

Studying within the Quadrates

I spent my half year abroad in the beautiful city of Mannheim. The city itself is not really that beautiful. The way the streets are structured in the city centre, the Quadrates, its university, the atmosphere and the night life certainly are beautiful. I definitely advice every student to go to Mannheim, if he or she considers it as an option.

Preparation

As a EU-citizen I did not need to arrange any extra insurance nor visa, so I only had to do few preparations. The International Office at University of Mannheim was helpful and clear. At the end of April, they sent me login data for a portal, at which I did the application procedure. Once I was accepted by the University of Mannheim, they sent me new login data, which gave me access to another portal; MyUniMa. This portal lead me through my entire exchange, from the preparation for arrival until the departure. On this portal, information could be found on housing and special courses offered to exchange students by the University, such as language and German culture courses.

Before departure there were four important deadlines. In the middle of May I had to subscribe for seminars I wanted to take part in. I simply signed up for a seminar by sending a mail with my personal mail account, I did not need to show any proof of being registered in Mannheim. At the second of June, the universities put their residences which were available for the fall semester online at the MyUniMa-portal and exchange students could directly sign up for them. The number was very limited and even though I had been waiting for half an hour before the residences were put online, I missed out on all of the residences. This meant that I had to look for a private room. I will go deeper into my search for a room at the section housing.

The University of Mannheim also offered a language academy which would teach you proper german, this took place during one month before the lectures started. If I had wanted to participate, I should have registered at the beginning of July. I, in the end, decided to not take part in the language academy. Mainly because I thought my level of German would be substantially higher than other exchange students, and it would not be that useful to me. However, I heard many positive stories about the academy and it is definitely a nice way to meet new friends in Mannheim when you arrive, so I actually would recommend the next student to go to Mannheim on exchange to participate in the academy. Another positive feature; it counts for five credits.

Around half August, I was supposed to sign up for courses offered by the university especially for exchange students. These courses contained topics such as the German economy, culture and Europe. Also German language courses at every level and discipline. All these courses do have a registration fee of fifteen Euros. The spots for these courses are very limited and also gone very quickly. I ended up with only one spot in a German language course.

For my other courses I only had to register for the exam, which took place around October. When I arrived in Mannheim and registered at the University, they clearly explained me what I had to do in the coming week and which meetings I should attend. I also signed up for a buddy program organised by VISUM, the student's association in Mannheim that took care of the international students. I met my buddy the second day after I had arrived and if I had any questions about university or a nice place to go to I was always able to ask her.

Housing

I unfortunately missed out on a residence offered by the university, as I said. This definitely would have been the easiest way to get your housing. Prices are around 300 euro per month, more or less similar to the prices on the private market. Before my arrival in Mannheim, I was able to find a dorm for one and a half months on the website: www.wg-gesucht.de. This dorm was located near the Herzogenriedpark, around fifteen minutes by bike to the university and the city centre. The idea was to continue my search for a room when I really was in Mannheim myself. I successfully found a dorm within 'the Quadrates', only for two months however and cost 370 per months. The search was difficult, many students were looking for a room at that time. There was even one man on the housing website who tried to lift me, fortunately I saw through. The last month I could luckily stay in the room of a friend I met, who had found the love of his life in Mannheim, and therefore had an empty room.

It was definitely not the easiest way, but everything worked out fine. I would advise the next student to go to Mannheim, to try to arrange his housing beforehand, preferably a dorm in either 'die Quadrate' or 'Jungbusch'. The area around the Herzogenriedpark and the Lindenhof are fairly good located as well, but I would really try to avoid Ludwigshafen and other areas further away from the city centre. 300 Euros per month is a reasonable price for housing in Mannheim.

Courses

In total I took five courses, together worth 25 ECTS. My former plan was changed, because I missed out on one of the courses especially offered to exchange students.

Industrial Organization (6 ECTS)

This course was all about market structures and calculating supply and demand in different market situation. Prior knowledge of game theory was useful. The mathematics was fairly easy, but the teacher really tries to make you understand the reasoning behind the calculations. I really enjoyed this course, because the professor came up with real world examples for every market situation. The final grade depended on the exam only

General German Language Course B2.1 (3 ECTS)

Since I did not participate in the language academy, I still wanted to improve my German or at least use it again. The general language course focussed on each aspect of the language; listening, speaking, grammar and writing. I believe the frequency of once a week was not

enough to truly improve my German, but it always was a comfortable environment, a total of around fifteen fellow exchange students, to speak German with.

Development Politics (5 ECTS)

A great part of the courses existed out understanding indices, which describe the economic situation of a country and how these indices are measured and calculated. Next to that, the lecturer taught differences in developing among countries in the world. The course was fairly easy with very basic math, I mostly compare it to my geography classes at secondary school. The grade depended fully on one exam.

Empirical and Experimental Methods in Economics (5 ECTS)

An interesting course in which lots of different experiments in different fields were discussed together with their positive and negative sides. The course existed out of giving a presentation about a specific experiment together with extensions and improvement I had come up with. This had to be all put together in a paper. The paper and a final exam counted for fifty per cent each for the final grade.

Biases in Economic Decision making (6 ECTS)

This was the seminar, which only lasted two full days. Twelve people participated in the seminar and everybody had to present a certain biases in economics on one of the two days. I found this course the most interesting one. I learned a lot about human behaviour in Economics. Also a paper needed to be handed in. The final grade was based on both the presentation and the paper.

Finances

The costs of living in Mannheim are very similar to the costs of living in Rotterdam, the groceries might be a little bit cheaper, but the vegetables and fruit then again are a lot more expensive. The average rent I paid per month was 320 Euros. A semester ticket for public transport cost 155 Euros, it allowed me to use all buses and trams and selected train within Mannheim and in a restricted area around it. The membership for the gym cost only 36 Euros. Internet on my mobile phone cost me 15 Euros per 3GB per month at a Turkish mobile company. The costs of going to a pub is substantially cheaper than in Rotterdam, but going into club is comparable. Mannheim on itself is definitely not expensive.

Daily life

My study schedule was rather empty, mainly because the semester is designed to obtain thirty credits and I only needed twenty-four. I spent my spare time going to gym, and visiting smaller villages around Mannheim. There are plenty to visit in surroundings of Mannheim, with Heidelberg as the real pearl. The population in Mannheim is very diverse, which meant a lot of smaller cultural festivals took place. In the evening, there was always enough to do. Jungbusch, the most diverse area, has many cool pubs to offer for a casual night. The centre

has multiple clubs. Visum, the association for international students, also organized a lot activities for exchange students which were definitely worth joining, so I did. Next to parties, they also organized trips to Berlin and Munich, movie and breakfast, a walking dinner and much more. I also joined the organisation Insight multiple times to travel with around Baden-Württemberg. There were many, many ways for me to get in contact with other exchange students and also German students.