

# BRANCHING OUT

## THE US FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL VISITOR PROGRAM

### HIGHLIGHTS

March 2013

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The US Forest Service International Visitor Program (IVP) facilitates participation in a wide variety of professional and educational exchanges, which encourage scientific collaboration and discovery, increase intercultural understanding, and promote cooperation among people of many cultures and countries.

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### SPOTLIGHT:

#### HOST BEN HAUPT AND VISITOR JOHANNES BUERVENICH FROM GERMANY

##### Visitor: Johannes Buervenich

##### **Tell us a bit about your background.**

Since I was a small child, I always wanted to be a forester. I spent a lot of time outside working in the garden, watching animals and enjoying nature during the different seasons. The idea of protecting nature while still making a profit from it in a sustainable way is one that is constantly on my mind. I grew up in Germany, near Cologne, which is a region with a very high population density.



Natural areas, and forests in particular, are a subject of intense focus on the part of the timber industry, environmental protection organizations, and locals who want to have forests for recreation. To find the balance between the different groups is a very exciting part of a forester's job. I completed my three and a half years of forestry studies in Rottenburg, in southern Germany, and graduated in 2012 with my Bachelor's degree. I liked my program because it allowed me the opportunity to have many practical experiences outside in the field. In addition to my time with the US Forest Service, I also did two internships in private forest administrations in Germany and France. A friend who had also volunteered with the USFS recommended that I consider doing an internship in the United States as well, and it was a great decision!

##### **What did you do with the Forest Service this past summer?**

I spent three months in the Goosenest District of the Klamath National Forest, a large area in the north of California, near Oregon. Mt. Shasta, the 14179-foot peak of volcanic origin, formed the entire landscape and is still the most significant element of that region. People on the Goosenest Ranger District tried to create the most interesting and varied program possible for me during my internship. And they did a very good job! Mainly I was working with timber: I did the inspection of a tree planting after a huge forest fire. We had a very motivated planting crew and we had to control the number of trees planted per acre, as well as the quality of their planting. Since the region is in the rain shadow of Mount Shasta, every tree must have a good start to survive these tough conditions. Aside from that duty, I also marked trees for the upcoming tree harvest operations, and I was part of the crew that marked wildlife clumps to track birds, such as the Goshawk.

These opportunities demonstrated to me the connection between the different departments in the office. The wildlife crews took me out to find owls at night, and to search for nests during daytime. That was very exciting for me, and we always celebrated when we found a new nest of a rare bird, seen for the first time in the area. Working with the archeology crew was very interesting, too. Before I came to the United States, I would not have imagined that I would be looking for cans, plates, nails and so on, which were left by the first settlers 150 years ago. It was very different for me, because in Germany scientists are often looking for Roman or Middle Age objects! In addition to the many other duties, I also worked with the District Ranger and learned about the role of the fire crews. There was not a single day that was boring. Often we had to work very hard, but that didn't matter because it was so interesting for me!

### **What has this experience meant to you?**

I am very happy that I could come to the US to have this experience, for many reasons. From a professional point of view, I have learned a great deal about forests and the management of that type of ecosystem.

I want to mention three aspects in particular that were most beneficial for me: First, I was impressed by the size of the forest areas and districts. In Germany, we often have very, very small properties and pieces of land. The management of these pieces of land involves a lot of work and the result of your work—for example, when you thin a stand of trees—is on a very small scale. During my time in the US I have learned what it means to “think bigger.” Second, the Douglas-fir is an important tree species of the American West Coast. In the face of climate change in Germany, we are trying to replace our Norway spruce in many regions with the American Douglas-fir. So it was very interesting to see how the Douglas-fir grows “at home” in order to better understand how it can be used abroad. The third aspect is the important issue of forest fires in many parts of the US. That was a completely new idea for me: bring fire back into the forest to make it fireproof. Fire is the crucial element which destroys and regenerates the forest.

From a personal point of view there was the experience of coming into a different world but to feel very, very welcome as a guest. There was really nobody who refused to help me. Everybody—not only in the office,

but especially in the office—tried to show me parts of their jobs and of their everyday lives. After work, I went fishing with them, visited their families, and on the weekends we went out together to explore the area around.

### **What are your favorite memories of your time in the US?**

Oh, there are many! Enjoying the bald eagles in the sunset when I did the inspection of the planting crew very early in the morning, taking the boat to go fishing for rainbow trout after work, feeling very small when I was standing under the Redwood Trees, the highest trees of the world, hearing the call of the coyotes at night around my house, going out for hiking with friends on the weekends, celebrating Easter... There is a very long list!

