids, but I will never forget moments like when the 5-year-old said to me that she loves me to the moon and back because I am her big sister and that's what sisters do! Or moments with my host mom and I relaxing on the couch and gossiping about my host dad's cooking skills, talking about god and the world and she told she had never had such a cool roommate like me ;) I really enjoyed the trips we made to Arizona, Colorado and Chicago, but the little moments like these are the ones I will remember!



Besides my host families, I will miss my new friends the most! The times when we went to eat Tacos or drove around to get some snacks were so much fun! Especially in the last weeks we had some sleepovers, made cookies, went sledding and hung out in the mall and it was always nice to spend time together!

Sport

One of my most favorite things was being part of two different sport teams and experiencing what it feels like to be part of such great friend groups and how to practice hard to get in shape and achieve your goals!

In particular during my last weeks in the USA I got to enjoy more aspects of being part in my crosscountry skiing team! As we were further in the season the first races got set up. And because the weather was too warm, the team travelled for about 4-6 hours to be able to actually ski on snow. Honestly at first I thought that it's gonna be awful but it was actually the most fun time ever. Almost every Friday the team drove up north right after school. And not even the time we spend in the car together listening to music and telling jokes but also the stops for dinner at food places made the drive way more fun than expected. And then on Saturdays we had races. The races always varied in length (between 5 and 11 kilometers), how hilly they were and what technique you were allowed to use, which made it interesting and different for each race. Therefore, it was lots of fun warming up with the team, actually race yourself, cheering for the boys, going on a cooldown and watching the awards! At night we came back to our dorms and had a lot of fun playing games, relaxing in our hammocks, going for a walk and preparing our skies for the next day. On Sundays we usually had a second race after which we were heading back home, excited for a nice nap on the car ride to regenerate some energy from an exciting but also exhausting weekend ;)

And then in the middle of January we finally got tons of snow, so that our coaches were able to set up weekly Wednesday night races, which were just against your own teammates, but still really fun. All in all, being in this crosscountry skiing team was probably my favorite experience. The people I met in this club were all some of the smartest, nicest



and funniest people I have ever met. Each single person in the team whether it was the coaches, the parents, the manager or my teammates gave their best to include me, so that I was able to gain this unique experience, which gave me so much more than just learning a new sport. Going out there on the trails every day, exercising, getting some fresh air, meeting people and skiing in beautiful landscapes between snow-covered trees cleared my mind and made me feel alive, stronger, free and just happy. I can't be thankful enough for this experience and the amazing people I met whom I can call my friends!

On the other hand, I even really liked watching sports and going to the football or basketball games and cheering for my school. Feeling this team spirit and showing my belonging by wearing the school spirit wear and playing with the school band during the halftimes was simply amazing. Having sport this professional and serious at school is definitely a thing I will miss in Germany. It's still unbelievable how important sport is for the whole country and how you can even get scholarships for playing for a specific college.

School

Speaking of college, I really learned a lot about the school system in the USA. I came to the decision that having the opportunity to choose your classes in school is amazing because the students get supported in the subjects there are good at and you can try more specific classes to find out what interests you have. For example, I had the class Anatomy and Physiology in which we did several dissections among other things. For example, we dissected a real cat, a brain and an eye of different animals, which made the class fun and interesting. All in all, the students are all way more motivated, not only in sports, but also in school and they work hard because they know that they need to get into a good college and try to receive scholarships because the costs for going to University in the USA are incredibly high and not just a few families need to take loans to finance their children's education.

Goodbye America and Welcome back home

Finally, flying back home and saying goodbye to everyone in the U.S. was weird and tough and my feelings were totally mixed up, even though I did not fully realize then that I would leave Brookfield, my high school, my friends and host family. And then after an uneasy way back I suddenly took off the plane...

...und auf einmal war ich wieder auf deutschem Boden. Der Moment, als ich tränenüberströmt mit meinen drei Koffern zum ersten Mal nach so langer Zeit meine Familie wieder gesehen habe, war einfach unglaublich schön. Trotz Gefühlschaos gab es nichts Schöneres als meinen Bruder, Vater und meine Mutter wieder in den Arm zu nehmen!

Schließlich wieder durch die Gegend zu laufen und überall deutsche Straßenschilder zu sehen und sein gewohntes Umfeld und seine Schule wieder zu sehen, war auf jeden Fall komisch, aber nichts ist besser, als sein einzig wahres und altes Zuhause wieder zu haben.



Doch auch Wochen später kommt mir mein Auslandssemester noch vor wie ein Traum, da sich die beiden Länder und ihre Bewohner so sehr unterscheiden. Vor allem wieder in den Schulalltag zurückzukehren, war anfangs schwer, da sowohl Schüler als auch Lehrer in Deutschland verschlossener sind, als ich es aus Amerika gewohnt war und mir das Fehlen des regen Treibens und die aufgeweckte Atmosphäre einer High School, die nie schläft, doch stark aufgefallen sind.

Durch meinen Auslandsaufenthalt habe ich das Gefühl, die Welt mit anderen Augen zu sehen. Man weiß frühere Selbstverständlichkeiten mehr zu schätzen und nimmt sich Zeit, schöne Momente mehr zu genießen. Auf einmal wird einem bewusst, wie groß die Welt ist, wie viele Möglichkeiten jedem einzelnen von uns offen stehen und, dass für jeden Menschen, egal wie unterschiedlich man ist, irgendwo einen Platz in dieser Gesellschaft ist! Außerdem habe ich gelernt, dass man alles schaffen kann, wenn man es wirklich will und einem Neugier und Offenheit mehr Türen öffnet als alles Andere!

Das Abenteuer meines High School Semesters ist jetzt zwar zu Ende, doch es gibt so viel mehr in dieser Welt und ich kann es kaum erwarten alles zu entdecken und so viel aufzusaugen und mitzunehmen wie ich kann, denn meine Reise hat gerade erst begonnen!