

Valparaiso University

Having completed four years of study at Valparaiso University, I would like to share some information and advice for German students who are interested in spending a semester at university in the United States. Hopefully you will find this information to be helpful!

General Information about Valpo

Valparaiso is a liberal arts college, located in northwest Indiana, only an hour away from Chicago. The city of Valparaiso is located 80 kilometers southeast of exciting **Chicago**, 24 kilometers south of the **Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore on Lake Michigan**, and 151 kilometers north of **Indianapolis**, the state capital. There are approximately 3000 students who attend Valpo, so it is similar in size to Reutlingen University.

One of the things that I especially liked especially about Valpo was the small class size that allowed for good classroom discussion and a more personal relationship with your professors and fellow students. If you do not completely understand the information presented to you in lectures, the professors are more than happy to take time to explain the information to you one-on-one during their office hours.

Living on Campus

All of the students except for 4th year students are required to live on campus. There are nine different student dormitories and two apartment complexes on campus. Living in the dorms has its positive and negative sides. Unlike in Germany where doors in the dorms are usually kept closed, you will find that it is common for students to leave their doors to their rooms opened, so that friends and neighbors feel welcome to come and go as they please. Although this creates a good social environment, it is sometimes difficult to study with the noise and distractions. However, a large, new library has recently been built on campus, so it offers a quiet, comfortable place for students to study. The library even has a coffee shop in it, where you can get your early morning or late night caffeine fix to keep you going!

Opportunities for Social Life

Although Valparaiso is a small school, there are always many opportunities to get out and socialize with people. Whether it may be attending a sporting event, taking a day excursion to downtown Chicago, or going to a party, there is always something fun to do at Valpo. During the week, the students are usually kept quite busy with work for their classes, so unlike at Reutlingen University, where most of the parties are during the weekdays, the big parties at Valpo are usually on the weekend. Although there is no club like the Färberei in Valparaiso, there are often dance parties at the fraternity houses. On a warm day in the fall or late spring, students often head to the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore to spend an afternoon relaxing on the beach.

What I believe to be one of the main disadvantages of living in the United States is that it is much harder to get around without a car. Unlike in Germany, the United States does not have the extensive public transportation system that makes it so easy to get from one place to the next. However, many students do have a car on campus, so if you ask someone, people are usually more than happy to take you to where you need to go.

The union board is an organization that offers various opportunities for students to socialize both on the weekdays and on the weekends. Throughout the year, the union board organizes many different events for the students, such as movies in the student union, bus trips to Chicago, a weekly coffeehouse, and concerts on campus.

In addition to the events offered through the student union, there are many different organizations that Valpo students may join. For instance, while I was at Valpo, several organizations that I was involved in were Gospel Choir, SALT (social action leadership team), and Habitat for Humanity, which is an organization that builds houses for low-income families. There are also many different intramural sports that are offered for students.