

Adrian Johnson
06/05/2006
European Union and the U.S.
Uli Bruckner

GOING ABROAD

There is more going on in the world than what my friends and I have experienced while living in our bubble within the city limits of Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. I have always known this fact since the days of my youth, but I never really thought about it. I was always wrapped up in the world I saw daily; the relationships right in front of me and issues strictly concerning the U.S., not thinking of anything which stood outside of these boundaries. When I stepped onto the campus of Stanford University and started meeting international students and building solid relationships with them, I grew curious about the lives they had lived prior to taking courses at Stanford and began to desire to see what I had not seen and experience to some extent how people handle life in different nations. This led me to take a quarter abroad in Germany. And as soon as I walked around the city of Berlin taking in the newfound sights and sounds, it did not take me long to realize I was going to see and experience a culture steeped in history yet new to me for the next two and a half months. Then began the expansion of what I thought I knew shedding some light into the former darkness allowing me to view more. The world proceeded to get bigger and fuller each day I spent in Germany and at the same time the world shrank. My world continued to expand as I ate new foods, enjoyed a different landscape and climate from the desert of Las Vegas, and learned about contemporary issues concerning Germans. The world seemed to get smaller when I reflected on my interactions and exchanges with my host family and Germans I met randomly in various places. All wanting to achieve his or her own version of success, live safe and comfortably, and

enjoy good relationships along with food and drink. One way in which I was able to realize these things was through taking the Political Science course with Professor Uli Bruckner and participating in our Bing trip for the quarter to Istanbul, Turkey. This trip definitely opened my eyes to the complexities affecting the global stage currently, and allowed me to see and hear the multiple viewpoints on certain international issues as each nation involved- US, the member states of EU, and Turkey- sought to find the perfect balance between benefiting their own nation and trying to maintain upstanding relations with other countries. Through meeting and discussing contemporary issues of Turkey in relation to itself, the European Union, and the United States with Damla Gurel, member of the Turkish Parliament, Turkish university students from Koc University and Sabanci University, and Turkish professors, there seems to be no choice except to start caring and taking a stake in international challenges. Turkey is currently on the path to becoming a new member state of the EU for a number of benefits. Because of this, Turkey as a country is undergoing a lot of changes in order to meet the requirements while preserving their distinct cultural heritage. And at the same time Turkey tries to maintain good relations with the US despite not allowing troops to stage attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan on Turkish soil, and relies heavily on its Islamic faith to keep potential terrorist activities out of Turkey. All of these experiences reflect the broadening of an individual mind allowing one to see the view from a newly reached summit en route to climbing even bigger mountains. This is what “going abroad” is all about, and winter quarter abroad in Berlin, Germany 2006 has done this for me.