

If one is allowed to generalize that students go to Great Britain for the sophistication, Paris for the romance, Italy for the art, or Spain for the parties, then the question is: why Germany? I've noticed that some students come here because they have relatives in Germany. Some are fascinated by the German philosophers, theologians, writers, artists, and musicians. Some wanted to learn more about the history and economy of Germany and Europe. Some are fans of soccer, techno, or the counter-culture in Germany. Some simply liked the easy language requirement. In any case, it is important to have a clear idea of why you want to go to Germany. The treasures of this country are not advertised as though they were tourist attractions; you have to find them. (And the Germans will help you, if you ask!)

### PREPARATION BEFORE YOU LEAVE

To avoid spending hundreds of dollars on shipping internationally, you would need to pack very well. The weather in Baden-Württemberg ranges from medium snow in the winter to hot and sunny in the summer. When you arrive in August or September, the weather is still warm, so a light jacket will be fine. By November, it starts to snow and you will need a thick, warm jacket just like when you go skiing. You will need thermals under the jeans, wool socks, and waterproof shoes, if you don't want your legs and feet to freeze in the snow. I used a hiking stuff sack to compress my clothes. By April, the weather warms up to a cool San Francisco evening and gets hotter in the summer. (See the Fashion section)

Certain personal hygiene products are *extremely* hard-to-find in Germany. Special hair products such as relaxants, wax, or cool stuff from the salon are rare. American condoms are not sold here. Everything else including female hygiene products seems to have the same availability as in the US.

If you need to take medicine on a constant basis, you *must* bring enough for the entire year. German customs do not allow medicine to be mailed.

For students who will do a home-stay: it is a nice gesture to bring your host family small gifts, although they are not expected. Typical small but nice gifts include Californian wine, fancy lotions or shampoo, cook books along with American-style measuring cups, Ghiradelli or See's candies, and souvenirs from your local region or culture.

I recommend bringing along with you your laptop, digital camera, and other expensive electronics, if you have them. German customs will tax them if your family tries to mail them to you later. A USB Flash Disk is particularly useful if you don't own a computer or your room in Germany doesn't have an Internet connection. (See Shopping, regarding cell phones)

English-language books, CDs, and DVDs will be both entertaining and soothing when you feel homesick in Germany. For all the times when you do not, I recommend *bringing* two German-English dictionaries: a small one for conversations, traveling, and the classroom and a big one for writing papers and reading at home. German-English dictionaries in Germany are less useful because they assume the reader speaks German. There is also a good online dictionary at [dict.leo.org](http://dict.leo.org).

You'll have to carry most of the things back with you in those two pieces of luggage, and you might bring back a few or a lot of things from Germany.

### ACADEMIC LIFE

The German university system is less structured and requires you to be very independent in your studies. The university is decentralized in its operation, organization, and location. While the

university publishes a course catalog each semester, you have to go to the department building to find out the time and location, course description, and required books. They are posted on a bulletin board called *Schwarzes Brett*. Most German universities do not have a centralized registration and transcript system. You have to sign up for courses in person in the departmental office. Most courses have a few spots reserved for exchange students, so tell them your status and most of the time you wouldn't have to compete with German students for a spot. To get a grade, you need to talk to the professors about getting a *Schein*, a certificate stating one's grade and completion of the course. Grades are usually based on the paper or the final exam, while some professors will require or recommend a *Referat* (a presentation). Assignments are usually given on a semester basis rather than a weekly basis, and students are expected to work independently. Course work tends to be more in-depth, and students are expected to know facts and specifics more so than just the "big picture." Instead of letter grades, grades are given on a number basis. A 1 is equivalent to an A, a 2 to a B, etc.

A common pitfall for American (and many German) students is waiting until the end of the semester because of the lack of assignments during the semester. Another one is not anticipating the amount of work the professors expect students to do *outside* of class. Professors tend to cover the basics or the most relevant in class and expect the students to read or research on their own to fill in the gaps.

In other words, the philosophy of education is different in Germany. The students have the burden of learning, and the professors are not expected to *make sure* the students actually learn.

## INTERNSHIPS

Germans tend to train their employees and to educate their students by means of internships. Many students who study technical or professional subjects are required to work as interns in a company before graduation. These days it is difficult to find work in Germany, but many companies and organizations welcome interns (and the free labor). Exchange students have worked in hospitals, cultural organizations, and tutoring centers for university credit and occasionally for pay. If you do your research and make the phone calls, it is not difficult to find a *Praktikum*.

