

## **How I lived during my stay in Chemnitz**

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“Hallo”, “Guten Tag” and “Guten Morgen” – these are the first words I have learnt in Germany. Usually, Germans say you these beautiful cute good words at the start of a day or when they see you. Hence, I started my exchange report with these German words.

I arrived in Frankfurt, Germany on October 10<sup>th</sup> 2011 After 10 hours of travels from India ,I was really amazed with the new world, I pinched myself to make sure it ‘s “real”. Another few hours of travelling from Frankfurt, I reached Chemnitz. It was autumn and it was absolutely lovely to see the different shades of leaves. I enjoyed watching the last leaf fall from the trees and each and every moment of this season. The temperature was around 8° Celsius and it was pretty cold. Our first festival celebration in Germany was Diwali which was in the last week of October. It was a new experience celebrating with my German friends, all of us lighted lamps and some of us lighted the sparklers which completed the Diwali festival celebration. In December there were only a few days with sunshine and we went outside and had fun in the snow at temperatures below 5° Celsius. Temperature continued to fall until it was below 12° Celsius.

I celebrated Christmas with my German friends and their families. It was the first time I was celebrating Christmas in a proper traditional way. There were lots of chocolates and different types of cakes, cookies, dried fruits, fresh fruits and mulled wine. Glühwein, its German name, is the Central European traditional hot beverage which you only drink during Christmas and winter. It’s made of red wine, oranges, cinnamon, cloves some other spices and is served hot. The moment I had a glass of mulled wine, I started to sweat and I felt as if I had been running for the past hour. It was so hot I had the feeling I don’t need any warm clothes to walk home even at temperatures below 10° Celsius. After we had mulled wine Santa Claus was waiting for us: one of our German friends dressed with a long red cap, a long white beard and a big round stomach came into our room and started to distribute gifts and chocolates to all of us. The celebration ended with a beautiful Christmas song.

In January the winter was pretty hard as the temperature was still decreasing until it reached -16° Celsius. It was my first experience of such extreme weather conditions, till date it was the coldest climate I have ever experienced in my life till date. However, I played in the snow, made snowballs and one of my dreams came true: I made a snowman. I like taking photographs, especially in nature and so I went outside and took some pictures in every season to record the changes of the weather and landscape.

I made, for instance, a picture in spring at bright sunlight, when it started to snow and to rain and one of the path from my hostel to the university I had to go each day.

I also took a picture of a tree which was in the centre of the university. I like this tree because it reminded me of my friends back home in India. In the evening, my friends and I used to relax under such a tree having coffee. Sometimes I also had a nap after a day's work and classes. By taking this picture I have captured a part of the life cycle of this tree.

Doing sports is also among my favourite leisure activities. Whenever I had some spare time I played table tennis inside the hostel and on Wednesdays and Saturdays I usually played Shuttle Badminton in the gym on the campus. I also played football and basketball with friends using the courts on the campus. In the morning I normally went jogging on the university court made of football field with a race circuit around it. The fresh air from the trees surrounding the field and the clean atmosphere kept me healthy.

The main purpose of my visit to Germany was the participation in the exchange programme which was supported and financed by DAAD. I thank Manipal University, India and Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany for offering the double degree programme which provides proper guidance and the opportunity to gain cultural experience. Altogether, I have travelled 9 different countries in Europe including Germany.