UNC Charlotte
Niner International Country Guide

Learn more about where you’ll be living from a UNC Charlotte student who has already done it.
Which city and country did you live in abroad?

I studied abroad in Germany and Poland for one week. Specifically I was in Berlin, Germany for half of the time and Krakow, Poland for the other half. I also was able to briefly visit The Netherlands and Sweden due to flights.

What is the climate like in that location?

(Describe the weather when you were there. What are some things students should take with them to prepare for the weather in this location?)

My trip was from June 18-28th, so I was expecting the weather to be pretty temperate abroad. Both Germany and Poland have pretty similar weather based upon my experience. After checking weather forecasts, I did not pack many clothing items with sleeves because the expected forecasts were around 60 degrees fahrenheit. This was a terrible mistake, because it ended up being much colder than that. Some nights even dropped into the 40s. I would recommend packing a wide variety of clothes regardless of season. I would also like to note that most hotels abroad do not have air conditioning so plan accordingly for that.

What was the city’s public transportation like?

(Describe how you got to and from the city center or the university day-to-day. Did they have a subway line, buses, could you walk most places? What were the costs of these transportation options? Were they easy to utilize? Did they have Uber/Lyft available in this city? Did you have any challenges navigating through the city?)

While abroad, my group heavily utilized Berlin's transportation system. A bus pass was provided for us to travel around the city. The buses run constantly with times and destinations posted digitally near the stops which made travel easier. There is also a inner city subway to aid in longer distance travel. Also, there is a train that goes to the outer city limits. Both subway and train tickets were provided and easy to navigate with help from the advisor. Taxis were available but public transportation but was expensive and not provided except in certain circumstances.

Describe the types of food that are common in that city.

(What were the types of foods you could find at most restaurants? What were some delicacies of that city? What were your favorite or least favorite foods?)

Both Berlin and Krakow offered a wide variety of international foods. Traditional German dishes such as Bratwurst, Currywurst, and Schnitzel were readily available within the city. Also, Greek, Italian, and Japanese restaurants were prevalent in Berlin. I enjoyed the majority of the food in Berlin especially the currywurst.

Krakow was similar with some traditional food and some international influences. Our hotel outside of Auschwitz provided food for us, but the food was hit or miss. If you are a picky eater then I would plan accordingly. There is a pizza restaurant that will deliver to the hotel and we had
Are there any particular restaurants you would recommend students try if they are in that city?

(If possible, list the name of the restaurant and a link to the website)

Since my experience was a short faculty lead study abroad, much of the restaurants were already included in the itinerary. The restaurants picked by the faculty advisor were all good but could run a little pricey. If a student decided to skip out on a meal that was scheduled or provided, there were plenty of small stand and restaurants in the area.

Was it easy to travel to nearby cities and countries?

(If you traveled in your personal time, what modes of transportation did you use (e.g. bus, train, airplane, etc.). How did you book these travel plans? Online? Local bus station? Generally what was the cost of travelling in that region? Where did you stay (e.g. Airbnb, hostels, hotels) when you travelled?)

As expressed earlier, my experience was a short faculty lead study abroad which left little time for individual travel. We did have one free day in Berlin. During that day we used the public buses to go across the city. The travel was fairly easy even though we did not have a faculty advisor or any knowledge of the German language. If we would have not had the bus pass, then we would have had to buy a one day pass which would have been expensive.

What are some of the differences between U.S. culture and the host country culture?

(Are there any gestures or differences in communication style that is different from the US that you noticed? (smiling, eye contact etc.))

I did not notice many cultural differences between US and German/Polish culture that were extremely shocking. It is interesting to note that those who learn English overseas learn the Queen's English which will have an effect on their accents and pronunciation in English. In Berlin, advertisements were not censored as they are in the US. There are many posters with risqué material on them so be prepared.

Generally, how would you describe the locals in the host city?

(Were the locals friendly and helpful? Would you recommend approaching the locals for help?)

The locals in Berlin acted similarly to citizens of other major cities. They were usually in a hurry to get from one place to another. A few times our faculty advisor would stop and ask locals for directions and most greeted us with kindness. So despite the hurried lifestyle, locals were still kind if approached. Krakow was at a slower pace than Berlin; however, the locals were just as kind.
Are there any cultural events that you attended during your stay that you would recommend to students (e.g. festivals, holidays, etc.)? (How did you find out about these events?)

