



More impressions about Washington

Studying in D.C. doesn't mean just hanging around in this green city on a bicycle or enjoying each impressive monument, complete with its own large personal space secluded from other buildings. It also includes living on campus and going to class sometimes.

You are not alone

Students in America normally live on campus. That means they have to get along with random roommates each semester. Living in dorms requires not only getting used to the exaggerated use of air conditioner but also handling situations like being covered only by a towel running down the hall to the showers, and ten minutes later, sitting in class next to the guy you crashed into on your way. You learn to be the quietest person ever when you always come home later than your roommates.

Sometimes that means removing your make-up in a completely dark room (you don't want to wake up someone!), always putting the light on your laptop on the lowest brightness, and checking to see if you are really wearing your pajama-shirt on the right side when you leave your room the next morning. I promise, after staying in the dorms for a few weeks you won't care anymore about trash lying around on the carpet. Buying or borrowing a vacuum cleaner just for your small room seems just too stressful.



There comes a time when you really have to do something for class. If this is the case, you have to lock your door and when someone knocks on it, it has to look like you are sleeping. You should leave the room only if you have to use the restrooms. While going there, you should turn your face to the floor to avoid seeing someone on your way there. Why? There's always someone who is able to convince you to go out for drinking a beer. Living in dorms means that you are never alone-like it or not. However, instead, you will manifest a sense of support with all the others who are staying around you. At that point, it all starts to feel like home.

Not just studying – being a part of it

When I'm not hanging around in Starbucks, eating awesome Oreo-cookies or watching a basketball game in the university's arena, I am in class studying something. Going to university doesn't mean the same as it does in Germany. The first time going to class in Germany, you would be very surprised if your professor knows your name-but, that sort of thing is just normal in the States. Classes are small and professors (by the way – you don't have to be a real professor in order to be named as such) try their best to take care of each student. Sometimes, the border between being a professor and a friend can be very small.

You get your degrees not only from passing exams at the end of the semester, but also from being as motivated as you can to speak out during the daily discussions in the seminars. The background theory in the lectures doesn't seem to be as important as it is in Germany – yes, that means you don't have to hear so much boring speeches from your professor but also means knowing less about the context you are talking about.

If you want to study in the States you have to be able to afford paying a lot of money because they understand studying as a supply of services. Everything is organized. If you are able to pay the fees, you don't have to worry to be overstrained with all the bureaucratic stuff you have to manage – there is always someone who is just waiting



to help you. The university system is fully developed, students are proud of their home university (not just seen in wearing the sweaters all day long), and the staff tries to help everyone to organize themselves, find scholarships, carry you with the university bus from one campus to another, and just to be there for all of the (usual very young) students.

In the land of opportunities

You are not allowed to drink in public, you are not allowed to drive fast, you are not allowed to consume water or to carry your dog with you in a metro, gas stations aren't allowed to sell alcohol... there are many things which seem to be normal behaviors in Germany but are illegal in the District of Columbia. However, you will forget all these prohibitions if you appreciate the ability to buy one gallon of orange juice 24 hours a day or get pizza, burgers, and french fries in every corner (even in the cafeteria).

All dollar bills look the same. Instead, ketchup and cornflakes are available in every color. Sometimes it's hard to find checkroom for your jacket in a bar or a club, but you will meet people there who always say, "Excuse me," if they want to pass behind you, even they are still thousand miles away from you. The waste separation exists only in distinguishing between paper and trash, and you have to pull every door instead of pushing them to step inside a room.

If you insert the key words like, amazing, and you know in your word pool, you sound a little bit more like a real American, and if you put your arm under the table while eating, you even look like you got something from their culture. There are so many of these little things that make the United States so lovable.

(text & pictures: Christina Hubmann)