### **Now that you're home reflecting on your experience, what do you think was the most significant or helpful?**

During my time at the Gooseneck District, I found many new friends. It is great to have shared that time with them and still to be in contact. I have definitely improved my language skills, even though my three-month stay was relatively short for that. And I have found out that when you embrace the adventure of discovering other parts of the world and getting to know new people, you will feel very rich when you return home again!

### **Host: Ben Haupt**

*Ben Haupt is the Timber Management Officer on the Gooseneck Ranger District, Klamath National Forest, Macdoel, CA.*

### **Tell us a bit about you and your Forest Service career.**

I have spent most of my life in Northern California. I attended College of the Siskiyous for two years before transferring and then graduating with my bachelor's degree in Forestry from Humboldt State University. I began my Forest Service career as a temporary fire fighter for two seasons while I attended Humboldt State. After graduation, I accepted a forester position on the Mendocino National Forest where I worked for 6 years. I



then moved on to my current position, the Timber Management Officer of the Goosenest Ranger District on the Klamath National Forest where I have worked for the past 3 years. In my current position I oversee the districts timber program. The Goosenest Ranger District is a wonderful place to work.

### **How did you become involved in hosting international visitors, and Johannes in particular?**

The Klamath National Forest Vegetation Program Manager spoke with me about her experience hosting an international visitor previously in her career and how it was a great experience. Soon thereafter, Johannes contacted me directly and after talking to him I could tell that it would be a great opportunity for both him and the district. It was exciting for me to have the chance to share with Johannes the many experiences I've had while working for the US Forest Service. He also had the chance to work with our archeology, wildlife, silviculture, timber, range, and wildland firefighting programs. This diversity allowed him to see how each department works together to accomplish the mission of the Forest Service.

### **What are your favorite memories of working with Johannes?**

I enjoyed having Johannes on the District. It was interesting to hear about the German culture and how his country manages forests. In an effort for the district to learn more about forest management in Germany, we asked Johannes to put together a presentation. It was an excellent learning opportunity for employees who didn't have a chance to work with him.

In addition, many of us spent time with Johannes outside of work. Together, we enjoyed Northern California and Southern Oregon hiking in the mountains, sightseeing, Lake Tahoe, the redwoods, fishing, and enjoying the 4th of July fireworks.

Even though he's already fluent, one of Johannes's goals while he was here was to improve his English. By the time he returned to Germany it was obvious that he had met his goal.

If you are interested in hosting an international intern, trainee or volunteer, please contact Emily Betz (by phone at 1-202-644-4641 or email at [eebetzclose@fs.fed.us](mailto:eebetzclose@fs.fed.us)).

## **WHAT'S NEW?**

### **SEEING THE CARBON THROUGH THE TREES - THE USFS AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION**



While some environmental issues are related to a certain area, ecosystem, or country, the changing global climate knows no national boundaries. What we know about our land, and the way we choose to manage it—especially when its primary use changes—can have a profound effect on the environment. The forestry sector is especially crucial to the effort to mitigate climate change, and scientists around the world are studying the impact of deforestation and forest degradation on terrestrial carbon stores in order to help land managers worldwide make the best possible decisions about land use.

Forests, wetlands, grasslands, and agricultural systems store a significant amount of global carbon. Depending on how these landscapes are managed, they can either be “sinks” or “sources” of carbon, and their sustainable management to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions is essential to addressing climate change. Forests are of particular importance because they not only sequester significant amounts of carbon in plant biomass and soils, but they also provide valuable natural resources for local people and habitat for global biological diversity. Greenhouse gas emissions from land use change such as deforesta-

tion are responsible for approximately 18-20 percent of global emissions. However, in some countries with significant forest cover, up to 80 percent of greenhouse gas emissions are from the forestry sector. The US Forest Service, in collaboration with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) also works to develop more effective monitoring approaches to improve the measurement and understanding of carbon sequestration, fire impact, illegal logging, and other indices of forest health.

The US Forest Service contributes to the effort to mitigate climate change by reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation through the development and sharing of best practices for measuring and monitoring forest cover. US Forest Service International Programs (IP) strives to build a network for collaboration and sharing of expertise around the globe. For example, the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program provides the information needed to assess America's forests. Drawing on this experience, the International Programs office of the US Forest service works with FIA scientists to develop the tools and methodologies to help other countries measure and monitor their forests. US Forest Service scientists also work to develop equations to estimate the carbon stored in trees and the models needed to estimate forest carbon. Building on this research, the Forest Service works globally to build capacity for monitoring and managing forest and terrestrial carbon.

