

## Weißbier, Banks, and Apfelwein: Frankfurt am Main

**D**uring my exchange period of Block 1 and 2 I studied at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. There was not really anything I had to prepare before going on exchange as Germany is in the EU, the exception being finding accommodation. The Goethe offers rooms in its student residences, but these are limited and are assigned by means of a lottery system. As I was not assigned a place there I had to look for one on my own. Rents in Frankfurt are quite high as compared to Rotterdam and you will easily find yourself paying €400-€600/month for a room. The other costs of living are similar to those in Rotterdam, but alcohol and petrol are very cheap. You can find a brief overview at the end of this document.

The first time I got there, I arrived by car so that I could bring my stuff there. Driving there by car takes about three to four hours depending on traffic and how fast you drive. In-between, the ICE that goes from Utrecht to Frankfurt directly is the most comfortable means, but be sure to book well in advance or it will cost you.

When you live in Germany for over three months you are supposed to register at the city hall within a week, otherwise you will have to pay. I myself was too late and consequently decided not to register at all, since it is highly unlikely they will ever check. This brings me to my next point: beware that Germany has not really had its digital revolution yet, so do not expect to be able to arrange things online or even pay by card in any shop or restaurant (ALWAYS carry cash). You will have to arrange virtually everything through paper or physical presence.

The Goethe offers a free German course in September before the semester starts, for which they say you need at least B1 level. In my experience, elementary German (A2) will suffice, but the more German you know before you arrive, the more you can exploit the benefit of living in a German-speaking country. I definitely recommend doing the course because it is free, provides you with a good language foundation, and above all it is an excellent opportunity to meet new friends. I also recommend attending all the ESN Introduction events as this is where I met all the people I hung out with the rest of my time there; the events can be found on the Facebook page of the ESN Frankfurt am Main.

The semester itself starts halfway through October, during which you can attend any course you like as registration is only required after two weeks. I took one course in German and I must say that it went quite well, although I would not recommend taking all courses in German if your level is not that high, because I noticed I would spend more time examining the sentence structure than actually understanding the contents. The level of the courses is about comparable to here (depending on which ones you take of course) and they offer many interesting courses; my personal favourites being *Business Cycle Theory & Policy* and *Finanzökonomie*. You can find an overview of the courses I took at the end.

One thing you should keep in mind is that the Goethe works with semesters and that the Winter semester starts halfway through October, which means that the courses in Rotterdam will start halfway through the semester there. Luckily most professors are very willing to provide you with the opportunity to do prescheduled exams; however, I myself experienced some difficulties aligning and planning exams.

Germany is in fact very similar to the Netherlands in most respects; they even have the same concept as the Dutch BVO, which they call *Fußpils*. Beer is even more popular there than here

(can you believe it?), but Frankfurt is also well-known for its *Apfelwein*, which you can buy anywhere. Living there will probably be very similar to living here for you. However, be advised that all German supermarkets are closed on Sundays (I have found myself without dinner on multiple Sunday nights throughout the semester). I guess it is a matter of taste, but there is a lot of fun German music being played and I personally can really enjoy it. You will also here many a song where the English lyrics have been replaced by German ones which I think is absolutely great. There is a very fun Irish Pub near the Hauptbahnhof where you can also sing karaoke! Another fun activity is visiting ice hockey matches, a very popular sport in Frankfurt and as such I have visited a few Frankfurt Löwen games. It is a lot of fun and inexpensive. And last but not least: the Christmas markets. Never have I ever seen such beautiful and cosy Christmas Markets and thus around Christmas time I often found myself drinking *Glühwein* and eating Goulash at the markets with my friends.

Whereas in the Netherlands we have trains, metros, and trams, the Germans have an additional S-bahn (Schnellbahn), which seems to be some sort of cross-over between a train and a metro and proves to be the fastest way to go around within as well as in the vicinity of the city. You will be able to travel around Frankfurt and the surrounding areas including Frankfurt Flughafen, Mainz and Marburg with your *Semesterticket*. The Semesterticket is included in the mandatory fee you will have to pay and includes unlimited public transport. I have travelled to several places during my exchange, also because Germany is a great country for roadtrips and there is a lot to see. No motorway in Europe is as pleasant and comfortable to drive on as the famous *Autobahn*, because the only speed limit is that of your engine (as it should be) and trust me, this is highly addictive. Next to this, Germany – Bayern in particular – offers amazing landscapes, mountains, and magnificent castles like Schloss Neuschwanstein.

Finanzökonomie	Building and analysing econometric models; learning how to model complex processes by decomposing into smaller simpler processes; forecasting	5 ECTS
Leadership in the Financial Industry	Learning about the most recent research in the field of leadership and applying this knowledge to cases; what does it take to be a leader?	5 ECTS
Makroökonomie 2	Analysis of the Advanced Solow Growth model; Convergence hypotheses	6 ECTS
Business Cycle Theory & Policy	Formulation and analysis of the Real Business Cycle and New Keynesian Model, which are used by the ECB to predict policy implications	5 ECTS
Empirical Banking	PhD course; reading papers, discussing them, learning about research methods, writing your own research proposal	4 ECTS

Rent	€500/mth	500
Food	€10/d	300
Gym	€30/mth	30
Phone	€22/mth	22
Social Life	€100/mth	100
Erasmus+ grant	-€210/mth	-210
Studiefinanciering	-€291/mth	-291
<b>Total cost:</b>		<b>€451/mth</b>