

My time at the Schlesinger shop in Penzberg was so valuable. The owners were very friendly and allowed me to explore and get involved in many different areas of the business. I worked on the tills, helped sort stock and helped customers. My favourite part was talking to such a wide range of people, as despite improving my spoken German being the main purpose of my work experience, I learnt so much about local culture and Germany as a whole. For example, it was tricky at the start to pick up local dialect as Southern Germany has one of the thickest accents in the country, but I was able to pick it up and enjoyed working out the regional words they used (such as the word 'not' in German is 'nichts' and they say 'net'). Therefore, this week in Penzberg was largely successful and I am currently seeing the feasibility of going back again.

Travelling there was not as bad as I thought, I met Janina straight away and we took a bus to the house and shop. Penzberg itself was bigger than I thought and it was really fun to explore, I even went to a museum on Saturday as the shop closed at 14:30. At the house I stayed in (directly above the shop), I ate meals with the family every night and we had many conversations, covering all topics from politics to the environment- all in German! I was able to talk about things I did not know my vocabulary extended to, such as Brexit, which improved both my confidence and spontaneity in general conversations. They also had a great range of books in the house which I had access to and I started reading 'Der Pianist' (The Pianist), which I have now bought and have nearly finished.

The shop itself was not what I expected as it was a lot bigger and more modern than I expected. I remember this initial discovery very clearly as I quite nervous realising that there would nearly always be people in the shop, but this was really beneficial as it meant I always had something to do and people to talk to. The shop was open from 9:30-18:30 which was fairly daunting, however in Germany most shops close for an hour at lunch, where I was able to enjoy the local cuisine (I ate Wienerschnitzel most days). I was told I could stop working at 17:00 but I stayed to closing time most days as the day went surprisingly quickly and I really enjoyed working on the tills too (this became my main role). The shop itself sells a wide range of items and not just general kitchenware which is what I thought before I arrived. But, they sold furniture to carpets to food and I found it fascinating what people would buy as I have never before had a job in retail. It also meant I had to learn lots of new vocabulary to be able to get by. I did this by making some revision cards on the first night and if it was quieter in the shop, I would go over these.

The improvement in my German from this whole experience is very notable and I am so glad I did it. I am heavily considering taking a gap year to work in Germany or Austria and this trip has confirmed I would really enjoy doing such a thing. Therefore, I was very lucky to have this opportunity and will remember this experience for the rest of my life as well as it having many benefits for my future.