

After a semester of study in TUC, I am so glad that I chose to strive for the exchange opportunity last year. There is a saying, going as “believe half of what you see, but believe nothing of what you hear.” I never found it so full of wits until I set my foot on this continent, struggled a way to settle myself well, and had enough courage and curiosity to make a further exploration of all the new lands I have never been or even imagined before. This exchange experience did inject considerable new insight in me, of both my reflection and observation way and further understanding of various cultures, which help me a lot with preciser self orientation.

Man can't never stop judging. Once we were born and started to receive second-hand information from outside world continuously, stereotypes will flow in our brains. For me, I guess, as well as for most of Chinese people who more or less know something about Germany, the key words of German people are always related with seriousness, strictness, punctuality and high self-discipline, in a positive way. Since a very young age, I have browsed through all kinds of articles heaping praise upon those so-called German qualities, like how professional and considerate German people were, when they remembered to leave a piece of spare material after a construction project. I was also pretty impressed by the five-procedure German window washing theory. The writer once served as a dustman in a German family. The hostess was unsatisfied when she simply washed the windows using pure water and taught her the correct cleaning way comprising five processes, with the assistance of different tool respectively. Let alone the endless legends of German football team boasted by my male friends. Before setting off, my father kept warning me of obeying all the rules carefully, such as do not jump the red lamp and do not download music or movie from some Chinese websites. Compared to other countries, exchange to Germany was more like a pilgrim, especially for someone careless like me. But that's also exactly the charm of Germany.

The first day in Berlin had already surprised me. I knew that German people are kind-hearted, but did not expect it in such an explicit way. In the train station, a woman was saying aloud, “welcome to Berlin!” Boys on the train helped us keep the door open and showed us how to validate our tickets. The old grandpa passing by helped us with our luggage up to the stair. Many pedestrians accompanied us to our destination when we were lost. The next day when we arrived at Chemnitz, Karen's buddy Jork and his friend JJ came to pick us up. Though not so outgoing they were helpful, humorous and passionate towards life and job. Watching the small but delicate houses passing by from the car window, I found a sense of belonging begin to form. It just took one day or two to adjust myself to the life here. Our buddies offered thorough instruction, so despite of the complex registration procedure, we managed to accomplish it as soon as possible. Actually the hardest part was the food. It could not be denied that the dairy products, ice-creams, fruits, chocolates are really delicious and inexpensive. And I love the Nutella chocolate filbert jam as well as the famous Bratwurst everywhere in the street, but they could not substitute the main courses. But after we bought new pot and pan, trying to cook on our own, the problem was solved

eventually. Most of us had a new habit, meandering along the street, enjoying the warm sunshine, the natural scenery vibrant with all kinds colors, watching the cool dogs and handsome guys walking by. Sometimes, by observing local people, I could quickly assimilate myself into them. And during this procedure, I figure out many interesting things that showed me a more comprehensive and stereoscopic image of German people. Like they also run the red light, or they will be late for appointment sometimes. But these little discoveries actually drew us closer. I get to know that as human beings, we share something in common, instead of being separated by several cold conclusive adjectives.

On the first weekend after our arrival, I was invited to attend a kind of religious service by a Chinese missionary in small villa around the school. I made friend with the missionary's friend when I was learning driving in China last summer. He had stayed about 12 years in Germany and knew much about Chemnitz. So he introduced his friends to me. I am not a Christian but I still willingly joined the activity as an onlooker. Although the service was simply performed in a bright room with the aid of slides rather than in a solemn and respectful church or chapel, it deeply touched me and made me further understand the tenet of Christianity, the fixed bound between Jesus and his adherents and why Christianity, as one of the biggest religions in the world, could survive and thrive in the long history of human. It really gets its glamour and appeal. It could not be denied that from the perspective of modern science, I still could not understand the craziness of some believers about their religions. If the stories of Christianity are real, then the stories of all other religions should be real, too. Almost all religions are based on an imaginary almighty god that can not be convincingly proved. But I also believe that regardless of correct or wrong, tangible or intangible, real or illusional, there is something more important worthy of appreciating. During the service, the hostess was fully immersed in her spiritual communication with Jesus. She kept muttering, even bursting into sobbing for several times. And other participants, all dressed in austerity, heads bent, began to sing anthem. In the following time the hostess played a video introducing the difference between Buddhism and Christianity to us. It was interesting to watch it because my parents are believers of Buddhism. What impressed me the most was the different attitudes held towards sins. In Buddhism, the sins you made in your whole life would be sealed in your profile and you should pay the price in your afterlife. You could not escape from your preexistence. By contrast, in Christianity, human is also born sick but Jesus is the Saviour. He spontaneously shouldered all the sins of human and substituted them to receive the punishment. In this sense, all human is loved and redeemed by him. Instead of a untouchable divinity, Jesus is more like a brother to us. This was my first cultural impact here. I learned to reflect on others' thoughts instead of rushing to refute them. Buddhism has its own enchantment of course. It never forces others to convert to it. It tends to stress that all is up to their destiny and should be let go with their nature. What is the most important is that people should bury the ethical code in their heart and behave themselves accordingly. But still the strong affection between Jesus and his adherents touches me a lot.