The global community has been discussing Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (known as REDD), and conservation and sustainable management of forests (or REDD+) with a focus on developing new policies and financial incentives to curb emissions from forests. In order to take advantage of the financial incentives for reducing deforestation and degradation, countries must first be able to accurately measure their forest cover and the carbon stored in their forests. Thus, a monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) system that provides the framework to estimate current and future greenhouse gas emissions from changes in forest cover are critical to global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the forest sector. The US Forest Service, through the Remote Sensing Application Center (RSAC) works to integrate

remote sensing technologies, including satellite imagery and other data into partner countries' MRV systems to detect deforestation and forest degradation.

By helping to coordinate better measurement(s) of forest cover and forest carbon stock, the US Forest Service is playing a role in global climate change mitigation one tree and one ton (of carbon) at a time.

*This article was contributed by Dana Moore, Climate Change Specialist for the US Forest Service International Programs Technical Cooperation unit.*

## **CULTURE CORNER:**

### **RULES OF THE ROAD**

Adventure, danger, and a car. That's the perfect formula for a great American road film. It's also the basic recipe for nail-biting, high

adventure stories about driving in a foreign country. Let's face it: making instantaneous, life-or-death decisions while filtering an



overabundance of diverse stimuli in a moving vehicle is, well, an exciting adventure. Unfortunately, few of us are trained stunt drivers or NASCAR\* racers, and real life doesn't always give second chances like video games. Hence, it's always wise to brush up on both the written and unwritten rules of the road before turning the key in the ignition. Here's our attempt to get you started with a few rules of the road:

**Driver's License and Identity** — A driver's license in the United States is a passe-partout – a master key. A driver's license not only allows one to legally get behind the wheel of an automobile, it is an American's primary form of acceptable, official picture identification in the US. Americans present their drivers' licenses much like those in other countries present national identity cards or passports. While the number of Americans holding

\*NASCAR: National Association for Stock Car Racing

valid passports increased dramatically in the last decade, still only 36% of Americans even have passports.<sup>1</sup> Americans use driver's licenses to do their banking, to buy alcohol in restaurants and bars, to pass through airport security controls for domestic travel, to sign on for employment, to open up cell phone accounts, and to get library cards and credit cards. Getting a learner's permit and driver's license as a teenager is a rite of passage to adulthood that comes years before being granted the right to vote or legal permission to drink beer. So, in essence, driving is at the very core of our personal identity and our national identity as Americans.

**Speed Limits** — Independently minded drivers often feel that speed limits are recommendations rather than rules. Just be aware that fines for traveling more than 5 miles over the speed limit are usually quite high. Residential speed limits are usually 25 miles per hour (mph) or 30 mph, while broader thoroughfares are usually 35 or 40 mph. Highways and freeways will have speed limits set at 55, 60, 65 or even 70 mph. Police can monitor and enforce speed limits using radar guns. Stay vigilant and pay attention to the speed limit signs.

**Right of Way for Pedestrians** — Around the world, the "right of way" seems to be determined quite differently. In some places, the enforcement of strict traffic laws and the compliance of most drivers make it explicitly clear which vehicle has the right of way. In other places, it is long-honored, unwritten tradition that maintains an uninterrupted rhythm in traffic circles. In the US, behaviors aren't

<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, there were 113,431,943 valid passports in circulation in 2012. [http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppi/stats/stats\\_890.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppi/stats/stats_890.html)

According to U.S. Census Bureau monthly estimates, the total U.S. population in December 2012 was 315,255,012. <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/state/totals/2012/tables/NA-EST2012-01.csv>

#### IMMIGRATION AND LEGAL NOTES: Frequently Asked Questions About Driving

Hosts and visitors often have questions about driving, rental cars, and licenses. Here is some basic information about the practical and legal aspects of driving in the United States.

Any J-visa holder, in lawful status, may apply for a driver's license or state-issued identification (ID) card. You must wait at least 10 days after your arrival in the US to apply for a driver's license to ensure that the immigration and motor vehicle on-line database systems have sufficient time to "talk to one another" to confirm the validation of your arrival. In general, you should present the following documents to verify legal presence in the United States:

- Valid passport with visa
- Form I-94 card, "Arrival/Departure Record"
- Form DS-2019
- Social Security Number (if applicable)

The process for receiving a driver's license varies from state to state so it is important to contact your state's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for the specific details about your international driver's license and the step-by-step process for obtaining a US driver's license.

