



FOUR 10-HOUR PLANE RIDES IN TWO MONTHS

Trips to Germany and Israel
taught lessons in navigating life

By **Lillian Hickman**, an Honors Transfer Fellow studying
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Lillian Hickman in Germany



Hickman under an ancient aqueduct in Caesarea

As a senior, I decided to spend my last summer at MTSU studying abroad. As of May 2022, I had never been on a plane or out of the South, so naturally, I decided to travel to Germany for five weeks and then Israel for almost two weeks. While this may have not been the brightest decision, I have always been one to jump right into new experiences!

Before I could get out of the country, I had to figure out the logistics. I was fortunate to have Matthew Hibdon, strategic communications manager for the College of Liberal Arts and an experienced traveler, to help me understand airlines and how best I could go between Germany and Israel. Once I knew how to get a ticket, I thought I was completely prepared for this wild adventure.

I was dropped off at the Nashville airport May 31 and left to navigate my next two flights on my own. It turns out that flying is just hours and hours of waiting. Though the waiting was unexpected, navigating the German public transportation system was significantly more difficult. Both were new and fun, though.

After leaving Nashville, I landed in Newark and waited for my next flight. Then I landed in London and waited for my next flight. Finally, I landed in Hamburg and waited for my bus. Once I got from Hamburg to

the tiny town of Lüneburg and met my host family, I went right to sleep.

Germany was an experience I never could have prepared for or expected. My favorite part was how much cardio I was doing! My host family gave me a bike, and I rode it everywhere. I biked for 30 minutes every day to class and then around town meeting up with friends.

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The most difficult part of my stay in Germany was acclimating to the recycling system. Their ecofriendly mentality inspired me to put more thought and effort into my own actions surrounding recycling. This enlightening experience led me to want to learn so much more about myself and about our world.

I met many amazing people, which made leaving Germany difficult, but it is comforting to know I can return in the future for a longer visit. My new friends traveled to Hamburg with me to see me off, and I was devastated to leave them. However, once I got on the plane, I was relieved to be going back to my family. That was the longest I had ever spent away from them, and it was nice to return to them. The flights back felt like they were significantly shorter, and I enjoyed them since I knew what I was doing.

After a week back in the U.S., I was ready to be back on a plane. After only a few days, I was repacking my suitcase to accommodate the hot weather of Israel. Navigating the trip to Israel was a bit more relaxing since I went with an MTSU group and didn't have to jump in headfirst and figure everything out on my own.

This trip really was about educating us about the politics and culture of modern Israel. Taking away the stress of traveling helped me focus on learning, which

was probably one of my favorite things about my trip to Israel. Thankfully, there were only two plane rides, and once we touched down in Israel, it was a short bus ride to our hotel.

Israel surprised me every day. When we woke up each day to get ready for more traveling and exploring, I had to continuously remind myself that I was in Israel. It was surprising to learn how close everything is there. We were able to move easily from one side of the nation-state to the other and covered a lot of ground in 12 days. The food was very different from Germany, and I couldn't have asked for a better summer of diverse food.

Even though my summer of traveling was tiring, it was one of the most memorable times in my life. I couldn't have done it without the scholarships and instructional help I received from MTSU. I look forward to going back to Germany and Israel in the future. **A**

Exploring an ancient Roman aqueduct at Caesarea

