

## **University of Zurich 2016: Annefleur Korf**

### **General Information**

I studied at the University of Zurich in Switzerland during the fall semester of 2016. The fall semester officially starts mid-September and has examinations in January and February, depending on the courses one takes.

### **Preparation**

After being selected by the Erasmus University Rotterdam, I could apply at the University of Zurich (UZH) itself. The application process is not difficult but please make sure that you don't miss any of the application deadlines. The international relations office of the UZH will provide you with all the deadlines and necessary information in time. The application for the scholarship of the Swiss Confederation will also be handled through the international relations office of the UZH.

A couple of months before the exchange, I applied for a room at the student-housing organisation WOKO. I was lucky enough to get a room assigned while most other Dutch students didn't get one. Housing is expensive in Zurich so expect to pay more than you are used to and start searching for a room in time. The cheapest rooms are mostly provided by WOKO and most of the other exchange students (especially those from outside of Europe) stay in a WOKO residence. So, if you would want to live with a lot of other exchange students, I would recommend a WOKO room.

### **Arrival**

I arrived approximately two weeks before the start of the semester because I was given a place in the pre-semester Intensive German course. This course took place two weeks prior to the start of the semester. During those weeks, I've had the chance to meet other exchange students, improve my German and get to know the University of Zurich and Zurich itself. Furthermore, we could experience Zurich in the summer time and swim in the Zurichsee and the Limmat! The course is very popular though, so make sure you enrol yourself as soon as the enrolment starts. In my case, the course was full within an hour.

The two weeks prior to the semester were also great for organising many things, such as getting a public transportation card, getting a Swiss mobile card and registering at the Kreisbüro (you do need the enrolment paper from the University and the rental contract). ESN (Erasmus Student Network) also organizes introduction activities during the first few weeks which a lot of exchange students attend. Overall, my arrival went very smoothly and I remained very close with the friends I made during those weeks.

### **Courses**

Before I went to Zurich, I had to prepare a Learning Agreement in which I had to indicate which courses I wanted to take and incorporate in my bachelor. During the first weeks of the semester though, the registration of the courses remains open so it is possible for students to attend the courses and see for themselves if they want to follow them or not. In my case, I didn't change anything to my Learning Agreement but it is possible and some other exchange students did. Another thing to keep in mind with choosing your courses is the fact

that the semester of the UZH has most examinations in the months of January and February. I deliberately choose courses that either had examinations in December or in the beginning of January so that I would not have that big of an overlap between the semester of UZH and block 3 of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

During my exchange, I took the following bachelor courses:

- *Intensive German language course (2 ECTS)*

This pre-semester course can be followed on different levels. During the course, you learn to become more fluently in German (speaking, writing, reading and grammar). I really enjoyed this course and my German improved because of the high intensity of the course.

- *Intermediate corporate finance (3 ECTS)*

This was a seminar course in which various corporate finance topics were discussed. We were graded on group assignments which contained company valuations, evaluations of stock prices and valuations of business opportunities. This course was different from the previous course I had in finance in that it put theories into practice. This made the course a lot of fun as well.

- *Economic growth (6 ECTS)*

This course discusses the factors which determine economic growth in countries. The examination consists of a midterm and a final exam. The course is quite mathematical, especially the midterm, so if you don't like math I wouldn't recommend this course. The topics discussed are very interesting though and the lecturer compares the theories with empirical data to show that most theories aren't quite correct.

- *Introduction to Game Theory (6 ECTS)*

As the title says, this course discusses several game theories. I really enjoyed this course since the topics discussed are applicable to a wide range of studies. The lecturer is very enthusiastic as well which made the lectures a lot more fun. Overall this course wasn't difficult and very enjoyable.

- *A primer in entrepreneurship (3 ECTS)*

The course provides an introduction to the process of turning ideas into business. The lectures aren't hard, but the lecturer is enthusiastic which makes it interesting. The exam is however more difficult than the lectures.

- *More than Cheese and Chocolate; Switzerland in the Modern World (4 ECTS)*

This course is just for exchange students and teaches you a lot about Switzerland. The lecturer discusses various topics such as Swiss history, economy, cultural events, politics, democracy and more. It is also possible to go on an excursion with the class to Appenzeller Innerroden (Canton). I recommend this course since it teaches you a lot about Switzerland itself in a very fun way. Besides, the course is quite easy and almost everyone passed it.

## **Finances**

Switzerland is known for being expensive. Please bear this in mind before you go to Switzerland and make sure that you are willing and able to spend more than you are used to

in the Netherlands. The Swiss government does provide a scholarship which covers some of your expenses though. The table below shows an estimation of my monthly expenses.

Rent	576	CHF per month
Zurich Travel Card	60	
Food	±250	
Traveling	±250	
Leisure	±100	
Telephone	20	
TOTAL	1256	CHF per month

Scholarship of Swiss government: 2100 CHF in total  
OV compensation: 100 EURO per month

A few things that the table doesn't show, but does save a lot of money:

- The UZH/ETH offers **free sports facilities** for all students. The facilities are all over the city and offers a wide range of sports classes as well.
- The national train company, SBB CFF FFS, offers two travel passes that can save a lot of money.
  - The first one is the **'halb-tax'-card**, which costs 185 CHF and is valid for one year. It allows you to travel with 50% reduction on every train ride you take (including mountain cable/train rides). This card saved me about 300 franks in total.
  - The second card is the **'Gleis 7'-card**, which can only be purchased as an addition to the Halb-Tax card and costs 129 CHF. It enables you to travel for free from 7.00 pm until 5.00 am.
- You don't need to buy books for your courses. You can rent the books at the university library for multiple successive periods.
- The UZH and ETH have **mensas** on every campus where they serve food for relative cheap prices, with the cheapest dish for just 5 CHF.

## Daily Life

Switzerland is a beautiful country and has a lot to offer. The spectacular nature scenery can best be explored with hiking trips. From September to October it is possible to hike and almost all mountains can be reached by train. In the first week of December, the Ski season starts (if there is enough snow of course). The ESN Zurich also organizes a ski trip. You can even go to Austria for a day (St. Anton has a direct connection and is just under two hours away).

Zurich itself is an international city with a broad variety in cultural activities. Since most people didn't have that many lectures, we would explore the city during the week. In the weekends, we would go out of the city for traveling or hiking/skiing. Zurich has an Opernhaus, several art museums and often organizes festivals (such as the Zurich Film Festival or food festivals). The Zurich nightlife is really good as well and there is a wide variety in clubs and bars. I would recommend to go to some of the ESN international pub nights when it is hosted in one of the better bars, since you wouldn't have found out about it

otherwise. The clubs and bars are expensive though, and during the weekends you have to pay a fee to get into the better clubs.

During the Summer, I would highly recommend to swim in Zürichsee or near Limmat (the river that flows through Zurich) where a lot of students hang out after class. In the winter months, the Zurich Christmas markets make the city feel very cosy and a lot of people will go for some gluhwein after work/school.

Overall I have had the best exchange I could possibly imagine! I've made friends for life and made wonderful memories. The beautiful nature, the old city of Zurich and the 'Swiss life' will stay with me forever.