Given the cultural and emotional weight of experiencing the locations of the Holocaust, the free time that we had was much more light hearted. I would recommend attending an event that has to do with soccer because it is nothing like how soccer is in the states. When I was abroad, the world cup was happening. Those events were a wonderful way to experience international culture.

Describe any culture shock that you experienced while abroad. (If culture shock was present what would you recommend for future students to avoid or lessen the shock?)

Unlike the United States, coins are much more useful. Some coins can be as much as $3-4 US dollars. Also, I mentioned earlier that there is usually not air conditioning in hotels overseas based on my experience. Bathrooms overseas can sometimes look quite different from what we are used to in the US. The most shocking aspect of going abroad was that water was not provided at restaurants and was generally very expensive.

Did you find it difficult to meet locals of the host city? Why or why not? (In your experience were the locals open and welcoming of tourists? Where and how did you befriend the locals during your stay?)

3-4 days in both cities did not leave much time to meet locals in Berlin and Krakow. Also, the itinerary was already planned out and could go to around 9 or 10 pm. Because of this, free time was generally spent with the group of UNCC students.

What type of housing did you live in (e.g. homestay, dorm, apartment, etc.)? (Why did you choose this style of housing? Did you have access to a kitchen? How often/what was the process for doing laundry (in house or local laundry mat?)?)

We mostly were in hotels which were similar to those you would find in the United States. They included a sleeping area with a bathroom. We did not have access to a kitchen but breakfast was generally provided. No one did laundry given the length of the trip.
Describe your accommodations.
(Did you have access to hot water? Wifi? Did you live with roommates?)

Hot water and wifi were provided at all locations. The hot water was a little troublesome to figure out given the layout of overseas bathrooms. Most had one roommate throughout the duration of the trip.

Where was your housing located in regards to the city center or host university?
(How long did it take, using public transportation or walking, to get to classes every day? How long did it take to travel to the center of the city or any other major locations in that city?)

Class time was on site at the locations. There was also a debrief time at the end of the day with everyone back at our hotel.

What was the cost of living like? What ways can you keep costs low in that city?
(Compared to the cost of living in the city of Charlotte was it more or less expensive in that city? Were there any student discounts you took advantage of?)

The cost of eating in Berlin and Krakow were similar to those of Charlotte. Water is extremely expensive overseas and not provided. There were no student discounts that I experienced. We did not pay for anything on site but food.

Are you expected to tip servers or taxi drivers abroad?
(If so, what was the common tip rate? Was it the same rate as here in Charlotte (10-20%)?)

Tips after eating were generally encouraged abroad. They ranged from about 10-20% based upon the quality of the experienced. Taxi's were not generally tipped.
How did you communicate when you were abroad?
(e.g. did you use your own phone, did you only communicate if there was access to Wi-Fi, did you purchase a phone abroad, etc.)? (Would you recommend any helpful apps? Maybe whatsapp or a currency exchange app?)

While abroad, I used Whatsapp to communicate to loved ones back home. The only downside was that you had to have access to Wi-Fi to use this app; however, while we were out in the city we were usually always on the go and experiencing overseas culture. It was very nice to unplug for the duration of the trip.

What would you recommend students bring to be able to charge their electronics?
(Describe the electrical outlets, tips to keep in mind, etc.).

A converter is needed in both Germany and Poland. I packed two converters before leaving. One of my converters was getting extremely hot and not working properly. I would bring two just to prepare for this happening.

What do you know now about the location or program that you wish you would have known before going abroad?

I knew that the program was very short (at only 10 days); however, I did not know how short this really would feel overseas. I recommend to make the most of your time while on this specific faculty lead program because it goes by so quickly. I would be open to lengthening the trip by a couple of days since air travel is expensive.

What’s your first and last name?
Hunter Mikels

Which semester and year did you go abroad (e.g. fall 2016, summer 2017, etc.)?
Summer 2018
Which program did you participate in?

Germany and Poland: A Holocaust Journey

What was your student level when you went abroad (e.g. freshman, sophomore, etc.)?
If you would be open to being contact by other UNC Charlotte students who are interested
in your experience abroad, please provide your contact information (email, phone number,
social media, etc.)

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