## HOUSING

There are generally two types of student housing: student dorms and student apartments. In Tübingen, student dorms are high-rise apartment buildings with generally 12 to 20 rooms per floor. Students live in single rooms and share the bathroom and kitchen. Student apartments called *WG* are similar in set-up but the number is generally 6 per apartment and there are fewer floors. Student dorms are occupied mostly by exchange students, while *WGs* tend to be half German and half international. *WGs* are good for people who like to develop relationships with a few people, while student dorms are good for those who like to make many acquaintances. Many German students still live at home to save money, but those who choose to live in university housing are generally happy to live with exchange students. So this is a good way for you to practice your German (or for them their English).

A few students aren't satisfied with the rooms in Tübingen, but at €170-230 per month for a single, furnished room, it is not bad. The rooms are clean and functional, while the size varies from a single-car garage to a small room big enough for the furniture and little walking space. Utilities are included, and some student dorms even have Internet access. *WGs* however are responsible for setting up and paying for their own phone lines and Internet access. Students living in *WGs* also have to buy a few extra things for the apartment, such as curtains, lamps, or kitchenware. (See Shopping, regarding IKEA)

The WGs and dorms are run very efficiently. People take turns every week or so doing chores according to a cleaning schedule. Germans generally expect you to do your chores on time and will be mad if you slack off. The bathrooms, by the way, are unisex but most apartments divide the stalls by gender.

German students are quieter than American students in general, but when they choose to be loud, they are just as loud. This means that everyday life tends to be quiet and respectful, but the parties are still great. House parties are especially popular.

### MONEY AND BANKING

Before you leave the US, plan to bring at least \$1500 cash with you, since you will need to pay for the first month's rent, health insurance, and other set-up costs. The International Program office will help you set up a bank account here. Most students replenish their German bank accounts by drawing cash from an ATM with their US bankcards and depositing the cash in person at the German bank. Most US bankcards with a 4-digit PIN will work in Germany and will let you draw €300-500 per day depending on the bank. If your PIN has more than 4 digits, it won't work in Europe and you need to change it. There is usually a small fee of \$3-8 per ATM withdrawal but it is much cheaper than other options such as wiring which costs about \$30 per wire transfer.

Credits cards are generally not used in everyday shopping in Germany but are very useful for traveling to other countries or for buying expensive things. Some credit cards provide travel insurance (such as AmEx) and many provide fraud protection. Also, your German bankcard will usually have an "EC" function which will let you use it like a debit card.

Keep in mind the expiration dates of your credit cards and bankcards. They might expire while you're in Germany, cutting off access to your American accounts for weeks while the replacements are mailed to you.

Your financial aid package may not be dispersed until 2 or 3 months into the program in which case you'll probably either need to bring more than \$1500 or have access to savings in the US.

### HEALTH

All exchange students in Germany are required to purchase health insurance, and you would be covered by AOK, the state health insurance program. It costs approximately €60 per month and covers almost everything from accidents to dental visits. However, doctors are generally hesitant to treat illnesses acquired outside of your stay in Germany. There is a co-pay of €10 per doctor visit and if you see the same doctor more than once within a 3-month period, then you would pay the €10 only every 3 months. However, this is likely to change in the future when Germany further reforms their social system.

### TRANSPORTATION

For everyday transportation in your city, you would buy a student ticket called *Semesterticket* for €35-50 and it works for the whole semester. Generally, you don't need to pass through a gate or show your ticket when you board a bus or train but every now and then ticket checkers in plain clothes will come up to you and ask you for your ticket. The fine for not having a valid ticket starts at €40. If you get lost and want to take the opposite line, you still need to buy a new ticket. I learned this the hard way and got a fine, but I wrote to the transportation office about my sad story and got the fine reduced to €10.

The network maps and ticket machines are very difficult to understand. I won't attempt to explain them here, but do ask your organizer for a little show-and-tell if you get a chance.

If you plan to spend more than €200 during the year on train tickets, I recommend that you get a *BahnCard 50*. It costs €100 and gives you a 50% discount on all tickets. A ticket from Tübingen to Stuttgart is about €5 and from Tübingen to Berlin about €85. So it quickly adds up. There are also special tickets that are cheaper. The *Baden-Württemberg Ticket* (about €25) allows up to 5 people to travel within the federal state any day of the week and the *Schönes Wochenende Ticket* (about €32) allows up to 5 people to travel anywhere in Germany on the weekends. The only caveat for these tickets is that you cannot take the fast *InterCity* trains but only the slow *Regional* ones which can take twice as long. Popular day trips include Strasbourg, Munich, Basel, Freiburg and Cologne. The trips take a few hours each way and cost a few euros per person, and in Germany you can eat and drink (alcohol) on the trains!

