

# The Summer in Karlsruhe & Memories to Take Home



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Transatlantic Energy-Research Experience (TE-REx) Program 2023 (MINTernship) at KIT

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Fall 2022 at UNC Charlotte, I received an email about a summer internship program at KIT along with a list of projects. When reading through the project descriptions, one project caught my attention because it was within the scope of research that brought me back from a full-time job to a full-time PhD program earlier that year. So, I consulted with my advisor and applied. I was sure that I would be selected, and the good news came in December right before Christmas.

Between December 2022 and May 2023, it was a thrilling few months because I had to sort out some immigration matters with the USCIS and then visa stuff with German embassy. While there were times, I was debating my decision, I also took it as a mission to make this program happen. I received special travel permission from the U.S. government and was waiting on the German embassy for the visa processing. During this period, I learned that I was offered an internship at California ISO with an attractive benefit package. However, I was determined about the KIT research program and saying no to the California internship was an easy choice. In the meantime, I wrote letters to many offices and finally the day has come to pick up my visa from German consulate in Atlanta less than 48 hours prior to my scheduled flight from

Washington, DC. So, I had to bring in my driving A-game and drive across the country back and forth for long hours. But it was all worthy.

I knew the research project would be interesting, so I was more looking forward to the experience of living in Germany, interacting with the people, getting used to German culture, and more importantly the overall social and professional dynamics.

Now that I am at the end of my tenure, I can confirm, it was a great decision to apply for this program and push through all the road bumps that came in the way. Here at IEH (KIT), I felt a great sense of community among my colleagues. I was really amazed by experiencing the warmth of friendship and acceptance they offered. My supervisor made sure I was well situated. I can write pages about how grateful I am to meet and interact with every single person in this research group, the rooftop, table football, coffee/lunch/ice-cream breaks, first time trying out bouldering, travel advice, and in length discussion about “Eierschalensollbruchstellenverursacher”. I learned a great deal about the academic programs in Germany. I had the freedom to explore my ideas within the research scope and I believe that led to a very successful research outcome withing a short period of time.

I appreciated every single time someone engaged with me in a conversation with a keen interest in learning about me and my experiences. I re-discovered how human beings around the world are so similar in terms of their experiences and how they do or feel things. However, one major challenge is language. It was nice of my colleagues, roommates, and that random person at the “parking lot party” to include me in a conversation by switching to English only because of me. I am also grateful for Teletandem which allowed me to find a great language partner and I plan to continue learning German after I return home.

Overall, I had such an amazing time in Karlsruhe this summer, a personal statement would not do justice in describing all of it. A huge amount of credit goes to a former KIT exchange student at UNC Charlotte (read: my friend and brother) for a great social experience.

Apart from the wonderful time in Karlsruhe, this summer exchange program allowed me to travel to many destinations, make tons of memories and learn a lot about art, history, and culture of many parts of Europe. These experiences will certainly stay with me for the rest of my life. I will cherish the conversations with other fellow travelers on the trains, some of them made me think and get perspectives.

Lastly, I am thankful for all the fun adventures and stories I take home to share with my family and friends. I hope to stay in touch with many of these friends here and revisit Germany soon (and probably even speak German one day). I would wholeheartedly recommend this program to anyone.

--Tschüss--

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