Since we had German language class, we have begun to make new friends, most

of whom are Erasmus students. Then we also attended some parties, like the successful Brazilian night. I tried the German beer and chatted with people from different cultural backgrounds. It was the first time for me to meet people from so many countries. Before that I simply split the world into two parts roughly, one is the western world and one is Asia. But when I got in touch with these people, I could sense the nuances between them. The more people I met, the more stereotypes I abandoned. It is really silly to ascribe a country to good or bad side due to some minority behaviors. I remember my uneasiness when talking with an Indian man at the first time. But then I was surprised by his witness and broad mind. Two months later, I even met an Indian man supporting feminism! When he treated us with home-made dinner, we talked about the political issues, the poems, the art and the movies. Then I finally freed myself from the past prejudice towards Indian men, the negative image of whom often dominates the top line of Chinese news. Besides, I made bosom friend with a Japanese girl, Kazuna. She is so sweet and thoughtful, always behaving politely and hospitably. We share many characteristics and hobbies in common and I can share my secrets with her. Then I realize friendship is regardless of nationality and cultural background. She learns law and dreams of becoming an eloquent lawyer, which surprises me a lot considering her petit figure. Her persistence really enlightened me.

The first class we took was the German language class and I was distributed to the level A2.1. At first I was nervous about whether I could catch up with other classmates because Europeans had advantage over us of learning European language. Although I have learned German in China for 2 years, it was still the completely different situation. The class was taught in German, rather than Chinese. That meant I would face more listening and oral practice. It was really a big challenge for us who had paid much attention to grammar itself in China. I was fond of our first teacher very much. Along with traditional textbook teaching, she added many vivid examples and stories in her class. In this way, we could try to link language to the local culture. Language itself is a tool and is hollow. With some assistance ingredient, it would be easier for us to grab the essence. After the semester began, I stepped into level A2.2. Our teacher is a patient young man. I found those two language teachers had some similar education styles. Instead of cramming all the new knowledge into us, they adopted the gradual leading method. Some students do not have confidence about their oral expression ability. They stuck at the point where they could not find a direct translation. Then our teacher just encouraged them to change another word they had learned according to the main idea. So in this period, I always try my best to put the words I learned into use. But in the daily life I was also confronted with another problem. When I was checking out in a shopping mall or dining in a local restaurant, I could not understand the basic spoken German. They are different from the words we learned in China, like *Kassenbon* or *Zettel*. But gradually I figured out ways to make progress. I always tried to listen to the pronunciation carefully, then I tried spelling it out in my electronic dictionary according to the pronunciation. Sometimes I would guess its meaning and used the Chinese-to-German search function. And sometimes when I was at an appointment with German friend, I would ask him to repeat the

waiter's words one by one. Then he would also teach me the replying sentence. In this way, I can deal with most of the basic daily talk now. But there is also another secret that help enhance my spoken ability, travel. When you are traveling in Germany or German speaking region like Austria or some parts of Switzerland,(especially with someone who can not speak German so you have to shoulder all the responsibility), you will face a lot of emergencies. Before the exchange, I thought all the western people could speak English well. To my disappointment, it is not true. Most of them are poor at English or even naught. I remember when we were visiting The Louvre, my friend suddenly fell off and twisted her ankles. She burst into tears because of the pain. Then came a visitor who tried to console my friend but she was speaking German. So I tried to understand her and translated her words to calm my friend down. It was the first time that I had sensed the magic of knowing a foreign language. Without language, communication will no longer exist. And fluent communication can save you from trouble on some occasion. Last week I went to Bavaria. Unluckily the train from Chemnitz to Leipzig was canceled suddenly. So I could not catch the planned train from Leipzig to Munich. The ticket price was extremely high and all my friends suggested me to get a train failure prove at the tourist center. Because of the time limit it was the first time for me to try to explain something in German so fluently. Those experiences gave me confidence to learn the language well. Before that to some extent I was a perfectionist. I would not start to action until I get fully prepared. But now I realize knowledge is scattered everywhere in life. No matter in what gesture you pluck it, you can always reap something.

