

In Wien zuhause

Exchange experience in Vienna

General information

I studied abroad at the Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien (Vienna University of Economics and Business) in Vienna, which is the second-best university in the German-speaking area. I went there during the fall semester of 2016-2017, from September until January.

Preparation

When I heard that I was accepted into the WU Wien for my exchange, I immediately started the preparations.

I applied for a room with the OEAD, a government organization offering nice student dorms for a reasonable prices. Therefore, I already received a message in March that I would get the room of my first choice.

In the beginning of April I received a first e-mail from the partner university confirming my nomination to go on exchange there. In the beginning of May I received an information E-mail from my exchange university with the information about how to enroll for the university, the orientation & cultural program, the pre-semester German language course and the courses.

The enrollment for the university itself wasn't a lot of work: simply clicking on a link and filling out some personal information.

To take part in the orientation & cultural program and the pre-semester German language course you had to enroll and pay before May the 15th. I participated in both and would certainly recommend it! Joining the orientation program, which takes place every afternoon for 3 weeks in September, you get to know so many people straightaway before the semester start and have a great time together visiting all sorts of museums and other popular sites in Vienna. The German course is also something I would really recommend, because it is held every morning for 3,5 hours, 3 weeks long. This makes it a pretty intense course but there aren't any obligations if you don't want to do the course for the 2 ECTS. This makes it a great way to refresh your German in a relaxed way and I had a very good teacher.

Enrollment for the courses took place somewhere in August and it was pretty stressful. On the WU-website you can find a course syllabus and choose the courses you want. The enrollment system doesn't check on overlap. Since attendance is usually mandatory at WU this could be a problem. Therefore be sure to check if the courses you want to choose don't overlap. There is a great tool for this: <https://lvplaner.oeh-wu.at/>. Make sure you also choose some back-up courses which will fit in your schedule. When the course registration opens the courses will fill up within one minute. So the best advice I could give you: register exactly at the moment registration opens and have enough back-up courses.

Arrival

Upon arrival the first thing I had to do was picking up my key at the OEAD-office. This was only possible between 9 and 12 on weekdays. Because there are so many exchange students arriving at the beginning of September you can expect a waiting line of about 1,5-2 hours.

Within the first 3 days after arrival you have to go to the "Meldeamt" which is a registration office at the district where you live. Here you have to register yourself as a resident of Vienna. You don't need to bring anything else than your passport but again you can expect a long waiting line.

If you participate in the orientation and cultural programm this will start with an introduction session where you get all important information about you exchange semester. If you don't participate in it a second introduction session will be held at the beginning of the semester.

Courses

I took six courses at the WU, all 6 ECTS (be aware that not all courses have the same amount of ECTS, this is mere coincidence), which I will incorporate into my elective space.

German Business communication, C1-level (6 ECTS): The objective was of course to improve your German. The class was 3 hours a week. We discussed grammar, vocabulary, listening exercises and some writing/presenting (you could choose between either a writing exercise or a presentation as part of the final test). The content of the course was partly related to every-day subjects and partly to specific subjects from economics and business. All in all it was a very diverse course and the teacher (O. Weinelt) was very good, so I really improved my German a lot and enjoyed the course a lot.

Introduction to Austrian Tax Law (6 ECTS): Since I study fiscal economics in the Netherlands I was really looking forward to the course and I wasn't disappointed! The objective of the course was to get a broad overview of Austrian Tax Law, e.g. income tax, corporate income tax and VAT. The course took 4 hours a week. The level was comparable to the fiscal economics course you get in year 2 of EBE, so comparable to the Dutch level. If you have no background whatsoever in fiscal law/law it could be a bit difficult. However the teachers are really good and nice and take into account that the exchange students cannot use the German tax law book. Therefore they are less strict than with normal students and you'll probably manage.

Newer History of Central and Eastern Europe (6 ECTS): This course took 4 hours a week and the objective was to get an overview about the history of central and eastern Europe between the first world war and fall of the iron curtain. It sounded really interesting to me, but it was quite disappointing. The course was not demanding at all: the teacher told us in the first session that you would pass either way, even if you didn't come to class and there would be no exam. I came every time and all we did was listening to the teacher making jokes, speaking about the history of CEE and, some short movies about that subject and having discussions. The course wasn't structured in a good way and the teacher wasn't good at all, so I don't have the feeling that I learned anything and wouldn't recommend the course, only if you want to pick something you could pass very very easily.

