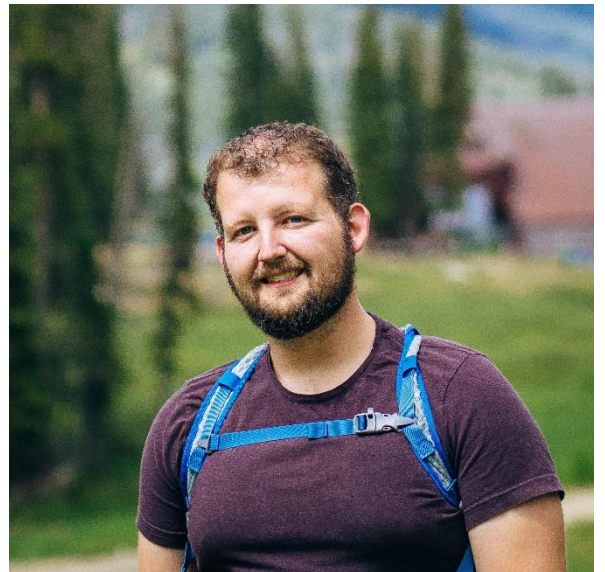


We are all
made of stories

Americans of Tübingen: *Tony*

“My name is Tony Cole. If people ask where I'm from, I'll answer the Northwest US. Though I was born in LA, I grew up in the mountains of Boise, Idaho and now "go back" to Portland, Oregon when I travel to the USA. Even though I now call Tübingen home, I still have a strong connection with the mountains, rivers, and trees of the Northwest and find myself drawn back to her every few years.

I came to Tübingen in January 2014. No one told me that you shouldn't move to Germany in the winter. You need the magic of a long summer night on the Holzmarkt or the golden light of October to romance you. At the very least let the Schokomarkt or Weihnachtsmarkt charm you before the grey of January and February set in. I came on January 11th, and a few days later we started a stretch where the sun didn't peak out from behind the clouds for 27 days in a row. That was quite the change from a guy who was used to 206 days of sunshine each year.



Tübingen became my home because of a fascinating job possibility. I heard about a student group here, Unterwegs e.V., that had its goal to provide a welcoming community for university students while allowing conversation and support on topics of religion, relationships, spirituality, and community. It seems like it's difficult to find places in society where open conversations about topics like religion and identity are available. Having a Master's in Philosophy and Theology, I was attracted to the opportunity to engage in this kind of work.

Though I had some other language studies in my pocket, I couldn't say more than "Wie geht's?" before moving here. I jumped right into intensive language learning with Vivat Lingua! and worked straight through to C1 in 14 months. Since I primarily work with German speaking students, it aided the language learning process and by the time I was finished with Vivat Lingua! I was ready to work full time. It was a beautiful way to start the immigration process.

I identify strongly as an Immigrant instead of the common vernacular of "Ex-Pat" that is used among English speaking immigrants. It's important to me that when people think through social and political issues in Tübingen, that they realize that my fate is also decided with their vote and choice of social policies. I too have a "Migrationshintergrund" and understand part of my work to acclimate and adapt to German/Swabian culture, even as I bring the gifts of my diversity with me.

I find myself sometimes surprised by how much I love Tübingen. I'm a "city-guy" at heart. I love the hustle and bustle of living together with hundreds of thousands of others and sharing space together. I also love the quietness of a mountain village, away from the world and its troubles. But here I am, in a mid-sized town, and I love being in this space. The mix of Swabian culture with other German and international flairs from the university is a unique gift.

Most of my Tübingen joy comes from being able to know so many students here. I am often given the chance to hear the stories, passions, and new ideas of young people who are going to play major roles in life and society in Germany and the broader world in the future. I love getting to spend so much time hoping toward the future with these young leaders and count myself as fortunate to share the streets and pubs with them.

This is who I am, and why I continue to find myself in this beautiful town.”