

Final Report

Home University: FH-Joanneum, Graz

Host University: California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo

Student: Michael Danzinger

MPS study: April.03, 2017 to July.03, 2017.

In the end of March 2017, I left the cold city of Vienna to spend one semester abroad in the warmth of California. I almost spent four months in the US with the main intention to work on my master thesis, but also to explore California and having the chance of meeting new people from all over the world.

The first visit at the university was an international meeting, which took place one day before the start of the new semester. This was a good opportunity for me to get to know other students from abroad and to gain an overview of the entire campus. The first impression of the university was what I had expected it to be. It is a huge complex of buildings with lots of different departments. At the beginning it was difficult to orientate myself, because it felt like being in a city surrounded by many buildings. During an introduction by Armand Vera, person for international meetings at Cal Poly, we got an overview of the campus area.

Further contact persons at my host university were Susan Tripp, person in charge of international students and Margot McDonald, head of the architecture department. Both of them are very nice ladies who supported me a lot and were a huge help at the beginning of my stay.

During our meetings the procedure of my master thesis was discussed which was then developed over the course of my stay. A major aspect of my work in California was a research on the Californian wineries; Therefore I spent a great amount of time on getting a better idea of these.

San Luis Obispo, my new home during these months, is a small city, mostly inhabited by fellow students and surrounded by wine regions. Nevertheless, the main object of my thesis was to analyze the wine region Napa Valley, which is located north of San Francisco, about five hours away from San Luis by car.

This distance is nothing special for Californians, but in my (Austrian) point of view it was very far away. Of course, the visit to Napa Valley took more than a day, so I took as much time as I needed to make my way there, which led me through most of California.

The original plan was to visit and analyze the wineries, on which I did a research on the internet beforehand. This was inhibited by the fact that most of them are not open to public and if so, some had to make a date for visitation in advance. Not being able to visit them was a foil for me and my research, but I managed to visit those vineyards with constant accessibility for public.

Obviously, this was not my only visit in Napa Valley. Back „home“ in San Luis I organized dates for visitations in those vineyards where I previously was not able to go.

Unfortunately, this is not such an easy thing to do for a student, since the wine industry is very capitalistic and usually offers tours only for groups to earn money through wine tastings. This meant I would have been obliged to do such tours on these wineries.

There is one winery where I failed to get any access at all. Dominus Winery is not open to any public visitors, because of that I could only get a view from the very distance.

The advice I can give to fellow students, doing research on their thesis in California, is to plan everything well in advance so that there will not be such incidents, like the above mentioned.

My stay came to an end much faster than expected; retrospectively it was worth every second of it. I can recommend the Marshall Plan Foundation Scholarship and studying in California to anybody interested. Without the financial support of the Marshall Plan Foundation my stay would have never been possible and I am very grateful for the opportunity, which was given to me.