Bicycles are popular, especially in Tübingen where they have bike lanes. You can get a new one for €150 or so or a used one for cheaper. The problem is that it is difficult to ride in the snow in the winter.

In general, you will be fine in the good hands of the punctual and user-friendly German public transportation system (that is, after you've figured it out).

## TRAVEL

If you travel long distances or outside of Germany, you can buy cheap plane tickets from low-budget carriers such as RyanAir, germanwings, and HLX. The tickets are €1-60 or so depending on when you buy them. Beware: some airports are very faraway from the city center and you have to pay for the special connection bus. Frankfurt Hahn is notorious for this.

You can also get an all-you-can-travel ticket called "InterRail" which is similar to a Euro-rail ticket. You can only buy it after you've stayed for at least 6 months in Europe, so, for example, you can get one for the 2-month spring break in March and April. Check on-line for more details about zones and prices.

There are buses that take you to nearby major cities for €20 or less. Not all of these discount bus services are reliable, so make sure you find out the details first.

It is more common in Germany than in the US to hitchhike, although it is getting less and less popular. You can also arrange a ride with someone on a *Mitfahrer* website.

Thieves have been known to target students on over-night trains. According to a student who was stolen from, the thief found a way to unlock the cabin door. Take full pre-cautions while traveling; you might let down your guard a bit too much after having gotten used to Germany's relatively safe environment. Also, tell your IP coordinator about your travel plans so they can help you when you are in trouble.

Finally, make sure you have enough money to pay for rent, food, and health insurance when you return. Some people ate potatoes for a long, long time.

## GROCERIES

There are many good things about German supermarkets. A lot of what you get here is "relatively" organic because of Germany's stricter regulations on pesticides and genetic engineering. Certified organic food is called "Bio."

You can, generally speaking, survive on a €150-per-month grocery budget if you shop wisely. A pack of cheap spaghetti costs €0.50 and a jar of cheap sauce costs only €1. A liter of milk is about €0.80. A bottle of shampoo goes for less than €2. A bottle of everyday wine ranges from €1.5 to €4. Meat, however, costs about the same as in the US. Cigarettes are €4 for a pack of 20.

You have to buy your own shopping bags in supermarkets. Plastic bags are €0.20 or so each, and cloth bags which you can reuse are €1 each. Germans protect the environment by encouraging people to reuse their bags. This also goes for beverage containers. You can bring your bottles to the supermarket to get your deposit (called *Pfand*) of €0.08-.25 per bottle back. Shopping carts require a €1 deposit as well.

### FASHION

Most German students dress in a similar style as the American ones with a few exceptions. Their jeans are tighter, much tighter. They generally don't wear sweat pants or shorts in public, unless they are jogging. And they generally don't like German army uniforms which are cool in the US but are actually considered right-wing in Europe.

Clothes are generally more expensive. H&M, the equivalent of GAP in Europe, is popular among students. There are many stores that are more expensive than H&M, and few that are less. American-style second-hand stores are hard-to-find, especially in South Germany. German-style second-hand stores sell high fashion brands that cost more than triple the price at H&M. For this reason, be prepared to spend €100 or so on a (new) winter jacket. In the spring, take advantage of your fieldtrip to Berlin for American-style second-hand shopping. Cologne, by the way, has good regular shopping, much better than Stuttgart. Metzingen which is not far from Tübingen has several outlets but people have consistently told me that the clothes aren't cheap there.

### SHOPPING

Almost all stores (including supermarkets) close on Sundays except for gas stations and some restaurants. The operating hours are also shorter, with most stores closed by 7 or 8pm.

Customer service in general is very matter-of-fact in Germany. People tend to smile less and there is almost no small talk involved, but they are always focused on the transaction and are ready to help you when asked. It is polite and somewhat expected to say hello and goodbye upon entering and leaving a store. The same is true in a restaurant. What might be seen as being aggressive or unfriendly is probably the norm. An American touch to doing business might bring a genuine smile to someone's face, but some Germans are also quite immune to it.

There is an IKEA in Sindelfingen less than an hour from Tübingen. It has less variety than the one in Emeryville and is slightly more expensive. Some people chipped in for a rental car to make one big trip. You can also take the train to Böblingen and get there by bus.

