

Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, Germany, Winter semester



Introduction

To be honest my original plan was to study in the Far East because the bigger the cultural shock the better. When in the end I was selected for a semester abroad in our big brother Germany I was a bit disappointed. But now that I am back I am so grateful for one of the best experiences in my life.

Preparations

First of all, it is important to realize that in Munich the semester starts the 16th of October. This limits you in the subjects you can choose because otherwise there may be an overlap with the exams in Rotterdam and Munich. Besides all the standard procedures, where the Erasmus university will help you with, preparing yourself for a study abroad is rather easy. I believe it is important to figure out for yourself what you want to gain from this period. In my case I wanted to improve my German and English language skill. Furthermore, meeting people from all the different cultures you will come across with, was my priority number one.

The LMU offers the opportunity to do a German language course before the beginning of the semester. This language course starts the first of September. If you decide to do this you will have to fill in some paperwork online this is very straight forward. The international office in Munich will notify you regarding the language course. Last but not least say goodbye to your friends and family but don't worry the coming five months will be over in a second.



Arrival

The hot topic among incoming exchange students in Munich is the housing problem. You should not underestimate this, luckily if you decide to participate in the language course they can arrange housing for the first month. The language course team will help you with finding housing. It is way easier to find accommodation when you are physically in Munich so don't sweat before you are finally there.

From the 16th of October and onwards you can get a semester ticket for the well-organized public transportation in Munich. So for the first month buy a one-month ticket or be healthy and get a bike.

Making new friends in Munich is rather easy. Logically all the participants in the language course are exchange students so you will have the feeling you are not in Germany at all but in a melting pot of cultures. All these people are new and eager to get to know you. My first month was crazy because the majority of these people reside in the same dormitories provided by the language course, so drinking beers with 50 something exchange students is more than normal. Moreover, the language course offers a cultural program that takes you to some sights.

Courses

German Preparation Course (6ects): In my opinion almost a necessity to make the most of your time abroad. Just as everything else in Germany this is well organised and useful. Passing the test shouldn't be too difficult maybe the Oktoberfest-weeks are challenging but for the wrong reasons:p.

Bank Analysis (3ects): Quite interesting because it covers topics never discussed before in Rotterdam. If you are not interested about regulations this is not the course for you. The test is doable but time consuming for only 3 ects.

Key Topics in Leadership (3ects): The professors offering this course are great speakers and interesting to listen to. During the course you will get to know more about the modern day challenges of managers and leaders and how to cope with the problems you come across with. The exam is easy.

Corporate Finance (6ects): The most challenging course I took. The content looks easy on first sight but please don't underestimate the exam. It is similar to Finance I but on a higher level. The guest lecture provided by JPMorgan Chase was great.

Labour Economics (6ects): I really liked this course. The content is interesting and the professor is fun for German standards. It gives you insides about how different actors on the labour market influence each other. The course is a good mix between theory and applied math.

Finance

I have to say that I spend a lot of money because I wanted to have the best five months possible.

Like I said before, finding housing in Munich is difficult. I settled for 720 but 550 is possible. If you are one of the lucky few that gets housing through the university you pay way less. Food and drinks are approximately the same price as in Holland. Munich is a rich city so spending a lot of money is not difficult but if you are student finding the cheap spots shouldn't be too hard.

I spend a lot of money while traveling but again it is your decision if you want to get on these little trips.

Housing	720 monthly
Food and Drinks	350 monthly
Public Transport	120 six months
Gym	100 monthly
Trips	150 monthly



Daily Life

Finally, the fun part. I guess I can write something like five pages about all the stuff that happened and made this period unforgettable. Bavarian's are rather serious and need a beer to get loose. They are well organized and you can see this in daily life. The cultural shock is not to be big. I only noticed that Germans are more open when you start talking in German. The LMU is a top notch university which a rich history. The period towards your exchange there will be a lot of support from the LMU. When you finally arrive you will notice they are not holding your hand anymore and you have to find out by yourself how to manage. If you have questions people are more than willing to help you.

In the opening speech given by the coordinator of the language course she said there are four different stages during your time abroad. The first one and half month doesn't have enough hour in a day. All the new people, culture and activities makes this an exhausting but amazing time. This period ends with the famous Oktoberfest I cannot describe this over the top beer fest. I can only tell you that you should experience it by yourself and you won't regret it.

The next stage starts with the beginning of the courses. Everybody is settled and a bit tired from the beginning. You will notice that it all gets a bit more serious. The third stage is the best. You really get to know the people and discover how positive all the different cultures influence and enrich each other. I don't want to get political but getting in touch with foreigners makes you understand the world and how people act. In my opinion the ultimate goal of the Erasmus program. Thinking about the last months makes me smile again. Almost every night I hung out or partied with my new family.

To my surprise Munich offers so much. It a clean and beautiful city with great events: Oktoberfest, Christmas markets and many other less famous events. Because of the central location it is possible to visit Italy, Eastern Europa and of course Germany itself. I made many

cool trips: Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Krakow, Bratislava, Nurnberg, Innsbruck, Garmisch Partenkirchen (snowboarden), Sölden(snowboarden), Flachau(snowboarden).

I am convinced that studying abroad is a useful experience you cannot miss. Wherever you go the people you meet make the place. This brings me to the final phase: I call it reverse homesickness. I am going to miss Munich a lot and even more the people I left behind. Luckily they promised me I have like 30 new homes all over the world.

Elroy Smit