

Makkinga takes Munich!

General information

Dear readers,

since I always wanted to improve my non-existing German language skills, I did an exchange at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. I have stayed in Munich from September 2015 till February 2016. The Ludwig Maximilian University is the best university in Germany. I can honestly say that I had the most exciting time of my life in Munich, and if I could make a choice again it definitely would be Munich again!

Preparation

When I found out that I was going to study in Munich for the fall semester, I was over the moon. Nonetheless there was some stuff I had to arrange before it was possible for me to leave the Netherlands. First of all there was a learning agreement, which had to be filled in and agreed by ESE and LMU. The big problem regarding the learning agreement was that LMU announced their courses in September. This was quite unclear, so when I looked up courses, I wrote down the courses from last year on my agreement. In order to get the Erasmus grant, you have to complete the learning agreement with the right courses. I did this in September in Munich. The LMU exchange office will send you some letters regarding your exchange, you have to sign these and send them back. This can't be done online since the university exchange office is quite old-fashioned there. The second problem was student housing in Munich. I applied for housing through university (Studentenwerk). Studentenwerk has the cheapest and best housing for students in Munich, since housing in Munich is very expensive. Unfortunately I had bad luck and I didn't get a room by Studentenwerk. So I started to search for a room and eventually found a room in Munich by Housing Anywhere. The third problem was that I couldn't speak any German, which is quite extraordinary for someone who is Dutch. Luckily the university offered a full time German language preparation course in September. You have to sign up for this course at the beginning of May. The course is really popular, so I can recommend to sign up early. After I arranged my learning agreement, found a room and signed up for the language course I was ready to leave. Well almost, the day before I left the Netherlands I bought a new winter jacket and a new pair of ugg-boots. I was ready to go.

Arrival

Since the language course at LMU was starting at the 3th of September, I arrived at 31 August in Munich. I took the train, since my dad could get free train tickets. When I arrived at Munich hauptbahnhof, I wasn't alone, 2200 refugees also arrived this day at Hauptbahnhof. Where I was more than welcome in Germany and could go wherever I wanted, the refugees were guarded by the 'Polizei' and carried away for their check ins. There was a big contrast: 'on the one hand I saw all the beautiful decorations for Oktoberfest and signs saying "Munich welcomes you for Oktoberfest 2015", on the other hand I saw hundreds of refugees led by the police and carried away.

The first thing I have done in Munich was buying a U bahn ticket for the first month, then I went to my dorm to pick up my key. Because my mother was between two jobs, she came with me to Germany. We spent the first days with buying some stuff for my room (blankets!) and discovering the city.

After my mum left, I met up with my LMU buddy. She gave me some helpful information regarding the things you have to do when you arrive in Munich. I needed to sign up myself at the KVR (Kreisverwaltungsreferat) and get a German phone number. I didn't set up a German bank account and, except for Oktoberfest, I have never been charged extra to pin money.

The first month in Munich was pretty amazing. The language course really helped my German and LMU planned some exciting trips for us in the weekends. Since the weather was so good, we have travelled to some lakes in the neighbourhood and did some hikes. Often we went for a beer in the English Garten.

Courses

Since I am a economics and law student (mr.drs), I wasn't obliged to take some mandatory courses or so. The only thing I had to make sure was that I took 24 credits, where about 12 in economics. Since I came to improve my German I decided to take German courses to fill in my 12 'free' credits.

Deutsch als Fremdsprache A2.2- 6 ects

In the first month I took a six ECTS language course in German. This course didn't only focus on learning grammar, but we also learned some stuff about the German culture.

Deutsch als Fremdsprache B1.2- 6 ects

Since my German improved so much in the first month, I got permission to do skip a level in German language. The B1.2 course was much harder and involved harder German grammar.

Land ohne Kinder- 6 ects

Land ohne Kinder goes about the German ageing problems. The current migration issues made this course more interesting. The course was taught by the famous professor Sinn. Professor Sinn is also president of the IFO (institute of economic research) and serves the German economy ministry's advisory council. His lectures are formidable and super interesting. Since I am the only international student in this course, he sometimes makes fun of me and my German accent. I feel really lucky to be able to follow a course from such a honoured man.

Einführung in Volkswirtschaftslehre- 3 ects

In this course, every two weeks another researcher gives a lecture about his/her research. At the start of this course I was really excited, because I really enjoy to keep up with new economic research. However lot of these teachers speak Bayrisch, a German dialect I can't understand. Also a lot of research didn't go in depth. This course is quite disappointing.

Urban economics- 3 ects

This is an applied micro courses about cities. The teacher is normally researcher at IFO and his lectures are interesting.

Finances

Life in Munich is in general very expensive. Not only are the supermarkets more expensive than in the Netherlands, the average rent is too. When studying in Munich, you also have to pay the tuition fee from LMU (around 100 euro's). The advantage is the isar semestercard, the card for the Munich underground. This will only cost you 100 euro's for the whole semester. The only really cheap thing in Munich is beer. In most bars you will pay around 2,50 for 0,5 L beer. The disadvantage is that most clubs will charge you money for entrance.

In my case, I spent too much money on Milchkaffees and fancy food. Also the Oktoberfest was not a very cheap occasion, but all the money I have spent there was definitely worth it.

Pay for rent/month	330(euro)
Transport	20
food	300
Cost for study	10
Mobile phone cost	20
Social life	200
travel	100

Daily life

Life in Munich can be described as really comfortable, the city is really clean and safe, and the night public transport network is amazing. The LMU is situated next to the Englischer Garten, one of the biggest parks in the world. In our breaks between classes we often went to the Englischer Garten. The alps are close by, so I have done a couple of hikes and when there is snow it is easy to go skiing. Prague and Vienna are only four hours away by train or by bus, so I can recommend everyone to take a trip there.

There are a lot of nightclubs in Munich, especially when you are interested in techno music.

Since Munich is a big city with so much opportunities, you will never get bored there. When you choose for an exchange at the LMU, you'll be at one of the best universities in Europe, discover a lot of culture and have a lot of fun.