

Adventures Abroad



A Hereford youth says Guten Tag to a German journey and a trip of a lifetime.

by **Haley Stark**

Wanderlust is defined as the strong desire to travel, and for 20-year-old Shelby Bagnell, Slater, Mo., it was a familiar feeling as she progressed through college. As a small-town girl raised on the family cattle operation, international studies and a chance to explore European culture seemed nearly out of reach until a Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) scholarship turned that dream into a reality.

Shelby, an agricultural education major with a teaching emphasis at the University of Missouri, first became aware of study-abroad trips as a freshman when older students promoting travel opportunities visited her classes. The concept instantly sparked Shelby's interest and inspired her to apply.

The day after she submitted her study-abroad application, Shelby received exciting news — she was the recipient of a \$10,000 Jack and Donna Vanier Scholarship. Shelby is an active member of the Missouri Hereford Association and has been showing since she could walk; she has attended numerous Junior National Hereford Expos (JNHEs) and served as the 2015 Missouri Hereford Queen. Currently, Shelby is on the Missouri Junior Hereford Association board of directors.

For Shelby the HYFA scholarship provided her the financial means she needed to make her international trip possible.

"It was like fate," Shelby says. "I applied on a whim last fall to go, I got accepted, then the next day I found out I received the scholarship." She was awarded an additional scholarship through the university that covered everyday expenses while in Germany.

The following March, Shelby departed to Germany with 25 other agricultural students for 10 days, where they ventured to a new city nearly every night. Close by her side was a small journal to document every memory and sight as she explored European culture and international agriculture.

A history fanatic

Germany is teeming with historical importance. Ancient architecture, magnificent castles tucked within towering mountains and museums filled with timeless artifacts are common components of the federal parliamentary republic's culture. Shelby's infatuation with history left her excited as they embarked on the trip with an itinerary full of historical stops and sightseeing.

The first two busy days of Shelby's study-abroad adventure were spent in Berlin, Germany's capital

and largest city. “The first day we were there we hit the ground running, and we didn’t stop,” Shelby says.

That day the group visited an engineering university where they listened to professors and graduate students speak on research experiments including utilizing lactic acid from dairy cattle to produce plastic cups.

While in Berlin, the students were given an additional free day to leisurely explore the city. Shelby visited popular tourist venues including Checkpoint Charlie, the Brandenburg Gate, a museum with a piece of the Berlin wall on display and the Berlin Cathedral.

Shelby also witnessed a European Union (EU) rally while in Berlin, an experience that she recalls as both eye-opening and intense.

Next the students traveled six hours west to the Cologne, a city made of cobblestone streets where the Cologne Cathedral’s twin spires paint the skyline with a sense of Gothic architecture and Roman history. The cathedral, took more than 250 years to complete, is voted as one of the country’s most visited tourist attractions.

“The Cathedral was the only thing not damaged during World War II,” Shelby explains. “Next to the Cathedral is the Hohenzollern Bridge crossing the Rhine River, it’s the bridge with all locks on it. They were actually cutting off some of the locks because they were weighing down the bridge and slowly destroying it.”

Next on the map was Frankfurt, one of the most important commercial and economic centers of mainland Europe. Outside of the bustling city life, Frankfurt is also home to a Riesling winery the students toured. Shelby notes the stretching



Shelby visited Technical University of Munich dairy farm.

vineyards and quaint castle and courtyards were once home to a former knight and his family.

Shelby enjoyed visiting an eight-story Mercedes Benz museum, where each floor was dedicated to a particular time era. “A lot of the boys I was with were very excited about it,” Shelby says. “But it was really cool to see how their automobiles have changed over time and how Mercedes Benz actually contributed to manufacturing during World War II.”

Of all the historic destinations, the most breathtaking was the Neuschwanstein Castle. Located above the village of Hohenschwangau on a rugged hill in the middle of the alps, the castle is an elaborate 19th-century Romanesque palace. Shelby found several souvenirs in the small tourist town before taking a 35-minute hike up the mountain to get a view of the castle.

For Shelby the most gripping and moving site, however, was Dachau Concentration Camp. “I didn’t take a lot of pictures because it wasn’t something I felt I needed to photograph,” Shelby explains. “If you want to see it, it’s something you need to come and experience for yourself.” The overwhelming

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Shelby’s study abroad experience in Germany had an emphasis on European agricultural engineering.

