

# BADGERS BEYOND ABROAD

alumni interview series

## Jack Hildebrand

Germany

### Life After Study Abroad

After completing a year at the Albert-Ludwigs Universität in Freiburg (with IAP's Academic Year in Freiburg program) I returned to Madison to finish my Bachelor's Degree, but had every intention of going back to Germany as soon as possible. In my mind at that point, Freiburg seemed more home-like to me than Madison did. Luckily, I never felt so far from "home." During my final year at the UW I was hired by IAP as a peer advisor to talk about my experience abroad and help other students decide which program would be most beneficial for them. Towards graduation I was awarded a teaching assistantship through the Fulbright Commission to work in Austria, where I have been for the last two years. Although it was not what I originally had in mind, Austria has given me the rare opportunity to practice my German, earn a little money, and travel probably an unhealthy amount. I am currently a student at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna completing a Masters in Environmental Technology and International Affairs.

### Impact on Life, Goals & Career

Studying abroad forced me from my comfort zone into new academic and social situations. In order to make new friends and become a better student I had to push myself to learn a foreign language. Soon I was taking classes like "Realist Literature" in German, which not only was a boost of confidence for speaking and reading comprehension, it was also motivation to branch out academically. After graduating from Madison with a degree in History and German, I threw myself back in the classroom, this time to teach Austrian students about American culture. After two years of teaching I decided to go in a new direction by enrolling in a Master's program at the Diplomatic Academy. In a sense, the basic academic and social skills I earned after "starting from scratch" in Germany transcended into my post-college life. For most, studying abroad means a well-rounded mix of work-and-partying, but it can also present unique opportunities to develop professional skills, especially command of a foreign language.

### Advice for Returning Students

My advice for students is to see the possibilities your experience can offer and figure out how to apply them. For me it wasn't completing history requirements, it was simply learning German. Without the year spent in Freiburg I would not have received a Fulbright grant, nor been competent enough to start a Master's in a completely different field of study. Going from a history degree focused on early modern worlds, to environmental technology, has been a transition to say the least, but I still get to enjoy the simple pleasures of living in a foreign country and doing day-to-day things.

Interview from February 2015



Jack on a castle trip in Alsace.

**See the possibilities your experience can offer and figure out how to apply them.**

**study abroad**

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