

## Update 1: Hello from Berlin! By Hannah Mattil

**Highlights: Stuck in Turkey, Battling the Bureaucracy, Making Pralines and Getting a Job**

Hello friends! I've been in Berlin for a month now and want to send you an update. If you were to ask me how I'm doing, I'd say, "**alles in Butter!**" (Keep reading to find out what that means!)

My adventure began on Saturday, February 8th, at the Atlanta airport. After a stop in Boston and long flight to Istanbul, my final flight to Berlin was delayed 8 hours due to a storm named Sabine. I ended up with a Turkish visa, some new friends and 2 hour stay in a hotel before being picked up at 1 am to return to the airport. (I'll spare you the much longer story as to why this made more sense than simply staying at the airport, but just trust me, it did.) The positive side is I got to see Istanbul at night, I made lots of really nice friends and we helped each other get through the rather difficult experience. I even got to help translate information into German for some of the other passengers.

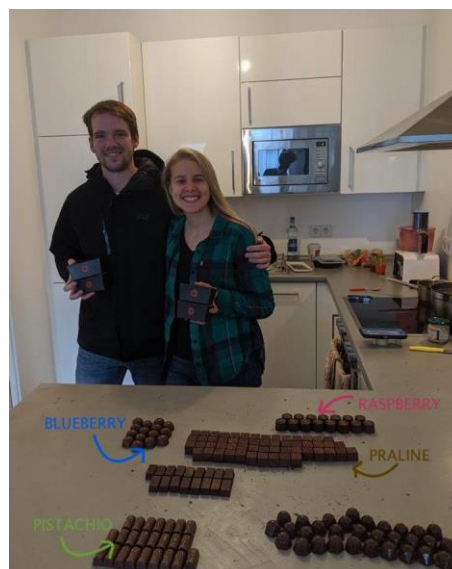


Istanbul airport antics at 2 am

Early Monday morning I reached the Berlin airport, where Max was waiting for me (what a sweetie!) We took the U-bahn to drop my stuff off at the apartment and then I went across town to interview with a company. The 5 hour interview went well, despite not having slept for a day and a half, and the good news is I got the job! I will be working for a small tech company as a project manager. However, getting a job in Germany is only half the battle. Then comes gaining approval to work in the country.

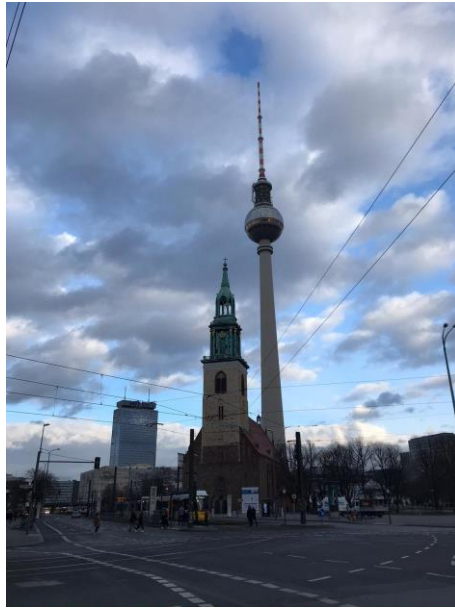
Basically, the German government has to make sure you aren't taking a job from a European applicant. They do this by requiring you fill out a bunch of paperwork and, I'm convinced, making the process as difficult as possible to scare people away. Stack of paperwork in hand, you have to show up at the foreigner's authority, the *Ausländerbehörde*, very, very early with your application and wait in line. The place opens at 8, and by the time I arrived at 5 am to "beat the line," there were already over 60 people ahead of me. Lucky enough to get in, I was a bit disheartened when the woman processing my application only took 1/3rd of the required documents, gave me a scrap of paper to write my email address on and told me to, "just come back" if I hadn't heard from them within 4 weeks.

Since I couldn't do anything but wait for approval, I set out to adjust to life in Berlin. I have spent the last month working on my German, doing some freelance garden design work, teaching myself Python and getting back into salsa dancing. February 16th was World Pangolin Day, and Max and I helped a few new friends with a fundraiser to save the Pangolins (the #1 most poached species in the world)! Most recently, a salsa dancing friend of mine taught Max and me how to make pralines, a 5 hour process that is well worth the work.



Making pralines with at our friend's apartment.

Max and I have explored many of Berlin's different neighborhoods, gone to some museums and have visited the Reichstag dome at night. Not immune to Coronavirus fears, we admittedly have done our share of *Hamsterkäufe*, which literally translates to "hamster shopping" and basically means stockpiling. We have enough rice and canned tuna to survive an apocalypse. It got a bit real for me when I found out that a friend of a friend has the virus. Guess I won't be salsa dancing for a while.



Pic of the Berliner Fernsehturm, taken on one of my many walks.

As of yesterday, it is looking like I will get approval to work, and my first day will be next Tuesday (after another lovely visit to the Ausländerbehörde on Monday...) That's about it!

Oh, and in case you're wondering what 'Alles in Butter' means, this is a German expression that means everything is going really well! We Southerners should have no problem relating, as we know that everything is better with butter.

Alles Liebe,  
Hannah