Arrival, Move-In, and Orientation

The fall USAC students arrived on September 3rd in Hamburg tired, but excited to finally be in Germany. After a bus ride to Lüneburg, it was time to move into housing. The students were either brought to their apartments by local students, or picked up by their host families. The next morning, the semester officially began with a guided walking tour of Lüneburg, during which the students were given an overview of the 1000-year-old Hanseatic city and its rich history. Orientation continued at Leuphana University, the students’ host university for the semester. The students went on a tour of the campus and learned about German culture, the city, the program, and dealing with cultural differences.
Welcome Reception

This semester, USAC held a potluck-style Welcome Reception for all of the students and host families. Host families brought a variety of dishes, and students were asked before departure to bring a typical American candy. The students enjoyed trying the dishes the German families made, and the German families enjoyed trying American delicacies such as Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups, Laffy Taffy, and Candy Corn. It was a great opportunity for the students and families to get to know each other, and an event USAC is excited to continue in the future.

Orientation Field Trip: Hamburg

As the final part of orientation, the students went on a field trip to the nearby city of Hamburg, a thriving city of 1.8 million. The city was busier than usual partly due to the Blue Harbor Festival happening that day, but the students were still able to enjoy a guided tour of the city as well as a few hours of free time to have lunch, enjoy the weather, and see the sights.
Field Trip: Bremen

One of the USAC-organized field trips in October was to the nearby city of Bremen, known for its association with the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, “The Town Musicians of Bremen,” in which a donkey, a dog, a cat, and a rooster set out for Bremen to become musicians.

Bremen also hosts a historic market place with the town hall and statue of Roland (UNESCO World Heritage Sites), an impressive medieval quarter with twisting narrow streets, and various museums. The students received a guided city tour, had some free time to explore the city and eat lunch, and then visited the Bremen House of History, where actors perform chapters of Bremen’s history.
Field Trip: Celle

USAC’s organized field trip in December was to Celle to visit the castle, the Christmas market, and see the red and white half-timbered houses in the Altstadt. The students were given an interactive tour of the Celle Castle and had free time in the city to explore the various stalls at the Christmas market – festive treats and drinks, traditional German handcrafts, and plenty of Christmas decorations and gifts filled the streets with holiday cheer.

Sarah Maier (University of Nevada, Reno) and Jayme Schlimper (University of Houston) enjoying a treat at the Christmas market

Sandra Walker (Boise State University), Corinne Harvey (University of Iowa), and Emily McNamee (Boise State University)

Thomas Aggeles’s (College of Charleston) crowning moment in the Celle Castle

Astrid Miller (University of Nevada, Las Vegas) and Liz Schoppelrei (Wright State University) in front of the Celle Castle

Emma Satterfield (University of Idaho), Bethani Meeks (University of Idaho), and Sarah Hoffman (Denison University) practice their curtseys
USAC Classes and Class Activities

This semester, in addition to intensive German language courses, students were allowed to enroll in a variety of different German and European Studies courses: German Conversation; German Cinema; Introduction to German Literature; Ethnic Conflict and Diversity in Europe; German-Speaking Europe and Its Cultures; The European Union: Processes, Dynamics, and Structures; International Affairs since 1945; and In Search of German Roots: Tracing Your Family Genealogy.

Many of these classes had field trips throughout the semester. The International Affairs and European Union courses had the opportunity to visit the headquarters of Der Spiegel, one of Germany’s largest weekly news publications. The students received a presentation about journalism and the history of the magazine.

The students in German-Speaking Europe and Its Cultures visited an integration course for immigrants and refugees at the local Volkshochschule. The USAC students were able to ask the participants in the integration course about their experiences in Germany, their reasons for moving, and any challenges they have faced. The students in this class also visited the new Lüneburg city museum. The students led the tour through the museum themselves, as each student in the class presented a different aspect of Lüneburg history.

Ethnic Conflict and Diversity in Europe and In Search of German Roots: Tracing Your Family Genealogy visited the German Emigration center in Bremerhaven, an interactive museum in which the students learned about Germans who immigrated to the US.

Finally, the students in International Affairs visited the Institute for Theology and Peace in Hamburg for a presentation and discussion on the use of armed drones. The class also visited the nearby Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial.
Outside the Classroom

Explore Lüneburg, Explore Germany

This semester, the USAC team developed a game to encourage students to visit lesser-known sights in Lüneburg and Lower Saxony. The students were given prompts through the USAC Facebook group to complete challenges such as taking a photo with a monument or answering a trivia question. The students earned points for completing challenges and were awarded prizes such as a postcard cookbook and movie theater tickets, with a grand prize being awarded at the end of the semester to the “Weltmeister.”

Refugees in Germany

Germany has been in the headlines the past few months since it opened its borders to refugees, and even Lüneburg has played its part in welcoming the refugees to the country. Leuphana University’s Bridging Program allows refugees who need to continue their university education to enroll in classes at Leuphana, and USAC was able to open its European Union course for a Syrian refugee, who the students were excited to work alongside in class.

USAC students were also eager to help refugees through volunteer work, and several were able to contribute their time at a clothing sorting facility in Hamburg, where they processed donated clothing and other items for refugees.
Activities through Leuphana

Throughout the semester, USAC students were able to join numerous activities and groups offered by Leuphana and the International Office. For example, a few USAC students enjoyed participating in a Multicultural Lantern Festival, an old German tradition in which people walk through the streets with colorful, handmade lanterns. USAC students were allowed to go on the field trips hosted by the International Office, such as their tour of Berlin. Other students sat in on Leuphana classes and lectures in various subjects, such as Teaching German as a Foreign Language.

Many USAC students were able to benefit from Leuphana’s Tandem program, during which a German native speaker and an English native speaker meet and speak for 45 minutes in German and 45 minutes in English. The students participated in Tandem either through the German Conversation course or on their own, and they each had a unique experience getting to know a local German student and practicing their language skills outside of the classroom.

As always, the end of the semester came far too quickly, but the students had a full and fulfilling semester while they were in Lüneburg.

Photo credits: USAC Staff
Cover Photos (from top left):
- Emily McNamee (Boise State Univ.), Erika Hahne (Adrian Coll.), Noah Conger (Boise State Univ.), Nick Ferronato (Boise State Univ.), and Lucas Gallup (Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas) on the beach at Travehmünde, near Lübeck
- Anjelica Langdon (Texas State Univ., San Marcos) in Hamburg
- Sarah Hoffman (Denison Univ.) at the Christmas market in Celle
- Alexander Carrier (Texas A&M Univ.) and Josefina Cruz (Universidad Nacional Andrés Bello) finding Lüneburg’s Gradierwerk for an “Explore Lüneburg” challenge
- USAC students in front of the Lüneburg Rathaus during orientation
- Jayme Schlimper (Univ. of Houston) and Jaime Lockard (Loyola Univ. Chicago) with the statue of the Musicians of Bremen
- Thomas Aggeles (Coll. Of Charleston) looking at the Bremen Cathedral
- Emily Garrett (Univ. of Nevada, Reno), Emma Satterfield (Univ. of Idaho), Samuel Funk (Univ. of Idaho), and Kristen Dumanski (Univ. of Nevada, Reno) on the guided tour of Lüneburg
- Gary Adkins (Ohio Northern Univ.) with his tandem partner in Lüneburg
- Students in the International Affairs and European Union classes at Der Spiegel in Hamburg
- Sarah Maier (Univ. of Nevada, Reno) with the Leuphana sign on campus
- Astrid Miller (Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas) looking at gingerbread hearts at the Christmas market in Celle.