

## Youth Camp Germany Spring 2025: Saying “Yes, and” to Connection

The fire crackled softly as we stood in a loose circle on the first night, conversations filling the quiet air under a sky full of stars. Most of us had just arrived that day, some after hours of travel. There weren't any icebreakers or structured games—just the natural warmth of voices meeting for the first time, in a space already full of possibility.

A few meters away, the Neckar River flowed gently by, setting the tone for the days that followed—unstructured, thoughtful, and playfully free.

We spent the weekend (2025, March 20-23) in a cozy house near Heidelberg. Each morning had its own pace, and each afternoon brought something new: conversations over breakfast, workshops, impromptu games, storytelling, and lots of laughter. We had 25 Servas members from 12 different nations.

At one point, we gathered for an improv workshop. Together, we created scenes—some ridiculous, some surprisingly heartfelt—and practiced the core improv principle of “Yes, and...” You accept what's offered, build on it, and see where it leads. It felt a lot like traveling: you never know exactly what's ahead, but when you say yes to the unexpected, the adventure begins.

Later that day, a few of us braved the icy waters and tried Eisbaden. It was freezing—the kind of cold that steals your breath unless you consciously remind yourself to breathe. But what made it special wasn't just the temperature; it was the energy and encouragement we shared, the way we drew strength from one another's courage. It's the kind of experience that's hard to face alone, but when you're with others, it becomes not just possible, but exhilarating.

Another moment that still makes me smile was canoeing down the Neckar. We had five canoes and three ridiculously large pots of couscous salad—comically big. We carried them on the train to the river, balancing them carefully in the boats. At lunchtime, we tied our canoes together, tethered them to a tree on the shore, and shared heaping spoonfuls of salad while floating on the water, surrounded by sunshine and laughter. It was simple, and yet so good.

In Heidelberg, we strolled along the Philosophenweg, a winding path offering stunning views of the city. From across the river, we could hear the sounds of a Holi celebration—music, laughter, and the joyful blur of bright colors. As we wandered through the woods above the city, we got to know each other more, soaking in the charm of Heidelberg, enjoying the moment—curious, playful, and present.

By the time we said goodbye, it felt as though we had known each other for much longer than just a few days. There was a lightness to it all—an openness—that made everything flow effortlessly. We left with new friends, shared memories, and the kind of joy that comes from doing something real together.

It wasn't just a youth camp; it was an invitation to embrace “Yes, and”—to each other, to the unexpected, and to the wonderful possibilities that unfold when we approach the world with trust, exploration, and curiosity.

(text: Ingrid Stevens; photos: privat )



