

## Environmental Studies and Sustainability in Germany

By: Emma Turk



After looking extensively during the first two years of the coronavirus pandemic for the best place to study abroad, I finally landed on the perfect program for me during my junior year winter break. I decided to study Environmental Studies and Sustainability in Freiburg, Germany during the fall semester of my senior year. This was an IES (Institute for the International Education of Students) co-sponsored program that offered the opportunity to study the German language while simultaneously studying environmental science. The courses were divided into four modules, so during each three-week module, I only had to focus on one environmental science or sustainability class at a time (as well as my German language studies). The environmental courses were taught in English, with small class sizes, and involved lots of field trips. Among my coursework while abroad was a course called *Freiburg Green City*, which discussed the social, ecological, and economic aspects of sustainability in the university town I was fortunate enough to live in and explore. Additionally, I took a course about *Sustainable Food and Agriculture*, which took excursions to local farms and farmer's markets. We ate lots of fresh fruits and veggies, as well as tried our own hands at a natural composting technique with a local cooperative garden.



My third module in Freiburg consisted of a course with a very long but necessary name: *Change of Ecosystems as a Result of Long-Term Human Activities in Southwest Germany and the Swiss Alps*. This was a favorite class of mine because we had an overnight trip to a wine region with vineyards located in the Rhone River Valley. During this three-week course, we hiked in the mountains of Switzerland, as well the Black Forest in Germany, exploring everything from the managed forests around Freiburg to the floodplains of the Rhine River.



All of the classes I took in Freiburg were very transformative and allowed me to gain an international perspective regarding Environmental Studies and Sustainability. Outside of class, I traveled with my friends and had several German cultural

experiences. I was able to experience the first Oktoberfest in Munich since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I also visited famous European capital cities such as Amsterdam, Vienna, and Bratislava. My friends and I often cooked, hiked, and spent lots of time outside for fun in our new hometown of Freiburg.

In terms of living accommodations, I was placed in a shared apartment flat with four Germans who studied at the local university. Since my program was mainly students who came from the United States, this was an awesome opportunity to get to know the German culture better and practice my language skills! Every day I was able to take public transportation to and from school in the city. I recommend the IES Freiburg program to anyone who loves nature, meeting new people, and wants to learn German!

