

We are all
made of stories

Americans of Tübingen: *Shalynn*

“On January 3, 2011 I packed my bags and flew out of Atlanta to Stuttgart with my new husband Tyler. We met in college in Atlanta, but he moved to Tübingen a year before I did. He flew to the states to get married and then we came back to Tübingen together.

I didn't know any German when I landed. Three days later, I started intensive language learning at Vivat-Lingua. A week later, I offended a gas station employee because I needed to buy some eggs and mistakenly asked him, "Hast Du Eier?". My husband made a computer game out of the experience, modelling it after the old school video game Frogger.

Soon thereafter we had to move out of the apartment he was in, because the renter wanted to give the apartment to his family. So we went on the long, dreaded search for decent affordable housing in Tübingen, which we all know is a feat within itself. We managed to find a quaint apartment near Mohlstrasse and lived there quite happily for 3 years before moving into our current apartment.

We both worked at a student group called *Unterwegs* in Tübingen where I met so many amazing students, many are close friends of mine today. They supported me in my journey to learn German, understand the culture and figure out life in a foreign land. I loved it.

In 2016 we had our first son. I continued to work at *Unterwegs* but ultimately made the decision to pursue a long time passion of mine – start a photography business. Four months before our second son was born, I registered for self-employment and started working for myself at *Shalynn Crawford Photography*. It's one of the most fulfilling decisions I've ever made.

I find a lot of freedom being a female entrepreneur in Germany. I'm able to share my artistic side with the outside world and be a part of people's lives in a very special way. And because I first learned German in my 20s, I have a strong American accent so I tend to stand out a bit – which isn't so bad when you want people to remember you!

Around the same timetime I was registering my business, we started navigating the turbulent seas of German bureaucracy with our permanent residency application. It was a difficult, long process and I don't think I've ever needed so much paperwork in my life – quite the opposite experience of applying for self-employment – but we had wonderful assistance at the Ausländeramt and we celebrated greatly when we were approved and received our visas. Tübingen has become our home.

Yes, we miss our parents. Yes, we import ridiculous amounts of JIF Peanut Butter every time we fly. Yes, it's hard to not having the grandparents around, involved in our kids' lives; we're very grateful for technology. But we have zero desire to leave Tübingen. Our boys' Kita is amazing. Our friends and the "family" we have found here is something we treasure immensely. Not to mention it's incredibly beautiful here and the city has a rich history. Tübingen is also very welcoming – not only to students, but to families, young and old. We experience, on a daily basis, a wide variety of generations and that, too, is something we cherish. We love all the small shops, the colorful old crooked buildings, the flowers and fountains in the summer and sledding down the Österberg during winter snows.

However, at the end of the day, it's the people in Tübingen that keep us here. And we wouldn't have it any other way.

Yes, Tübingen is definitely our home.”