Top 10 reasons to study abroad

- 1) Travel can increase personal growth and development.
- 2) Participants develop an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures.
- 3) Students can earn course credits.
- 4) Individuals can develop international connections.
- 5) It offers opportunities to make lifelong friends.
- 6) It is an opportunity for a once-in-a-lifetime experience.
- 7) It provides the opportunity to indulge in new cultures.
- 8) Scholarships and financial aid are available
- 9) Participants may find new interests
- 10) It's fun and beats sitting in a classroom. **HW**

Source: Oklahoma State University College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

size of the camp left Shelby speechless. She found herself hypnotized by the camp's somber history as they spent three hours walking the same path the prisoners once walked, starting where they got off the train.

They witnessed the showers and crematorium and even saw the documentation center, an arena Hitler was making to hold rallies and meetings before he was killed. It was later turned into a museum.

Agricultural destinations

Before Shelby left for Germany, she was eager to compare her experiences growing up on a small farm to German agriculture. Because she traveled with the university's Ag Systems Management Program, there was emphasis on European agricultural engineering.

The group visited the Ostwestfalen-Lippe University of Applied Sciences-Lemgo campus and toured a cutting-edge technology SMART factory implementing practices like 3D printing. The professor who traveled with the students had a friend who was the head of agricultural engineering at the university, so the group got an inside look at the university and its research studies. Later that evening the group ate dinner and socialized with several German graduate students.

The study-abroad students further learned about equipment manufacturing as they toured both a smaller company called CLAAS and a larger John Deere facility. CLAAS is a family-owned German machinery company known for its specialized LEXION combine.

At the John Deere factory in the city of Mannheim, Shelby compared German production to the John Deere facility in Moline, Ill. "It was a huge facility," Shelby says. "They do make a lot smaller equipment in Germany than in the U.S., but we still got to see the cab be put on to the body of a tractor and it was neat to see how it all came together."

Next on the itinerary was the Technical University of Munich, where there was ongoing engineering research

with dairy cattle production. The university has a small indoor dairy barn with 56 head of Brown Swiss cattle. There, a robot manure cleaner was created featuring a laser that can map out the path where the cattle frequently travel and then generate a map into the computer where the robot manure cleaner follows the path to clean up manure.

Shelby learned more about production agriculture when they visited German farmer Thomas Muhr, who grows wheat, rye and sugar beets as well as operates a small precision agriculture company. His farm, at approximately 800 acres, is one of the largest operations in Germany.

Shelby says she valued the farmer's honesty with students as he opened the discussion up to all questions. Germany requires agricultural commodities to be entirely organic and non-GMO (genetically modified organism), which poses some contrast to American agriculture. Thomas explained to the group how German farmers face a lot of pressure from consumers and government regulations. The government is very strict on agricultural practices and has even shut down some farms. Shelby says Muhr reiterated to the group how fortunate the U.S. was for having a government that supports farming and agriculture.

She notes other differences in German agriculture, too. "There's smaller scale farms with mostly dairy cattle and sheep," Shelby explains. "I only saw three beef cows at the German farmer's operation; they import a lot of their beef cattle and there's virtually no hogs." In fact, the German government is leaning toward importing agricultural commodities instead of producing them.

Back on the map

As an agricultural education major, Shelby says she is thankful for her experiences in Europe. For her, it put American agriculture in perspective.

"Things are a lot different in other countries, the United States is very lucky to have the agricultural advances that we do and have the opportunities we do," Shelby says. "Especially traveling abroad, very few students in Germany study abroad, and they're usually grad students if they do. As an undergraduate student, that made me feel very fortunate."

Shelby intends on traveling abroad again. She has her eyes set on a trip to Australia or New Zealand.

With hopes of becoming an agricultural teacher after college, Shelby plans on incorporating international agriculture and various countries into her classroom, aiming to teach an "ag around the world" class. It's her goal to educate other students and JNHE members about study-abroad opportunities because they are something Shelby almost missed out on. She advises anyone interested in or curious about studying abroad to ask questions and to apply for scholarships.

"Ask anyone you know that's been on a study abroad trip and apply for scholarships," Shelby says. "Without scholarships, my trip wouldn't have been possible and the knowledge I learned from my trip is something I'll never forget." **HW**