Please refer to the following DMV Fact Sheet for additional information provided by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement: [http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/dmv\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/dmv_factsheet.pdf)

**State DMV & Driver Manuals** — Every state has a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) that issues drivers' licenses and state identification cards. The DMV provides driver handbooks or manuals with all the relevant rules and laws and it gives the required written exams and driving tests. The DMV also oversees vehicle registration and issues license plates and yearly update stickers. States have varying requirements for non-citizen drivers, but in general, after a certain period of residency, international students and professionals must obtain a state driver's license. Go to your DMV website to download a copy of the driver manual and to check requirements for drivers' licenses.

**Safety Inspection Stickers** — Some states require annual vehicle safety inspections and vehicle emissions inspections. Check your state's requirements and be sure you have the appropriate sticker and documentation indicating the car has passed the safety inspection.

**Insurance** — Be sure the vehicle you are driving is insured and that you as a driver are insured. Always carry proof of insurance inside the vehicle. If you are involved in an accident with another vehicle, exchange vehicle registration and insurance details and get an accident report. States set minimum requirements for vehicle insurance coverage. Be certain your policy has adequate coverage for bodily injury liability, property damage liability, personal injury protection and uninsured motorist coverage. Check to see that collision and comprehensive coverage meets your need.

**Seatbelts and Child Car Seats** — Drivers and passengers are required by law to wear seatbelts. Children under certain ages and weights must travel in an approved child restraint device. If you are stopped by the police, you will be given

always consistent with our diverse population of drivers, but there are laws about “right of way” or “who goes first” that must be learned. Check your state drivers’ manual for the rules, but remember:

- Pedestrians in a crosswalk have the right of way. You must stop.
- Vehicles turning to the left at an intersection or across the road into road or driveway must yield the right of way to vehicles approaching from the opposite direction.
- Vehicles about to enter a traffic circle or cross a road must yield the right of way to all vehicles in the circle or on the road.
- This one is pretty basic: where there is a yellow, triangular Yield sign, you must yield.

It’s a bit overwhelming. But, once we’ve survived missed turns, near misses, and exchanges of lively gestures with fellow motorists to arrive safely at our destination, stop the engine, calm our nerves, and set the emergency brake, we will certainly have made a few incredible memories that will no doubt be spun into often-told tales of our great American Road Trip.

*Look for more Rules of the Road in an upcoming issues of Branching Out.*

a ticket for failing to wear your seat belt or for failing to properly ensure your child’s safety.<sup>2</sup> “Child passenger restraint requirements vary based on age, weight and height. Often, this happens in three stages: infants use rear-facing infant seats; toddlers use forward-facing child safety seats; and older children use booster seats. Many laws require all children to ride in the rear seat whenever possible, and most states permit children over a particular age, height or weight to use an adult safety belt.”<sup>3</sup>

**If You are Stopped by the Police** — While there are many slang terms for police officers, we highly recommend you don’t use any of them if you are pulled over and stopped by the police. Just address a member of any law enforcement group as “Officer.” If you see flashing red lights behind you, pull to the side of the road where it is safe and wait for instructions from the officer. In many countries, you’re asked to get out of the car so the officer can see you. In the US, you need to stay inside your car until the officer approaches you. Immediately after you’re stopped, get your driver’s license and proof of insurance out of your wallet then leave your hands in clear sight on the steering wheel as the officer approaches. Don’t make movements that could be mistaken for efforts to reach for a gun. Follow all instructions. If you’re having difficulty understanding the officer, let the officer know you don’t understand because English isn’t your first language. This could prevent serious misunderstandings. The officer will probably go back to the police vehicle to run computer checks on you and the vehicle. If you’re ticketed, you will be asked to sign the charges. Arguing or contesting the charges at that moment could result in a trip to jail for unruly conduct. Officers do not tolerate having their authority questioned. It is best to take the ticket and later research and follow procedures for contesting a charge either in a written protest or at a court hearing. Your signature on the ticket isn’t an admission of guilt, it is acknowledgement that you received the citation. Remember, there are also many different police forces (city, county sheriff’s office, state highway patrol, etc.) with different jurisdictions. Their vehicles and uniforms will all be different.

**Rental Cars** — Most major international car rental agencies are available in the United States. There is no way of saying which agency is the best to use because individuals can have both good or bad experiences with the same company in different cities. A few of the most common rental car companies in the US include: Hertz, Enterprise, Budget, National, Alamo or Avis; however, there are dozens of other options as well.

Most US airports will have rental car agencies on-site; however, there are many other off-site locations that may be cheaper. Rental cars in the US normally come with automatic transmissions. Additionally, if you are traveling with children under the age of 2 years you will need to request a car restraint seat from the rental car agency if you do not already have one of your own.