Besides language course, there are two Vorlesung, one Seminar and a Project Management this semester. The project management is more about group cooperation, project organization and further experience of different cultures. Those will be detailed discussed in another essay.

Vorlesung is the most difficult part for us. I major in business English in China. My courses in China were divided into two parts, one is the English foundation curriculum, including basic listening, writing, reading study. The other one is courses involved with business knowledge, like economics and management. In a sense, English is more of a tool in our major. We stress more on realistic practice and the combination of the language and other subjects. So it was the first time for me to study the academic knowledge, like Applied Linguistics and Introduction to English Language and Linguistics. For me the most difficult part is to remember those uncommon academic words. But sometimes professor often introduced some interesting knowledge to us, like the public schools in Britain are actually private and attended by the noble.

For Seminar, we have the course Hitchcock and His Movies. It is the course that surprised me the most. It is completely what I expect of the ideal class in modern university. I found people interested in the master and his works gather together. Whenever I notice their fierce discussion and dedicated note taking, I saw passion sparkle from them. Our teacher is a crazy fan of movies. Every time he analyses a film, he cites many other movies to make comparison. He is not trying to repeat the PPT or recite some monotonous academic words. Instead he put knowledge into his

vivid teaching. From his teaching, gradually I could feel the charm of film making, the charm of Alfred Hitchcock. I learned to appreciate a movie from different angles, not just my own feeling. Knowing the development of shooting technology and script construction step by step in history, I regret making a rash judgment of movies I have watched. Every student should make a presentation of one movie in front of the class to analyze the construction, the plot development and the cinematography of the film. It was very beneficial for me to further understand how an outstanding film was organized. To be frank, I was not an eligible fan of movie before I took the course. But now I find myself downloading classic masterpieces everyday with pouring enthusiasm and curiosity. And during watching, I cultivate the habit of appreciating it from various aspects now, other than just keeping close watch on the development of plots. Sometimes when I lower my pace, relax my mind to be involved in the world of the movie, I surprisingly spot the thoughts the director wanted to convey from lines of trivial daily conversation in the film. That is what I think a typical beneficial education. It gains us the access to a new interest. It exerts a life-long influence rather than a quickly passing-by ardor.

Apart from daily life and classes, I have learned the most from my several travel experiences. To make full advantage of my exchange opportunity, I spent almost every long vacation on traveling to other European countries. My travel collection is largely expanded this half year. I went to Czech Republic, Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland and of course, other areas of Germany.

Every country has its own vivid personality, let alone the difference among subdivided districts. Germany itself has already brought me lots of surprise. The first German city I arrived was Berlin. Influenced by its history we had learned in high school, though we ran into many vigorous and spontaneous people, it still left us an impression as a solemn capital city. But after the discount season, Berlin is more favorable to girls, who can easily find most imaginable brands with authentic discount in Berlin's main shopping mall. It really surprised me that Germany shops offered more discount than other famous destinations for shopping in Europe. Several days ago, I went to Berlin again, but this time, not just passing by, but for special purposes, shopping and sightseeing. We visited the main shopping streets, Berlin Mauer and Brandenburger Tor. In Chemnitz, I have not felt much about so-called air of eastern Germany. But in some area of Berlin, I sensed it. The cold and industrial atmosphere, tinted with some vividness of human community. But what surprised me the most was the promotion of Chinese food in Berlin. We tried three different styles of dishes, the typical chain fast food, the spicy Sichuan dishes and dimsum from Guangdong. Actually each of them was full with foreigners during meal time. And I must admit that they were really authentic of taste. But it seemed that the milk tea, which lots of Asian people are crazy about, is not so popular in Germany. We were so happy to find the ComeBuy milk tea store in the city center, but the customers there were largely Chinese and Japanese. On the contrary, when we were in Bamberg, we saw a bubble tea store full of foreign faces but the taste of the tea was thoroughly distorted from the original version. So you see this is another cultural shock.