Cell phones: most people in Tübingen got either an O2 contract phone or a pre-paid phone from Vodafone or Saturn. The contract from O2 is originally for two years, but you can reduce it to one year if you tell them you're an exchange student. You might be required to return your phone to O2 by the end of the year. The O2 phone is good for people who call a lot since there are reduced rates both in Germany and to the US. As of April 2005, it is only 9 cents per minute to the US. You also get a *FastNetz* number which functions like a fixed line number while you're in the home zone. The advantage is that your family and friends will save money calling your *FastNetz* number because calling a mobile phone in Germany is about 5 times more expensive. However, the O2 phone is also more expensive in the long run because there are monthly fees and taxes.

The pre-paid phone is good for people who don't call a lot and rarely, if ever, call the US. It goes for €50-100 and the SIM card may or may not cost extra. After you've got your phone and SIM card, you add money to your account and money is deducted every time you use it. There is no monthly fee. Calling with a pre-paid phone to the US will cost you at least €1 a minute. The good thing is that you can keep your phone.

"The Foreigner Tax": although theft and robberies are extremely rare in Germany, merchants occasionally do try to cheat travelers. They take advantage of the travelers' poor language skills and add a small amount of a euro or two to the total. This however will almost never happen in a university town where exchange students have a large presence.

### SOCIALIZING WITH GERMANS

The words *Freund* and *Freundin* don't necessarily mean "friends" in German. When you say *mein Freund* or *meine Freundin*, you are referring to your boyfriend or girlfriend. To refer to your friends, you should say *ein Freund von mir* or *eine Freundin von mir*. For same-sex friends, it is possible to say *mein Freund* or *meine Freundin* without referring to the person as your same-sex partner. Some Germans will consistently use the *von mir* form. Using the word "friend" in German has a similar effect to using "a buddy of mine," "my good friend," or "my girlfriend" (as in a woman's good female friend). Germans call their acquaintances *Bekante* (male) and *Bekanntin* (female).

Almost all German students use *du* with one another at the university, even if they don't know one another. They generally use *Sie* with people their parents age or older, professors, administrators, merchants, strangers, etc. There is a gray area when you talk to students who are above 30 or young people who work in a store or in a restaurant. In those cases, it is better to use *Sie* first and wait to see if they tell you to use *du*. It is considered impolite or even insulting when the *du* form is used in the wrong situation. To avoid using *du* when talking about how "someone in general" would do something, use the 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun *man* instead.

Germans like to get to know each other by talking about school or politics and asking friendly questions. Talking about something impersonal is a good way for them to get insights to a person's values. It is not a bad idea to read about American and European politics before coming to Germany. If you show them you can support a position with clarity and thought, you will earn their respect. While a question such as "What are you doing this weekend?" might be a setup for an invitation in the US, in Germany it has a more literal meaning.

Some German students will try to adjust to the American system by being friendlier than they would normally be with other Germans. These students will be more open to American social rituals such as teasing, being chummy or perky, talking shop, or talking about personal things (such as problems with the boyfriend or girlfriend, etc.). With most Germans, however, these rituals won't work unless you know them well.

### GOING OUT

With or without German friends, anyone can have a good time in Germany. Drinking on the market square in the *Altstadt*, watching soccer games, going to a concert or a dance club, and hiking in the forest are examples of everyday entertainment in Germany.

Festivals: It is fair to compare Oktoberfest to a large county fair with beer, regarding its size and atmosphere. It starts in mid-September and you will need to get to Munich by 9am the latest, if you want to get into one of the beer cabins. Without a seat, you will not be served as a rule. The weekends are extremely crowded. There is another version of the Oktoberfest in Stuttgart around the same time. The *Volkfest* is less crowded, less touristy, and supposedly more "genuine."

Around Christmas, most major cities will organize Christmas fairs called *Weihnachtsmarkt*. This event is much more tame and generally involves friends and couples walking around at night sampling from different food stands and drinking mulled wine, *Glühwein*. In the spring, Stuttgart organizes a festival called *Frühlingsfest*. You can go on carnival rides, drink beer, and sample food.

In general, Germans tend to speak much more softly in public spaces. Speaking at a volume acceptable in America is usually considered loud in Germany.

If anything is ever unclear in Germany, it is tipping. It is neither insisted upon nor required, although people often tip. In general, servers will not be offended, if you don't tip. However, if everything was OK and you ate well and had a good time, then it is a good idea to tip.