The minimum age to rent a car in the United States is 25 years; however, some rental car companies will allow those under 25 to rent at an additional cost. You do not need to have a US driver’s license to rent a car in the US, but it is advisable to call the rental car agency ahead of time to see what their particular rules are for international drivers. Ask your host or other friends and colleagues for their recommendations when it comes to renting a car and enjoy your road trip adventures while in the US!

<sup>2</sup> Governor’s Highway Safety Association - [http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/seatbelt\\_laws.html](http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/seatbelt_laws.html)

<sup>3</sup> Governor’s Highway Safety Association - [http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/childsafety\\_laws.html](http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/childsafety_laws.html)

**QUIZ: CAN YOU READ THE SIGNS?**

Part of the fun and excitement of traveling to or living in another country is learning local customs and ways in which your host country differs from your own. In the case of traffic signs, small differences that may have big impacts on your safety and well-being! While the meaning of different signs can sometimes seem humorous to an outsider, ake sure you know what common U.S. traffic signs mean, before heading out on a road trip. Here is a quiz to test your knowledge.

<i>When you see this ...</i>	<i>It means ...</i>
	A) No rest or relaxation allowed! or B) Railroad crossing ahead.
	A) Great sale on purses and briefcases! or B) Pedestrian crossing ahead.
	A) Ping Pong Tournament Winners Circle! or B) Construction work ahead. Be prepared to stop.
	A) Crazy, swervy drivers ahead! or B) Road is slippery when wet.
	A) Great steak restaurant ahead! or B) Cattle crossing ahead.
	A) Rudolph and Santa Claus welcome you to the North Pole! or B) Somebody put a red nose sticker on a deer crossing sign.

If you've seen signs that amuse or confuse you, please send photographs to Emily Betz (via email at [eebetzclose@fs.fed.us](mailto:eebetzclose@fs.fed.us)) so we can publish them in future issues of Branching Out.

# BRANCHING OUT | US FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL VISITOR PROGRAM

## Please Share Your Stories!

We would like to invite everyone to share photos and stories about yourselves, your programs, and the exchange experiences you've had in the United States and abroad. Please submit your stories, pictures, ideas, and feedback to Emily Betz at [eebetzclose@fs.fed.us](mailto:eebetzclose@fs.fed.us).

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## Disclaimer

This newsletter has been produced by the US Forest Service Office of International Programs International Visitor Program Staff. Information in this publication is provided for the benefit of current or prospective Program participants or USDA program hosts engaged in exchanges through the US Forest Service International Visitor Program. Any information provided in this newsletter on immigration regulations or financial issues is subject to change at any time and without notice. For official legal advice on immigration or tax matters, please consult a certified attorney or tax professional.

## ON THE HORIZON

### Upcoming US Holidays and Special Occasions

March 8	International Women's Day
March 10	Daylight Saving's Time
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
March 21	First Day of Spring
March 30	Easter
April 1	April Fools Day
April 22	Earth Day
May 5	Cinco de Mayo
May 12	Mother's Day
May 18	Armed Forces Day
May 27	Memorial Day
June 14	Flag Day
June 16	Father's Day
June 21	First Day of Summer - June Solstice

If you are a visitor to the US, ask your American hosts, friends and colleagues how they celebrate these holidays.

## Program Orientation Webinars

The International Visitor Program (IVP) will begin offering IVP Program Orientations the first Friday of each month. The monthly, interactive orientations hosted by our IVP team will cover J-1 Exchange Visitor Program regulations, visa information, resources for cultural adjustment, and an open Q&A session for all visitors and hosts. All J-1 visa holders with the US Forest Service, Agricultural Research Service, and partner agencies and organizations are required to complete an orientation within a month of their arrival.\* We highly recommend that all program hosts participate, as well.

We hope we will be able to answer your questions and get your valuable feedback.

Orientations will be held via conference call and GoTo Meeting on the first Friday of each month at 12:00pm-1:30pm Eastern Standard Time. Meeting invitations and conference call information will be sent via email to program hosts and their visitors who will be arriving soon or who have recently arrived. If you don't receive an invitation and would like to participate in an upcoming session, please contact your International Visitor Program Specialist. We look forward to your participation!

Upcoming sessions:

April 5  
May 3  
June 7

\*Program orientations are a mandatory requirement of the U.S. Department of State Exchange Visitor Program. All J-1 visa holders participating in a program of 3+ weeks are required to complete an orientation.

Hosts, we encourage you to use this opportunity to share an aspect of American culture with your visitor(s)!