

# 6 Months in the USA

Melanie in Saint Cloud, Florida

It is unbelievable how fast the time is passing by and I call Florida my home for 6 months already. During these months I learned very much for life, collected many experiences I want to share with my family and friends and impressions I won't forget for a life time.



The American High School life is one of those impressions. I guess, school becomes boring everywhere in a while but here it's mostly the school system that makes it monotonously. There are every day the same classes. Fortunately, there are next to the academic subjects the electives, which bring a diversity into your schedule, what I really enjoy. And the electives are very nice here in America! You won't believe how many different interests you can cover up with the offered subjects. E.g. you're sure about a military career after school, so you can collect experiences in the subject "Reserve Officers' Training Corps" where the army officers teach everything you have to know for getting into your military career. Or we have opportunities to experience the medical field. There are veterinarian classes for which teachers and students bring their pets to school to work with them in the school's veterinarian practice. We have different art classes which include painting, sculpturing or learning to sew in the fashion class. There are many interests to cover and you can discover your talents, interests or maybe disinterests. But



*WON THE DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIP*

as I said, when something gets common the daily life makes things a little bit boring. But the American school life is okay so far. I am just glad we have the diversity of the elective subjects, in which you cover interests while you have fun with your friends. But the best way to enjoy time with your friends are the clubs or sports after school.



*QUALIFIED FOR STATES AT REGIONALS*



*STATE CHAMPIONSHIP IN TALLAHASSEE*

Like the running sport Cross Country I did in the season from August to October. We had many competitions at many different schools and at the end of the season we were running for titles. After winning the District championship, we went to the regional competition. My team did so good, that we qualified for the state tournament in Florida's capital Tallahassee. A five hour drive can be boring but I had lots of fun with my team. We stayed at a hotel all together, preparing for the big race coming up on the next day. Getting up early in the morning we ran our last race of the season in the hilly Tallahassee course. Nobody really cared how bad or good we would do or were doing, it was just an honor to be able running there, experience the greatness of American athletics all together in the team, doing the best we could and achieved our goal we set at the beginning of the season. Summarized, it was a wonderful running season with a great team and I could collect many nice memories from it.



*READY FOR THE HOMECOMING DANCE*

Not to forget: in October was the homecoming week! A typical American high school event that I was able to experience. It's the week full of fun and dressing up crazy for school. On Friday was the big homecoming football game, what the week is mostly all about: team spirit and cheering for your football team. But most exciting is the homecoming dance on Saturday night. Everybody is dressing up nicely and is going to the school with their date or friends. Honestly, it's nothing really big but a nice fun event to experience. You

enjoy the night dancing with your friends among all the other students from your school.

The first athletic season ended and I wanted to keep on doing sports. From all the offered winter season sports (from basketball over soccer to weightlifting), I chose to do wrestling. Mostly because of the combat experiences I have from doing judo back in Germany. And I have to admit: I made a good decision. As hard as the practice sometimes is, you're going through it with the knowledge of being stronger afterwards. You get prepared for the upcoming tournaments and those are hard but fun. My team is going every weekend to different schools, we travel far to other cities to face different wrestling teams and I like to get to see all of Florida, being in my awesome team and face my opponents in the willingness to get better every time. I enjoy these athletic times and have much fun with meeting new people and having fun with team members who have become friends.



THE HARMONY LONGHORNS WRESTLING TEAM



PRESENTS UNDER THE CHRISTMAS TREE

I am able to experience the American culture, which includes all the holidays. The next upcoming holiday was Thanksgiving in November. We had a big meal and not to forget: a big delicious turkey. Relatives came over and we ate together so much food after praying thankfully for the given meal. It is really a nice holiday to spend together with family and friends and have a good time. Although this holiday was over too soon I was very excited for the upcoming Christmas vacations. Despite all the tournaments I have on the weekends, I found a day for shopping Christmas presents for my host family. And it's kind of horrible how packed the stores are during Christmas time! However, I made it through the filled stores and was so happy when the vacations finally started. Christmas is huge in the US. The houses get decorated with many lights and lightning up figures standing in the front yard. All the presents were already under the decorated tree since the beginning of December. On Christmas eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>, we went to a friend's house and had a big meal, enjoying the time together and already exchanging some presents. Then there was the big day, everybody was waiting for: Christmas day, December 25<sup>th</sup>! Early in the morning my family gathered together at the Christmas tree and opened the mountain



