

Schwabisch Hall.

The first thing I can say about the placement in the Goethe Institut in Schwabebisch Hall is that it is an absolutely worthwhile and enjoyable experience. There are numerous reasons for this and I'll detail just a few for you here:

- Submersion – if you want to learn German it's fairly natural to think that by going there you'll learn more. This is absolutely true. The every day tasks you take for granted aren't so simple any more, because you have to communicate predominantly in German to achieve anything.
- Teaching – Class runs from 8.15 to 13.15, and isn't all that bad. The teaching is fun and is very biased towards speaking the language. Many various areas are covered so your ability progresses at a good rate across a broad front. You get a load of homework everyday, but you can suss that with your friends and then do what you want every afternoon/evening. They've got a library-cum-study room with pcs and other learning materials that can help you as well.
- Excursions – To become good at German it isn't solely about knowing the words. It's about knowing the people, the places and the culture. The excursions offered are always interesting, and should be taken advantage of because it is considerably cheaper to get about with the institute than it is alone and they know places of interest.

There are other reasons you may be apprehensive about this opportunity, and I'll just tap into why there's no need to be:

- Loneliness - You may worry about being alone in a strange place with a load of people that you can't understand. That's pretty understandable, but hundreds of people are in the same boat as you and they're all feeling their way about just like you. And the best bit is nowhere near all of them have any decent English ability so the language of choice becomes German; which makes communication incredibly funny. So getting in a group is easy, and it doesn't even matter what you do together because your language will develop further if you only sit in cafes all the afternoons. The social side is all set up by the institute as well, with nights out, sports and films which are all good fun. I went out, had a few beers and ended up chatting to some Germans until the early hours of the morning on the night we got beaten by them in the football... So there are positives in everything! And if you miss the folks at home there's an internet café you can drop in on and keep in touch with your mates back in the motherland.
You'll also become good friends with a lots of people from all over the world, so you can plan a world trip to visit them in the future like I intend to do!
- (In)ability to speak the language – The Institut takes on every level of German speakers. From those who simply have never said a word of German in their lives to those who are whizz kids and 'think' they are experts. So whatever level you're at you'll be in a group right for you. Indeed, the first thing you do when you arrive, before you even go to your room, is take tests in reading, writing, and speaking – which was a bit of a shock to me, and seemed incredibly hard – but everyone found it that hard (in your class) so remember you aren't the only one.

- A few domestic details:
Rooms: Typical University style room with communal bathrooms and kitchen.
Take a bath towel as they supply two hand towels.
Catering: There is a Cafeteria for Breakfast (mine was free) and Lunch. Dinner was up to your free choice
Money: I received 300E pocket money which I found really useful and mainly covered my needs. Obviously what you spend is up to you.
Social facilities: at the Institut – it is a place of learning so not a lot besides library and PC. No TV etc
In the local town there are art gallery, pool. Churches, basketball and football facilities

Simply to summarise; you've got this chance, so don't shirk it, grab hold of it with both hands and shake it for everything it's got. You won't be disappointed.