Bavaria is my favorite part of Germany among the places I have traveled to.

Although every time when I talk about it with German people, they either shrugged their shoulders, saying that they had no idea of what was Koenig See, or gave me a weird smile, telling me that Rothenburg was where you could find most Chinese and Japanese. Apparently the hot travel destinations chronically dominating Chinese travel websites are not what German people have expected, although they are still good enough in our eyes. Munich is the city that gives me the biggest surprise. According to my friends who attended the Oktoberfest, Munich was a crazy and messy city. You should always take care of your personal property, protecting them from pickpocket and even public robbery. So after I arrived at Munich at night, I was fully allergic but the city was completely beyond my expectation. Fresh air, tidy streets, courteous citizens. And the Airbnb host accomodating us were so nice and refined that we felt ourselves at home. It was a pity that our strain schedule only allowed a one-day stay in Munich, so we should unwillingly select just one museum to pay a visit out of its many excellent counterparts. It was a hard job and took us nearly a week to make Deutsches Museum our final decision. But the time was still not rich so we also browsed through several experience sharing articles to eventually decide the key themes to further explore. It was definitely an unforgettable experience to watch thousands of vivid models and technological and scientific experiments, especially the mine part. We just went underground to visit emulational scenes of the daily work OF ore's miners. Led by the paths, we went through several mining scenes along with the development of technology. At the beginning when I went downstairs, I just felt thrilled and curious about the miners' life. But after a span of time, I could not bear myself in that suffocated darkness anymore. In recent years, there were more news about mine collapse accidents reported in China, which brought about a large amount of casualty and split of thousands of families, but is was not until then did I understand the real feeling of working underground, let alone the truth that I was just a tourist passing by, needing not to join the hard labor work day after day. Although at last I could not finish visiting the whole museum, it did bring me lots of reflection, of both the importance of technology and what an educational museum should be. There I saw many children accompanied by adults observing the items on display and doing various experiments according to their interests so they can be involved with what they love since a young age. A nice museum is like a qualified teacher. It never stresses on showing off its abundant knowledge but trying to use the knowledge to enlighten following generations. Actually, all kinds of intriguing museum aroused our interest. In the following days, we visited many museums in Bavaria, like Medical History Museum in Ingolstadt, Medieval Crime Museum in Rothenburg and Bavarian King Museum in Fuessen. Through the exhibited collection I peeped at the past era and the life of some important figures. Standing in the New Swan Castle, looking around the past luxury, which seems not so practical and attractive today, I could sense the magic of time, the miracle of history that always keep their hurry forwards, weeding out the outdated. People in the small town are all very friendly. The first day we arrived at Rothenburg, an old grandpa volunteered to be a guide. On the way to our home, he introduced the history of the town to us and showed us the places worth visiting. He looked frugal from his appearance but actually he was a clothes designer!

People engaging in the fashion industry often seemed untouchable for us when in China. We could only see them in magazine. It is a different occupation from others because most Chinese regard the pursuit of fashion and the daily life as two separated things. Aesthetic factors seldom count in daily life consideration. But in recent years, more Chinese young generation supports a new attitude of life, paying more attention to high quality life. Hope that our next generation will find it common that a random passer-by in the street is involved with fashion industry because good aesthetic taste should be an essential part for everyone to be a better self. In fact I did not expect much about the Bavarian trip but it did give me lots of surprise. On the contrary, I used to think highly of Hamburg but it failed to live up to my expectation. The central train station was full of people from middle east and left me a messy impression and I did not sense much about the features of a maritime city. But before we left, we luckily found a Cantonese restaurant, which served the most delicious and authentic my home town dishes I have ever tasted in Europe. It really made our day.

