

Annapoorna Vaidyanathan Iyer: My experience of weather and food in Germany

I left the warm climate of India and arrived in Munich on the cold evening of January 30th. Fully prepared to face the sub zero temperatures in Germany I spent a nice evening roaming about the streets of Munich taking in all the initial sights the country had to offer me. On 31st I arrived in Chemnitz and was greeted by cold winds but snow-free streets, which was a pleasant surprise. Just when I had started thanking my lucky stars for the wonderful weather, it started snowing! Waking up to a snow covered view was a pleasure, but as soon as I stepped out into it, the pleasure was all gone and I just wanted to run back into the warmth of my room.



I was born, brought up and studied in warm climate regions in India. I had never lived in such cold climate or walked on so much snow. It was like learning to walk all over again. Heavy boots helped me a lot by helping me balance on snow and keeping my feet warm. Good shoes and warm scarves are a must to survive such extreme weathers. The entire month of February was all about me getting adjusted to snow.

Germany has its own cuisine of food consisting of the infamous Schnitzel. As I am not a meat eater, I tasted the poultry, pescetarian and vegetarian versions of everything. Potatoes or 'Kartoffeln' as they are known here is a common side dish observed on every plate. Initially, the Mensa, a food canteen located in the center of every university area seemed a good option to eat lunch. Gradually, I did get bored of eating there and I started venturing to the eateries near the campus area. There is a common misconception that vegetarians cannot survive in Germany. This is completely untrue. Now, vegetarian options are available at most eateries and even the Mensa on most days. Of course, there is a kitchen in every apartment or hostel room where a person can cook their own food.

March, the month in which Germany is supposed to start experiencing spring, arrived. There was a week's break when we had some nice weather. I neatly folded all my heavy winter clothing and even decided to wear some light shoes. A good night's sleep and then I woke up to snow covered Chemnitz, again! It was a different feeling this time, no pleasure but a simple sigh signifying I had resort to more layers of clothes. There was good snowfall the entire month of March as well. I was told that this year there was an extended winter



here. All my travel plans were put on hold as the view at all places would have been the same - sheets of white! Easter weekend arrived at the end of March and I finally decided to travel to some places outside Germany. Weather in Prague was good to us, no snow on both the days we were there but Vienna weather ditched us. I got to taste Glühwein, a popular drink during Christmas, Easter and Halloween. Back to Germany in April, I experienced two major changes. Snowfall had stopped and existing snow was melting. Also, the time had been moved ahead by an hour signifying the start of daylight savings time. I did know about this time change but initially I couldn't understand why the time was moved ahead.

I got the answer to that question in May. The amount of daylight experienced here during the summer months is exponentially more. 3.30 am in the morning is the crack of dawn and one can hear the birds chirping! 10 pm at night and finally it starts getting dark. My sleep and dinner schedule went completely haywire and I had to keep looking at a clock to keep track of time. The first few weeks of May had some pleasant and warm weather - which was the best



weather I got in the entire project term. I travelled a bit and enjoyed wearing single layered clothing. More people were out on the streets and barbeques had started. The favorite barbeque item here is meat sausages. Bratwurst (meat sausage) outlets are a common sight across Germany. But the Turkish Döner and Dürüm outlets are giving immense competition to the traditional German cuisine.

Last week of May proved to be a nightmare all over southern Germany. What started as light rain turned into floods. Saxony, the state where Chemnitz is located was completely flooded. Transportation was disrupted and many people from the lower areas of the state were evacuated. Chemnitz river, a small river flowing through the city started dangerously rising in level eventually leading to an overflow. Some people even declared it worse than the flood of the century which took place 10 years ago in the same state. Salute to the grit of Germans and their disaster management! A weekend of flood and a week full of thunderstorms later, the weather was finally at peace. In my last week in Chemnitz, finally summer started. It was sunny and rains had ceased!

Four and a half months and some crazy weather situations later, I would say it was a different experience all in all. I didn't get to experience the acclaimed summer beauty but I did learn how to get through snow and rain. I will be missing the different kinds of Brötchen (bread rolls) I love eating. I am grateful to pmTUC and Dept. of PME, Manipal, for giving me the opportunity to do my final semester project in Chemnitz, which by the way, was successful! And of course to DAAD, for the great monetary support they have provided me with.