BIG CHRISTMAS DECORATION IN A HOTEL

of presents with excitement. After these 2 hours, relatives came over and we exchanged more presents and had another big meal all together. The unity of the family let me experience a great, blessed, American holiday time. I felt honored to spend Christmas with this family and lots of Americans asked me whether I am sad because I don't celebrate Christmas with my German family this year but actually I didn't want to be anywhere else than where I was for this holiday.

We had 2 weeks of vacation. So, I used the free time to visit a show full of ice sculptures in Orlando. It was very beautiful but freezing minus 16 degrees Celsius in the halls. As much as I enjoyed watching the pretty sculptures, I was glad to be back again outside in Florida's heat.



*ICE SCULPTURE SHOW IN ORLANDO*

Also, as usual, I went to Walt Disney World. Meanwhile I visited all of Disney's theme parks and I just love to be in a totally different world full of childhood dreams. The parks were overloaded during the holidays but it was nice nevertheless. Everything just took way longer than usual because of very long lines.



*FIREWORKS FOR NEW YEAR'S AT SEA WORLD*

My New Year's Eve I spent at Sea World. They still had many Christmas shows going on and it was so nice to watch them. The story of Christ's birth was played as a musical with real animals on the stage or there was a beautiful ice skating performance before the countdown for New Year's Day went off. Fireworks got shot up into the air and it was a wonderful start into the year 2018.

On New Year's Day I had to get up early in the morning because we went to a college football game. The University of Notre Dame was playing against the Louisiana State University. It was just fun going into that big stadium in Orlando, sitting down in the bleachers and enjoy watching the game. It was even more fun because my host family is a huge Notre Dame fan, so we had all the equipment for cheering for the right team. First football was a little bit confusing for me but as the game went on, I really got into it and it was great when Notre Dame achieved their winning touchdown in the very end. As cold, rainy and windy as it got during the day, the weather didn't matter anymore when our team won this awesome game!



*NEW YEAR'S DAY AT THE NOTRE DAME GAME*



*OUT ON THE LAKE*

While the weather got colder during the holidays, I went fishing with some friends on a warmer day. I caught two big fish and I am still very proud of my catches. It was very nice sitting in the boat with my friends out on the lake, trying to catch some fish. I totally enjoy these moments.

When the holidays were over I wasn't ready to go back to school at all. The first time of my high school year I didn't want to

go back to Germany. Now, I am pretty much okay with the feeling of going back to my home country. I miss every time a little bit more of Germany. My family, friends and the good German food as well. During these 6 months I learned to appreciate more the little things in life. I experience the American culture and lifestyle and discovered many new things. The US-Americans have a more relaxed attitude. I appreciate all the time I can spend here with my US American family and friends.



*PROUD WITH ONE OF MY CATCHES*

This high school year abroad is the perfect opportunity for children to grow up, which means learning to take responsibility, how to solve problems on their own and learning to appreciate things even more. I learned so much during the last six months, that I won't forget and I am excited to share all my experiences with my family and friends back in Germany. I might be another person when I will be back, but in a positive way.

### **"Home is where your heart is"**

I appreciate all the time I can spend with my host family and American friends, experiencing another life style and culture, a wonderful time and just feeling blessed with the people giving me the feeling that I found a second home. I am looking forward for the upcoming time I still have in Florida, in the knowledge that there is even more to discover and learn.

Feeling blessed and kind regards,

Yours Melanie