

My Experience in the United States of America

My name is Stefanie Wenzel and I spent the third semester (WiSe 12/13) at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. There, I studied social management. I chose to study in the United States because I was an exchange student a few years earlier and wanted to see what life is like as a college student compared to a high school student.

Laramie is a little town in the southwest of Wyoming which is located in the midwest of the USA. I would describe Laramie as one of those typical “western movie towns”. Not a lot of people and mostly cowboys who hang out in one of those local cowboy bars, drinking beer, listening to country music and doing square dance. Of course, drinking and going to one of the local bars is only allowed if you are 21 or older.

Like I said Laramie is a fairly small town and therefore you won't have a lot of shopping possibilities. There are a couple of cowboy shops to buy things like cowboy boots and hats. Unfortunately, there is only one other store that sells “normal” jeans and t-shirts but still it is a little different from our “fashion understanding”. To do your grocery shopping I would recommend to go to WalMart which is very good to reach via the free Cem City bus that goes every 30 minutes from one site of the town to the other. Another convenient way to reach the grocery store is “Saferide” which is student operated pick-up service. You can call them and the driver will bring you everywhere you would like to go within town. Also, renting a bike from the universities outdoor service is a nice way to get around town and not to depend on the bus. The bike rental costs \$25 for one semester.

My preparations for this exchange semester began in December (so a little more than half a year before the actual exchange) already. First of all, I had to make up my mind where I would like to spend one semester abroad. Once I made that decision I could start talking to Mr. Hoffmann and his team at the “Referat für Internationales”. To get going I checked out the homepage of my chosen university and tried to find courses that might fit the German schedule. This might take a while and from I own experience I can tell that you will change those courses a number of times. And don't worry if you find out that the courses aren't exactly what you were looking for even if you are in the host country already. There is a possibility to make changes in your schedule with the help of Ruth Shepherd (Study Abroad/Student Exchange Coordinator) and Sara J.V. Robinson (Study Abroad Advisor). Though, if you doubt to take a right course don't worry about it and take that one class at your home university before risking taking a course that won't fit into your course of study at all or failing it.

Of course, to travel into the United States as an exchange student means to have all the right papers. That includes a passport, a J1-Visa and several other forms which you can find on the German embassy website. The German embassy is fairly slow and you should schedule a meeting way ahead of time to get a meeting which fits you. The meeting will be scheduled online and there are a few questions to answer.

Once, it was clear that I will get a visa and all the necessary papers to get through customs at the airport I booked the airfare and made preparations how to get from the Denver International Airport to Laramie. I can recommend the "Green Ride". The driver picked us up at the airport and drove us directly to the Washakie Center at the University of Wyoming campus. The driver was very reliable and I felt safe driving with him.

Another very important tool is a health insurance. In cases of an accident or illness that will make life much easier because being in a hospital in the U.S.A without insurance can easily cost a few thousands a day.

The university is a very modern and big facility with a huge and pretty campus. The library is open almost 24 hours, 7 days a week and offers high speed internet. It is nice place to study and meeting friends at the enclosed little café. Several clubs which are organized by students offer opportunities to get involved in the student live and get to know many new friends. The university offers free entrance to the gym for all students which also a great place to meet people and relax from the daily stress of studying.

I chose to live in one of the universities' apartments instead of living in the dorms because to have privacy was an important point for me. You will find the different options of living at the universities' homepage. I lived in the Spanish Walk Apartment and have to say that it was pretty old and dirty and wouldn't want to live there again.

To put it in a nutshell, I can say it was a great experience to study abroad. It was great to upgrade my English skills and of course to meet new and interesting people. Although, as a social management student it's hard to find the right classes it was still an experience I wouldn't want to miss.

Ich stimme zu, dass der Bericht anderen Studierenden der FH Nordhausen zur Verfügung gestellt wird und ggf. auf den Web-Seiten der FHN veröffentlicht wird.