

# Marshall Plan Scholarship – Field Report

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## Traveling to Ithaca

Suddenly the day of my journey had come to arrive. The alarm went off at 1:00 am. Extremely tired, as I had only slept a few hours, I took a shower, and had a small breakfast. Approximately an hour later, we headed towards the airport in Munich. My family was so kind to drive me there. At around 4:15 am, we arrived at the Franz-Strauss airport in Munich. After the check-in, I searched my gate and waited for the boarding to begin. Since everything went smoothly, without any problems or unexpected delays, I was at the gate almost an hour before my boarding started. While waiting, I had the opportunity to watch the morning sun rising above the airport of Munich.

Finally, the boarding started. After a short delay of a couple of minutes due to technical issues, we rolled onto the runway and started to take off. The flight was over very quickly. Arriving at Amsterdam, I quickly rechecked which gate I had to take and headed towards it. Fortunately, there was no long queue at the passport control because once I had walked through half of the airport to get to my gate, the boarding had already begun. Nevertheless, I managed to get there in time and boarded the plane. A few minutes later, we took off towards New York.

The bus drive to Ithaca was really exhausting. Although I was extremely tired, I could not really fall asleep. Another 5 hours later, I finally arrived at my destination, Ithaca. There, I took the local public transport to my Airbnb apartment. I fell asleep very soon and slept for almost 12 hours. If I did this journey again, I would definitely stay one night, or even more, in New York, before moving on to Ithaca. In total, my whole travel time was around 25 hours, which was exhausting. Therefore, I recommend spending some time in New York, in order to start your research visit more relaxed.

## General impression of my research stay abroad

My overall impression about Cornell University is very positive. I got familiar with the people in my working group very quickly, which eased the whole process of adapting to a new environment. I really enjoyed getting to know the academic culture of Cornell, or American universities in general, which is different from what I knew. The university organizes numerous events throughout the year. This brings people together and results in a strong community and a sense of fellowship. I also liked the fact that they value sports a lot, and many students are involved in one of the several sports teams. Other students enjoy watching their classmates competing against other universities. In my opinion, this is another reason for the strong community.

## Quality of the host institution

I did not know a lot about Cornell University before I arrived. Therefore, I was quite impressed how the system works. Once I arrived at campus, my student ID card was already finished, and I only had to pick it up. The staff at Cornell were also very friendly and were happy to offer help if needed. I never felt like I was left on my own, be it filling out some application form or having trouble solving technical issues. The university also provides free bus rides for every new student for an entire year. This was pleasant since it turned out that this also applies to visiting students. They also offer many different courses for personal development and recreation activities. Most of them are free, others cost a small fee. Besides these social benefits, Cornell University provides a great amount of state-of-the-art research facilities. I was astonished when I got a guided tour through some research laboratories.

## Contacts within the host institution

Both my guest professor and his research group welcomed me very warmly. Although, I was visiting them only for three months, I felt accepted as an equal member of the group from day one. People outside my group were also very amicable and engaging into conversation with them went naturally as they showed sincere interest in what I was doing. I also spent time with them outside of university, which made my stay at Ithaca beneficial beyond the academic realm. I really enjoyed the insights into both the American university system and the American way of live that came along with the intercultural exchange. The citizens of Ithaca appeared also quite friendly and generous overall. This might be one of the benefits of living in a such a small and cosy town.

## Recommendations for future Marshall Plan students and fellows

As already mentioned at the beginning of the report, I recommend staying one night in New York (or Washington) before continuing your journey to Ithaca. You will be more relaxed and do not have to worry about missing your connection flight or bus due to long queues at the immigration process. Finding appropriate housing is quite difficult, especially if you are staying for only three months. I recommend checking on Airbnb for hosts that provide a discount if you stay more than a month. Although buses are free for new Cornell students, they do not leave frequently. Therefore, buying a cheap bike might be a good option if you stay longer. I also recommend traveling to Ithaca in summer as there are a lot of wonderful outdoor activities available. I did not experience Winter in Ithaca, but people told me that there is not much to do. If you happen to have the opportunity to study a semester abroad, be it at Cornell or somewhere else, take the chance and enjoy the amazing experience which will benefit both your academic and your personal development.