



My first impressions from Washington D.C.

There are many clichés about the USA – especially when you are a German student. They circle in your head until the first day you arrive. Stereotypes are waiting to be verified: Some won't be there any longer; some will be exactly how you expected them. And there is only one way to find out: You should go to a place to live the life the people live there.

The USA is big. Many states belong to this continent and this means a variety of different cultures. However, or just because of this reason, everyone has an opinion of this powerful country. My first impressions about the United States, especially about the capital Washington D.C., range from huge metro stations, unexpected natural disasters and different attitudes to alcohol over to buildings which look much older than they are.



Be my best friend

It all began with my travel in an airplane: I must have looked despaired and overstrained because the man next to me – a real New Yorker guy – offered me his mobile phone number and mail address on a napkin, just in case I have any questions while being in the States. I was so tired but he doesn't stop small talking with me. Wow. Have I ever given a foreigner my phone number in an airplane?

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It seems like all those overfriendly people are just waiting to help. It is equal if they are able to do that – at the latest their i-Phone can. It feels like every American wants to be your friend – maybe actually your best friend after five minutes of talking. You could get the idea that every person – even the cashier at Mc Donald's – wants really to know, how you are when they greet you. I'm fine actually. Maybe nobody is really interested if I would feel just okay. But could there be a better start in a foreign country?

My very first Impression of Washington was that only friendly persons live in DC. Maybe it's exaggerated and maybe it's hard to figure out who really is a friend of yours, but there couldn't be an easier way to be comfortable with a new city and a new country.



Proud to be American

Americans love their country, love their culture, love their way of life. And, they speak it out loudly. In DC you won't find a street without any American flag and in the university buildings you won't find a pen without their logo on it. Nothing should be failed to be proud of your life but it is not common in Germany. If the Americans have a good job, they will tell you about it. If they own a huge house, the neighbor isn't jealous about it, but he's a participant in neighborhood security.

We don't have to decorate our balcony with flags and we don't have to mention in every speech that we are proud of our unit and team spirit but maybe we could learn to be a little bit haughtier of ourselves. We have also reached a lot, there are also things we are standing for and we have also our values. And there is no shame in demonstrating it to others.



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Washington: Feel the history

There are numberless museums in DC, a lot of them for free. Most of them try to collect as much as possible about the past to help all Americans to remember their history. The Maybe the American history cannot look back to so many centuries but to a lot of movements in getting this specific, multicultural society.

As a German student you walk through the exhibits with colored people and you watch movies about the racial reconciliation. You pace through the showroom with your Jewish roommate and you read the number of died people in the holocaust. You stride through the museum with your friend of the GDR and you touch the Berlin Wall. The museums offer a huge inside in what is responsible for the American people being the way like they are. As an international visitor you see how they are telling their own past and you can compare it to your own knowledge about it, which could be different in many ways.

DC and Me

DC is the capitol of the United States, however it is homelike. DC is anintended and clean city with lots of impressive white buildings. It seems like a multicultural city with thousands of opportunities for passing your free time. It is a dynamic and cosmopolitan city. On the one hand it is full of politicians, of people, who rule the world and on the other hand full of young interns, who are looking for work. You can walk in this city for hours; you can walk straight on without any curve.



After that you drink the sweetest soda ever in a very huge cup or you eat a banana with peanut butter. You can pet one of these gentle squirrels or you can stay a whole day in one of these oversized shopping malls. Washington is great – many things are a little bit different from Germany: I haven't had so many stitches from angry mosquitoes and I never got up from these crazy siren tones but I also never saw a sundown sitting next to the impressive Lincoln memorial.

(text and pictures: Christina Hubmann)