

Rebecca, BA German & History

I have been really excited about my year abroad since I came to a Leeds Loves Languages day in 2013, when I was doing my A-Levels. This was the first time I became aware about the possibilities that doing a language at University level could offer me. And if I were to rate the experience as a whole, right now I would definitely say that the experience has not disappointed.

I didn't really know what I wanted to do for my year abroad, or where I wanted to go, so in the end I signed up to be a British Council language assistant, and I was placed at a vocational training school in the beautiful University city of Jena, in central Germany. The experience has been perfect for me as being in a school has allowed me to get really close to every day German culture. For the first time in my life I am not surrounded by students, but out in the real world. The teachers at my school are really wonderful, and they take me on day trips and invite me over to their houses, meaning that I have had the chance to meet real German families and learn what it really means to be German. On New Year's Eve I was with a German family in a small village somewhere in the Thüringer Wald and I got to take part in German traditions such as the tradition of Bleigießen. This is where Germans melt a little lead over a candle in a spoon, and then tip the liquid lead into a bowl of cold water. The lead solidifies and the shape that it takes determines your fortune for the coming year. Mine formed into a little bush, which means that I will get lots of money in 2017. This is certainly true; as the combination of Erasmus grant, student loan and my stipend from British Council gives me enough money that I can enjoy myself and take part in all of the different things I want to without worrying about finances.



The best bit about the year abroad is the effect it has had on me personally. It sounds clichéd but it is true when I say that my year abroad has made me braver, more

independent and more confident than ever before. I wasn't particularly shy before I came to Germany, but non-the-less I am so much more confident in approaching people and forcing myself to socialise now. This has allowed me to strike some brilliant friendships with people from all over the world, and with people I potentially wouldn't have even spoken to before. I am so confident with travelling now that I feel like the whole world is in my palm, and I can go anywhere I want. And I no longer shy away from awkward or difficult situations, because if I don't succeed, at least I will have a funny story to tell later on.



Most of all, the mobility period has reignited my passion for my degree. Its easy to forget why you chose to study, when you are bogged down with essays or hunched over Nietzsche at 2am without a clue what's going on, but when I got out to Germany, and I was able to have interesting conversations with people, visit some incredible places, and have a whole host of incredible cultural experiences, that I realised that all my hard work so far had been worth it, and I finally refound that part of 18 year old me that was so excited to study German and History.