And after the language course in October I chose Prague and Vienna as my first travel destination outside Germany because of their geographical advantage. Prague was as good as my imagination but in a different way. Last spring festival there was a hit movie played in China, dealing with a romantic story of a couple of lovers who met each other in Prague and fell in love. Since then Prague becomes a hot ideal travel place for Chinese young generation. It has become the symbol of romance, happiness and love. But the real Prague is a lot more than that. It is an enchanting stereoscopic multicultural world, instead of a plain label of beautiful scenery. It seemed that everyone living in Prague was born artist. It is a city splashed by the mix-color oil paint of multiple culture. The art of Prague is unfettered by those constraint of professional art form. One could have the strongest feeling when meandering along the Charlie Bridge and the famous Prague Square, where many bands are performing and many painters displaying their works. And in those curly but charming streets you could also find all kinds of scrawl on the wall. That was the impression Prague had left me at the first time but several days ago, when I went back to Prague again, it gave me different surprise. Actually in the residential area, the construction is much more modern. All is tidy and orderly, which form a perfect community. The second day we accidentally walked in the most prosperous commercial center. It was really beyond my expectation. People flew in from various direction like the scene of the big squares in Guangzhou or Shanghai in China. The clothing industry is thriving, too. We found almost the newest arrival collection in Zara and Bershka. Prague is a city full of novelty and surprise! After leaving Prague we went to Vienna. I have to say that Vienna disappointed me to some extent. It used to be a decent place in my heart. It was home to all the beautiful music and golden halls. And compared to the art in Prague, the atmosphere in Vienna is more discreet, withdrawn and academic. We failed to buy the tickets of the famous performance of Vienna local symphony orchestra so maybe in this way we failed to grab the essence of the true beauty of Vienna. All we could do was sightseeing in the city. But to be frank the scenery was really plain and unimpressive. Even the Golden Hall was just a common building as seen from the outside. But the journey gave us little surprise. We

tasted almost the most delicious chocolate cakes in a sweet shop and at night, I listened to a post-modern style concert in a local jazz bar. The performers were all in their eighties . So did their fans. An old grandpa next to me kept clapping and shouting all the time. It was interesting that when following others' recommended routine I felt depressed but I enjoyed myself when just assimilating into locals' life. Now I do not dare to jump to conclusion that Vienna is a good city worth appreciating or not, but next time, do not copy the others' routine and explore the unique Vienna of your own. I think it is exactly what makes traveling unforgettable and meaningful, your own story, your own memory of a specific place at a certain period of your life.

The other place that left me deep impression is France, the symbol of romance and delicious food. I made tour to France for twice and stayed there for around half a month. I have been to the southwestern part of France to visit the special little town , Nice in the southeastern France to breathe the fresh air of blue sea and Paris in the middle France to capture the beauty of a modern city. It is the country I have spent most time traveling in but it is still far from a deep experience. My feeling towards France was complex and contradictory before. In many articles, French people, especially the Paris citizens, were not so friendly to those who could not speak French well. So I was nervous at first when I should take the plane alone for the first time to visit my good friend who studies in Bordeaux. Since he had an exam that day, I was supposed to take the public transportation to the appointed restaurant. French people, as German people, mostly do not speak English very well, but luckily still, I ran into a warm-hearted grandma who had lived in America for several years so she spoke fluent English. She helped me buy the ticket and chatted with me all the way. It really altered my stereotype about French people. I was so lucky to have my friend as my professional guide for my first travel. He speaks fluent French and has authentic local accent. And his familiarity with the local transportation system and life style also largely facilitated our trip. French architecture and the layout of buildings are close to those in Germany but the cultural atmosphere is different. French people lead a more relaxing a lazy life. They tended to rely on their primitive industries and to some extent lack the spirit of innovation. So the unemployment rate is climbing up in recent years and the economic situation remains not so positive. But as a bystander, having no pressure of making a living there, it was really an escape from intense studying life. Scenery in southwestern France was exotic and mysterious. The key words were castles and all kinds of stone bricks of long history. As for the southeastern France, the key words were flowers and seas, while Paris was metropolitan and full of art. Unconsciously my aesthetic appreciation ability must be enhanced.

Besides those places mentioned above, I have also been to Barcelona, Madrid, several places in Swiss and they all showed me mixed glamour and beauty that gave me more reflection about my life and my own orientation. In the past Europe was a distant dream, an ideal refuge. After all those close observation of it finally dawned on me that there is no such a perfect place in the world and if you look closer, you can always find all the ups and downs appearing in everyone's life. Happiness is not about the reality, it is all about your attitude. I know that I am not strong enough to fully master my destiny but at least I am qualified as an observer now.



I have dreamed a thousand times about what my life should be during my exchange in Germany before. It turned out that this experience gave me much more surprises and joys. Thanks so much for the opportunity offered by TUC!