Internship at the BMW Group in Munich, Germany

**Munich, Bavaria, is probably best known for two things: the Oktoberfest and the Bayerische Motorenwerke (BMW). For a period of six months it was also my home as I headed south in January 2011 for my internship at the BMW Group, to find out what it is like to live in Munich and to work at this premium car manufacturer.**

Text: Maurice Hoogreef, MSc. Student Flight Performance & Propulsion

It was probably at the age of two when I first started to recognise car makes and models. Unaware of the technology and engineering behind it all, I became passionate about cars, racing and the automotive industry. Twenty years later, in the Master curriculum of my studies in Delft it was time to perform an internship and my wish was clear: I wanted to do my internship at a car manufacturer. Being raised bilingually I had always wondered what it would be like to live in Germany for a while. So when I received a positive response to my application for an internship in Munich, at one of the most prestigious car manufacturers in the world, I grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

**BMW**

BMW is a German car manufacturer, with its headquarters in Munich. Founded in 1916, the Bayerische Flugzeug-Werke (BFW) started as an aircraft manufacturer which later acquired the name and operations of the aircraft engine manufacturer BMW. After the Second World War the company was allowed to repair US army vehicles and manufacture motorcycles, but was not able to do so because of the heavy damages sustained during the war. Then, in 1947, the company started mass production of the R24 motorcycle and the rest is history. By the mid 1970s BMW had established its name in motor racing and in 1990 the Research and Innovation Centre in Munich was opened (where I performed my internship). Today it is a well-known luxury car manufacturer with worldwide operations, revenue of more than sixty billion Euros, a profit of roughly five billion Euros and a 100,000 employees, of which about 30,000 work in Munich.

**MY JOB AND EXPERIENCES AT BMW**

In January 2011, I left Delft for a six month internship at the Research and Innovation Centre, or “Forschungs- und Innovationszentrum” (FIZ) in Munich. My internship position was at the department of quality management (EG-12) in the division of ‘Entwicklung Gesamtfahrzeug’ (EG), which translates to ‘entire vehicle development and integration’. My internship consisted of two parts: one on the preventive side of quality management and one on the reactive side of the department. The preventive work was all about the “quality assessment”, a way of evaluating a project to provide an indication of the readiness of
the concept that is currently being developed. This provided me with insight into upcoming cars and innovations. The work on the reactive side consisted of helping with the preparation work and the actual presentation of the results of a cross-company project to reduce warranty costs. After about three months a high-priority risk analysis for the new i8 Concept (shown in the visual) was requested by another department. The technical risk analysis was primarily focused on the risks involved with the vehicle crashing into a pillar at fifty km/h, a standard BMW test for all new vehicles. Because of the electrification of the power train, the assignment was to find out whether or not all risks involved with this type of crash had been identified and covered, as well as identifying possibly hazardous interactions between components. The most demanding requirement of the analysis was the time restriction, as all work had to be done within six weeks, thereby limiting the possibilities. This gave me good insight into the amount of pressure on development work. Needless to say I am very proud that I can say I helped make this specific car a little bit safer and the i8 will actually be featured in "Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol!"

Next to the work, there was also plenty of time to experience the culture and the working environment within BMW and, with a little bit of initiative, you can see a lot you do not usually get to see. This meant I got to drive a 306 horsepower 135i convertible and a brand new 530d touring (which happened to have a sports pack installed), and various other cars. Then there is the tour through the factory, the FiZ and of course the BMW Museum and the BMW Welt.

STUDENT LIFE IN MUNICH

It starts with finding a place to live. In Munich this can be tricky as the city is big, rather expensive and there is a large demand for housing. Luckily, BMW owns or rents apartment buildings, so as soon as I received confirmation for my internship position I contacted the BMW Apartmenthausverwaltung and applied for a room. These rooms are not necessarily cheap, but they are furnished and conveniently situated in Munich. My room on the Lindwurmstraße was just two kilometres from Marienplatz, which is the centre of the city, and about a hundred meters from the Theresienwiese, where not only the Oktoberfest but several other festivals are located. Combined with an excellent subway system and even bicycle lanes, this was a perfect place to live and it would only take me about twenty minutes by subway to get to work. Sadly, when the Oktoberfest started I was no longer in Munich, but the Starkbierfest, Frühlingsfest, Kocherball and Sommerfest more than made up for that. These are less well-known to foreigners (which, to Bavarians, is pretty much anyone who does not live in Bavaria) but certainly no less fun or traditional! In addition to these festivals, Munich is home to several breweries with their Brauhäuser and it has a really good night life with plenty of bars and clubs. On sunny days, no matter what season, you will find plenty of people relaxing in the Englischer Garten, a massive park in the heart of Munich (in fact it is bigger than Central Park in New York!) or at the river Isar. The Englischer Garten is perfect to go for a walk, go running or enjoy a beer with friends in one of the beer gardens and the Isar is a popular barbequing location. All in all, Munich is a very nice, clean, green and safe city to live in. But there is not just the city itself. There are several lakes in the area to spend one of your weekends, the Alps can be reached within an hour and by train you can visit several other cities, such as Augsburg, Nürnberg or Salzburg (Austria). These are just some of the ones I visited on trips with the Munich Erasmus Student Association (MESA), which organizes daytrips, parties and many other activities. MESA was, for me, the perfect way to get to know many international students and find a group of friends to hang out with in the evenings and weekends.

LOOKING BACK

In retrospect, my decision to go to BMW and Munich was the best I could have made. My internship was in a nice department with friendly and helpful people, with whom I could communicate on first name basis (which apparently is not all that common in Germany) and I felt very much at home. I also got along with the other German interns and we would usually go for a traditional Weisswurstfrühstück with several members of the department on Fridays.

I was lucky to find my internship position through a contact of the internship office at BMW and in return I was able to provide a new contact to the faculty and another internship position at BMW. So if you are interested in a position at BMW, you might want to start at the faculty’s internship office.

Feel free to contact me (mauricehoogree@gmail.com) if you have any questions about doing your internship in Munich or for any other questions or comments!