

# Exchange program experience

My name is Angela Daniela Castro Morante and I am a last year Peruvian student of Geological Engineering in the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. I was recently given the opportunity to go to Bonn, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, through the DAAD GeoSAP Bonn-Lima program in the Institute for Geosciences. I spent 7 months at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, from August 2021 to March 2022, deeply immersing myself in the German culture of the area and the geological knowledge that the university offered me.



Me and the main building of the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn in the back.

Academically related, I took four different courses in the university that helped me enlarge and consolidate my knowledge in geological sciences. These courses were: BP 08 - Geologic Mapping, BW 37 - Digital Mapping in the Geosciences, MGP 10 – Petrology, and MGP 12 - Isotope Geochemistry.

In the geological mapping course, we went to the Eifel area, which is a certain volcanic zone in North Rhine-Westphalia. This geologic mapping course gave me firsthand experience, stimulate my interest and motivation into geological features and structures and strengthen my observation and perception skills. This was definitely one of the best experiences I had in Germany and it really motivated me to be more interested into studying different geological settings, besides the ones that I already knew in Peru.



Me pointing a quartz vein in the Eifel area.



The geological mapping class.

The courses Petrology and Isotope Geochemistry had definitely been some of the best experiences I had in Germany. In Isotope Geochemistry we went to university to do some practice work, including working with a mass spectrometer, which was really interesting and exciting. In Petrology, we went to university to work with the microscopes, which is one of my main topics of interest, so I really could consolidate a lot of information I studied in class. I am pretty sure that what I learnt in the laboratories and classes will help me with the courses that I have left and with my future job.



Me working with a microscope in the Petrology laboratory.

The university had a lot to offer. The infrastructure it held was amazing and quality of the teaching methods and professors were really good as well. I also really appreciated the help that I received: as an international student, I was assigned a person that helped me adapting to this new life and university, which was really helpful when I needed it. Also, I spent almost every day studying in the libraries that the university had to offer and I ate lunch several times in the dining hall from university.



The Peruvian group with our study buddy.

Cultural and socially related, it was really hard for me to adapt to this new country. It was the first time that I travelled for so long by my own, and also that far away. It took me a month to completely adapt myself to my new living conditions. I learnt a lot about how to be an independent person, which I am sure will help me in the future when I am able to become completely independent.

This opportunity also helped me to learn and understand European history, specially the German one. I had the opportunity to visit several museums in Europe and I think that learning about its history allows us to know the past to understand the present and project ourselves into the future with lessons learned and challenges to be achieved. I am also really keen into art, so it was really interesting to be able to visit the art museums that Germany and Europe have to offer.

I also had the opportunity to travel to different countries in my free days, since Europe is a well-connected continent. This allowed me to get to know different cultures and languages, at the same time that I got to know places that I never imagined visiting. I spent some days exploring it to discover many interesting places, each with its own history and appeal, art, monuments, castles, palaces, alleys, food and landscapes.



Me and some friends at a Christmas dinner in Paris.



Me with the Eiffel tower.

Language related, I had the opportunity to practice my German daily. My level of German was not very good when I left Peru, however, by using it and reading it everywhere, I was able to improve it.

I also made several friends in Germany, some from the geological faculty and some others from the student dorm where I lived. This was one of the best ways to get to know German and international cultures. I spent pleasant moments with people from all over the world and created memories that I know will last throughout my life. When you meet people who were not raised with the same cultural background as you were, you begin to realize that you know very little about global cultural experiences. When you learn about regions around the globe from the people who actually live in them, you are given the opportunity to challenge any and all stereotypes of which you may not have been aware. At the same time, I got to share a lot from my culture and traditions, which I am sure was really enriching for the friends that I made.



Me and friends from Petrology.



Me and friends in Cologne.

This opportunity has helped me open my panorama in so many ways. Now I am really confident about going to Europe to do my masters degree and keep experiencing exciting adventures. I am

sure that without this program, I would have never even thought about doing a full program abroad. Now I am sure that I want to go abroad to keep learning and probably someday work there too.

This has been one of the most impressive, incredible, and unforgettable experiences in my life. Personally, for me, it was quite challenging and because of this even more fascinating, as I had to adapt to the new conditions of life across the ocean from my home. I will never be the same person I was before this exchange program. This has helped me improve in so many ways and I will never be thankful enough for this opportunity.

This exchange program took me outside of my comfort zone and made me experienced new feelings. I added so much value into my life and it defined myself as a person. I would highly recommend to follow the same path, it is an experience that I will never regret and definitely changes a life, in some way or another.



Me next to the Rhine river in Bonn.