

IAESTE-REPORT

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Neckarsulm
Country: Germany
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Traineeship at Audi, Germany

I cheered when I got the placement and the opportunity to do a traineeship at Audi. Finally I would get the chance to see how a big company works and to do that in Germany would give me an excellent chance to learn German.

A four months long traineeship and a complete summer in the central parts of Europe seemed extremely appealing. To start at a new workplace and also to have the difficulty to communicate in a foreign language was challenging. Would I be able to manage and work in German?

The company & the language

The Audi factory is situated in Neckarsulm in the south of Germany. The main products for Audi are cars and Audi is one of the leading automobile companies in the world.

There are two large factories in Germany, the one in Neckarsulm is the smaller one with 12 714 employees. Audi has a number of industries all over the world and therefore customers worldwide.

Before beginning at Audi, my German knowledge needed to be refreshed. I took a two weeks intensive course in Frankfurt. During the train journey towards Neckarsulm I saw a more hilly

landscape with thickly wooded forests, cultivations, small villages with old and beautiful timber houses. I have earlier just soughed past Germany via Autobahn und missed almost everything. But now I had the opportunity to discover the big European-Country from the inside.

I was fortunate to be a part of a department with many young employees and trainees. I quickly became accepted by the colleagues.

The biggest challenge was the language and it was a bit difficult at the beginning, especially new technical knowledge in German, spoken in a strange dialect. One of the directors was from Norway and when indistinctness occurred, we had a possibility to speak in Swedish, which gave me certainty in the beginning. My employer was very busy and only had time for a short presentation. Instead another trainee showed me around.

My work

My work included current business with a variety field of tasks, concerning the process chain "Doors C6" in one of the Audi-Models. I supervised and demonstrated the improvements potential and introduced these improvements into production. When an error in the production occurred, it had to be analysed, the cause had to be searched

and a solution had to be found. I carried out sequence measurements to analyse the result. As tools I diligently used Excel and PowerPoint.

The office consisted of two rooms, with small groups of desks for the different teams; Electronic, Seri-production and Process-optimising

It was satisfying to know, that my achievement helped the mutual work forwards. Now and then the assignments I was given, did not feel challenging, just a task to keep me occupied. But I have to say that most of the time it was interesting and instructive. The cooperation with the colleges worked excellent. Everyone was always helpful despite that the department was very busy.

Audi, women & smokers

Another of the three department directors, an enormously skilled woman, has in the last couple of years worked towards increasing the share of women at the department. In my department 30% were women. I heard from my colleges that the department is more pleasant and has a calmer working environment now, with a higher share of women.

It was enjoyable to come to such an eminent department. The women I spoke with were

satisfied with their situation at the company.

In Germany many people smoked both young and old. I was surprised that smoking was allowed in some parts of the production. There are smoke areas, but sometimes the cigarette-ends were thrown directly at the floor. As a non-smoker, this made me a little bit uncomfortable.

Accommodation & Social Activities

It was hard to find an apartment close to Audi. I got a list over accommodation possibilities by Audi, the rest I had to arrange by my self. I was a bit nervous to call and speak German but in the end it was rewarding. I ended up in a small village 12 km away. A college from Audi welcomed me at the train station and drove me to my apartment. I got information from and about Audi, including maps over the area. *(usually IAESTE arranges lodging, but in this case there were no local committee in Neckarsulm. The Editors remark)*

A lot of activities were organized every week for all the trainees. It was fun and easy to get to know other students outside work. Everyone was curious in a person from Sweden and what customs we have there. The general opinion about Sweden is almost always positive and it is

satisfying to represent such a beautiful country.

Many times I had to either confirm or deny the different prejudices that people have. German is like Sweden in many ways, the Germans run as little around in Lederhosen, as all the Swedes are blond and blue-eyed. Since I like to organize events, I arranged I very appreciated "Swedish Night" with "Swedish Soft ball-tournament" and barbeque.



Carina & local representative in traditional clothes

Achievements

The traineeship was truly interesting and educational; it was especially rewarding to get a glimpse of the complex car-Industry.

I think that Audi is satisfied with my achievements. My colleges thought it was exciting to co-operate with a foreigner. Furthermore I think it was interesting for them to hear about Sweden and the customs we have. I feel that I would have gain more personally, if I got more guidance from my employer. At times I didn't know what was expected from me. Also language difficulties in the beginning of the traineeship made some situations more complicated then they had to be.

It was very good to come to a larger department, because there were always new assignments to solve. They were used to have trainees there, which made it easier to be given the right sore of tasks. I truly recommend other students to go on this placement, but with the necessary language knowledge.

There are things I appreciate more now in Sweden. There are many things we take for granted, for example the possibility and liberty to go for a country walk without the need to travel to the appropriate areas.

Regardless of where you are in the world, you always meet new people with different personalities and ways of acting. You have to learn to be able to interact with all kinds of different people. The traineeship has provided me

with experience that makes it easier for me to acknowledge differences, face difficulties and solve the arising problems.

My biggest achievement is that I now can speak, and work fluently in German. It is fascinating how much easier it is to learn a language when you are in the country. Not only have I got new work experience, but also the possibility to take part of the German culture.

A traineeship is an excellent way to prepare yourself for your upcoming career and it gives you the means to meet the challenges that the future holds.

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Some more pictures:



Flying with a colleague



Me with some of my colleagues at Audi



Wine cultivation at dawn



A funny parking sign