Supply Chain Planning (6 ECTS): This course covers different planning problems that occur on a few levels of supply chain, particularly in the aspect of inventory planning. It focuses on identifying and formulating the problems for decision making in different planning phases on all supply chain hierarchy levels. The following topics are discussed:

- Decision Making in Supply Chains
- Strategic Network Design
- Reactive Capacity/Quick Response
- Collaborative Planning
- Replenishment Policies
- Pooling Effects
- Distribution Planning

For me this was one of the most difficult courses I took in Vienna (together with the tax law course) because I had no previous knowledge in supply chain planning, but I really enjoyed it. The content of the course was interesting, however the teaching method was not great. The teacher (Ms. Chan) was very friendly, not strict in grading and always willing to help, but her lectures could be quite boring now and then.

Risk Management and Insurance (6 ECTS): the content and objective of this course is:

- The concept of risk diversification
- The probability of default of insurance companies
- Normative frameworks to decisions under uncertainty (expected utility rule)
- The impact of asymmetric information on insurance markets

The level of this course wasn't high, the mathematics was comparable to year 1 Micro Economics or easier. The teaching method was fine: the teacher (T. Rauter) was friendly, good at explaining the subjects and very efficient (most classes only took 1 hour instead of the planned 3 hours). In conclusion, I would say it's an interesting course and easy to pass, so I would certainly recommend it.

Planning and Designing New Touristic Services (6 ECTS): according to the syllabus the content of this course is:

- Understanding basic approaches to tourism data analysis
- Formulating competitive tourism marketing strategies
- Developing new tourism products / services

The workload and level of the course were very low (it was easy to score a 1, the highest grade in Austria) and mainly consisted of 2 group assignments. The first one focussed on market segmentation within the tourism sector based on statistical data. For the second one the groups had to design a new touristic service. The lectures were mainly about statistics, which I didn't expect looking at the description in the syllabus. The teacher was actually very boring and unclear in his explanation. Therefore, I would only recommend the course if you want to get a high grade easily, not for the learning outcomes.

Finances

Rent	€ 565 / month
Groceries	€ 40 / week
Sports facilities	-
Social life	€ 50 / week
Mobile phone costs	€ 10 / month
Transport	€ 75 in total
Travelling	€ 1.500 in totaal
Unforeseen costs	-

Considering the financial aspects of an exchange I would say this very much depends on your own spending pattern: you could more or less make it as cheap/expensive as you like. I rented a private apartment which was a bit more expensive than a room with shared kitchen and bathroom, so having a lower rent is also possible in Vienna. Groceries are about as expensive as in Rotterdam. I didn't spend anything on sports facilities, because it is not possible to get one general sports pass as in Rotterdam. You can only buy lessons/a membership of one particular sports club. Costs for your social life (e.g. drinks, eating out and going out) also really depend on your own preferences. The mobile phone costs I made were for a HoT sim-only package. The transport costs consisted of the semester card for the Wiener Linien with which you can use all public transport within the city centre of Vienna. My travelling costs were the main costs I made during my exchange and I made them especially for the EBN trips (to Mauthausen & Hallstatt, Krakow and the skitrip to Zell am See) and on my own (to Budapest).

Daily life

Daily life during my semester abroad mainly consisted of going to the university, hanging out with friends and enjoying the city and surroundings of Vienna.

I really loved being at the university: the campus is brand new and the architecture is amazing, especially the university library. There are also a lot of nice places to eat or have a drink on campus (e.g. Das Campus).

Concerning the city, what stood out was the very rich cultural life in Vienna. Because Vienna was the capital of the huge Habsburg empire for centuries there are a lot of beautiful 18th century buildings in Vienna's city centre, especially along the Ringstrasse, giving the city a traditional, relaxed and enchanting atmosphere. There are also a lot of palaces, museums, theaters, concert halls and the opera house. I would certainly recommend it to enjoy this as much as possible, also because it is pretty cheap: most museums have student discounts and the opera and Musikverein (important concert hall) offer standing tickets.

Something else which is typical Viennese is the coffee culture. There are a lot of great coffee houses in the city (e.g. Café Central and Café Gerstner) and some hipster places (e.g. in the 7th district) where you can enjoy all kinds of coffees and great cakes in a relaxed atmosphere.

In the weeks before Christmas the whole city centre is decorated making it even more enchanting and there are a lot of Christmas markets. It's really nice to go there and just look at the gifts they sell, drink some Punsch and ice skate at the Christmas market at Rathausplatz.

Vienna isn't only a city with a rich cultural life, Christmas markets and coffee culture but also has beautiful vineyards and forests, the Wiener Wald, surrounding the city. It's really nice to go for a hike here (especially in summer/autumn) and enjoy the nature and view on the city.

The public transport system in Vienna is really good. There are subways, trams, trains and busses taking you everywhere in the city centre and suburbs. During the weekend they go 24/7, at least every half an hour, which is great if you want to go out. Going out is really nice in Vienna as well. There are some nice bars but also clubs (e.g. Volksgarten and Säulenhalle).

All in all, my time in Vienna was an unforgettable experience! There is so much to see and do and I met so many great people that the five months I spent there flew by.