Here is my tipping system. For beer or coffee, a tip of €20 is a nice gesture. For a €10-20 dinner, anything between €40 and €80 will be fine. Any amount greater than €20 is tipped at 5%, more or less. When you tip, you simply tell them the amount you want to pay including the tip, and the corresponding change is given to you on the spot. For example, to leave a tip for a bill of €12.50, you can simply say, "Thirteen, please." If no change is needed because you are leaving the change as the tip, you say *Stimmt so*.

German bars rarely serve ice in their drinks, so don't be alarmed or offended when you see only one ice cube in your Coke.

It is legal and common to smoke indoors. It is not productive to insist on strangers to not smoke in your presence, but you can ask your friends and acquaintances to switch seats with you, for example.

Living in Germany will involve some degree of getting used to the quieter atmosphere. Be prepared to enjoy life in a different way. The slow pace will be strange at first, but you might miss it when you go back to the States.

#### DATING

Dating a foreigner can be a fun experience. I know a few students who are dating Germans and a few who are dating other exchange students. There are probably more that I don't know of. If you are in a relationship before you go abroad, be prepared to deal with the long distance during the program. I've seen a few couples break up, but also one that is getting married. If you do date a German, be prepared to communicate clearly about what to do after the end of the program.

It happens occasionally that women are harassed, touched, or solicited in public or at a party. This is not socially acceptable in Germany or anywhere else for that matter. In such a situation, tell them firmly to leave you alone (*Lassen Sie mich in Ruhe!*) and push them away if you have to. They usually leave you alone after that.

#### TOLERANCE

Germans are working at creating a tolerant, multicultural society, despite the presence of xenophobia and hate crimes. Not everyone wants to have a *Multi-Kulti* society, and recent victories of the National Democrats in local elections confirm the rising influence of neo-Nazism in East Germany. In fact, a report by the EU commission on prejudice and racism confirms that Germany is among the most intolerant nations in Europe.

Tübingen and Heidelberg are more progressive than most of Baden-Württemberg, so the chances of experiencing racism, homophobia, or sexism are lower. There are monthly events for

gays and lesbians and a women-only bookstore in Tübingen, for example. Racism, unfortunately, is a different matter. Apparently, it is still acceptable for people on TV and in films to use racial epithets.

Working against this intolerance and social injustice are many Germans who identify themselves with progressive politics. They are likely to condemn and criticize this aspect of Germany more harshly than you do. They will serve as your allies and friends, and perhaps you will like Germany precisely because it produces people like them. And these people do go far in politics. The Green Party, for example, has many well-known politicians who led demonstrations and sit-ins in their youthful days. The first Turkish-German parliamentary member also belongs to this party.

Take advantage of your special status and use your year as an opportunity to reflect on your self-identity and on the social and political differences between Germany and the US.

### SCHWÄBISCH

Swabian is the dialect spoken in Tübingen and the surrounding region known as Swabia. The dialect hardly resembles High German to the untrained ear, but almost all people speak High German, albeit with a *Schwäbisch* accent. It is understandable to want to speak High German rather than a dialect-influenced form, and the occasional, progressive Swabian will agree. As a foreigner, though, having a regional accent can increase your uniqueness and charm. Most likely you will pick up the regional accent or at least know and understand it, whether you want to or not. If you don't understand them, don't ask them directly to speak *Hoch Deutsch*. Ask them to speak *deutlich* instead. And don't make fun of the accent.

### CONCLUSION

I am very grateful for the opportunity to write this report which is very long the first time you read it, but I hope the information will be useful during the year. I would also like to thank everyone from Long Beach to my home campus, SF State, to the organizers in Tübingen for working so hard at making this experience possible for us. We exchange students are very creative at coming up with problems, and Anita and Marion have always been helpful and gracious. I should note that many universities don't have programs like ours. We are fortunate (to the point of being spoiled) to have such great people to support our exchange.

University of Heidelberg  
2005-06

### ARRIVAL, ORIENTATION AND PREPARATORY LANGUAGE PROGRAM (PLP)

I believe the best way to arrive in Heidelberg is through the use of the Lufthansa Bus. It costs 19 Euros and leaves every hour. The website is <http://www.lufthansa-airportbus.com> and you can pay the driver. It drops you off at Crown Plaza Hotel very near Bismarkplatz, the center of town. From Bismarkplatz students could take a taxi for about 6 Euros or Bus12 to Universitaetplatz. The info-café is located in the Mensa in Universitaetplatz. Be sure to make a reservation for the Lufthansa Bus to secure yourself a seat, there will most likely always be one at the airport but they have cut down on their services and do not always have large enough cars leaving from Heidleberg to the airport.

