

## My year as a volunteer in Germany: February 2019 – February 2020

Written by Elvis P K

The experience was unforgettable. The first month was hectic and I wanted to go back home. Everything was happening so fast. People walked so fast, ate so fast and talked so fast. The people wanted me to do everything their way and I wanted to do things my way. I started missing all the fun back home. I also did not like the German food in the beginning. I wanted to eat more meat but meat is expensive there. Available are always bread and sweet things. The start was difficult because I could not go to host parents during the first weeks and had to stay in a youth hostel. I was home sick for a month and a half and did not want to do anything.

At my job place, a hospital, everything was different than in my home country. The people I worked with were running all the time and everywhere in and out. I did what I was told to do and there was not much room for interactions. It made me crazy that people could only see the work and nothing else. But I was also impressed with their organization. Everything is automatized in such a way that one person can easily run certain operations in the clinic on their own. The clinic has different departments but they are all connected. The patients have to book before going in. In Namibia you go to a clinic when you are sick.

My host family – a big thank you to them - had their own way of doing things, very organized. They were self employed but they woke up earlier than me every single time. Eating time was always at the same time whether we ate at home or went out. After dinner, it was time for playing a game and talking about how your day was at work and so on. In Namibia I was used to come back home late and eating alone and not together with the family.

The weekends were the best time of my stay in Germany. There were always activities like hiking, swimming, watching games, going out to drink beer or travelling. The greatest fun was watching the big games in the Bundesliga. There are lots of people at the same place, drinking and supporting their teams.

The travelling was perfect. I had a ticket that allowed me to take any public transport in the region of Hessen. Public transport is really excellent. The busses and the trains are connected in such a way that you can take a bus and catch the train which will bring you to your destination. In every town there are different bus stop points where you can take a bus from. It was also impressive that bicycles have their own routes; there is a real net of cycle tracks. I made it a habit to ride the bike over short distances.

I also got the chance to visit the big and old cities like Berlin with beautiful monuments and buildings. Germany is a beautiful country with a rich history. The Germans are strict people but after the initial problems we did get along very well – at the workplace, at home and in leisure times. And now being back in Namibia I miss the German food.