## ACADEMIC LIFE

I believe that the academic life in Germany is ideal. It is very different from the American school system. For instance, no one is there to hold through your entire degree. They don't make a detailed syllabus explaining what you need to do to succeed in their course, rather tell you what will be discussed in the next meeting and it is up to the student to prepare themselves through reading and self-studying. The goal of courses in Germany is not to only receive an "A" but rather to obtain the knowledge and keep it. Grades are relatively unimportant to the University but rather students use them to evaluate themselves and prove their knowledge through a "Zwischenprüfung" at the end of their first two years of studying. At the end of their studies students are required to take a cumulative test of their subject proving they are competent in their field. I believe this shows that University in Germany is about learning and not just about having good grades. I have also realized that the American students are probably the laziest students that I encountered and have a rather bad reputation for being lazy. I have had to prove myself in each class to the teachers and my classmates because of this bad reputation that has preceded me. One girl said to me, "How come you are taking so many difficult courses like Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft and Grammatik...I thought all the American students just wanted to take classes in English." I do not understand why so many American exchange students bother coming to Germany if they are going to take the majority of their courses in English. I also recommend signing up early for a Tandem partner, half your conversation is in English and half in German. It is a guaranteed way to get practice in. In courses like Proseminars, there are not always chances to get too much speaking time in. My first semester I drastically improved my reading competence but my classes allowed such small opportunity to speak. I recommend taking the courses that you want to transfer as required for your major your first semester because some of the classes are closed to Kurzeitstudenten in Spring. Also it is better to take them in Winter Semester because it is freezing, being raised in Orange County I was not prepared for this and did not want to leave my room (ideal for lots of studying). Also it is too cold to travel, in my opinion. There are so many carnivals, festivals and fun events in Spring Semester that it would be better to get your difficult courses out of the way, on a more negative note, not everybody passes Deutsches Grammatik and Sprachwissenschaft, this can give you an opportunity to re-take them. In my Sprachwissenschaft, only 10 of 50 people passed the class, and in Grammatik about 15 of 40.

## Academics

German professors are very strict in the "Institut fuer Deutsch als Fremdsprache" with attendance. If they say you are allowed to miss two times and you miss three, you don't go down a grade; you are not allowed to return to the class. Another important note, I received my list of courses that I could take at the Orientation. This is an important thing to go to if you want to get signed up for classes on time. Typically at the German University students just show up to class and it is not necessary to sign up. However, this is not the case for Deutsch als Fremdsprache. I signed up for almost all my classes and a few of the classes I wanted were full. You sign up for the courses on a paper taped to the door of the professor so it is not as easily to sign up as at home. Just sign up as early as possible for courses then you don't have to worry about trying to get in the spot of someone who did not show up.

## HOUSING

During my time here in Heidelberg, I lived in a high rise building with 13 other room mates. We shared a kitchen, common area, toilets and showers. Every room is equipped with a private sink and basically furnished. The kitchen has everything you would need to cook so it is not required to buy anything. I also had free cable and internet and my rent was 168 Euro per month. The most common housing that I have noticed is also in Neuenheimer Feld where you live in a very small apartment with one other person and you share a kitchen and bathroom with them. I believe in this case you would have to provide your own kitchen and toilet supplies. Be sure if you want internet to mark so on your application. Only four buildings out of maybe thirty are equipped with internet and it is very expensive to have it privately.

### **MONEY AND BANKING**

I highly do not recommend using Euro Travelers Checks unless you specially order them in large increments of for instance 500 Euro each. Almost no where in Heidelberg will accept these checks, the only place I was able to use mine was at the Info-Café to pay my deposit on my apartment. Other than that I was charged 2 Euro to put each Travelers Check in my bank account. This ended up costing me over 100 Euros because when I ordered my checks I didn't specify in what denominations and I received mostly 50's. I also had many problems with my German bank, Sparkasse. It is required in Germany to have a German bank account because your health insurance, rent and telephone bill are taken out automatically. What some other students I know did was open a Bank of America account because they are partnered with Deutsche Bank. It is the same as having a Deutsche Bank account. It would also be easier to transfer money, you could have your parents put money from your account to the Deutsche Bank without paying an ATM fee. Credit cards are also not widely used and on many German websites they charge you a fee to order with a credit card but it is free with a German bank card. Only large stores and restaurants accept credit cards so make sure you always have enough cash.

### **COMPUTERS**

I recommend that every student bring a laptop if they already have one. I use mine everyday for school or to call home. Heidelberg has several internet cafes but they are often crowded and not ideal for studies.