

STUDY ABROAD REPORT

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I spent 2 exchange semesters (WS 2010/2011 and SS 2011) at Paderborn University, Germany.

Culture shock

Actually, the culture shock I experienced was not too big: I had been to European countries before. Nevertheless, I faced some difficulties in Germany. One of them was the fact that on Sundays all the supermarkets and shops are closed and there are few people in the streets. Sunday is a day of calm and quiet. Also, don't forget to buy food for Sunday beforehand, other way you will have to eat out. People from the International office organized a presentation for exchange students about Germany and culture shock we could experience. There they explained what to do and what to avoid while staying in Germany.

Banking

The banking services do not work on Saturdays or Sundays in Germany; all you can do on a weekend is draw the money from your bank account from a cash machine. The opening of an account was quite simple with the help of my "buddy"; we did it the next day I arrived. It is a routine procedure and is recommended for all exchange students. You can always pay cash or with a debit card.

Invitations/visas

In order to obtain a visa I had to get an invitation from Germany (which I got 3 weeks after the letter had been sent – the post services between Russia and Germany are not so fast), and a confirmation that I have enough money on my bank account to live in Germany for a year or a confirmation from Germany that there will be a guarantee who will pay my costs if I run out of money. I used the second option. I had to make an appointment a week before I went to the consulate general with the documents, and it took a month to get my visa done.

International services

There is an international office, which helps exchange and international students. Mrs. Angelika Brebeck the head of the international office is always eager to help to solve different problems, she can even give you a blanket or a pan if you need one. Another service is Eurobiz, the students' organization which helps exchange students to integrate in Germany and organizes entertaining events, parties, trips and excursions. Each exchange student gets a buddy. There is a chance that you get a buddy who speaks your native language as it was in my case: my buddy was an international student from Russia.

Orientation

The orientation program consisted of several presentations (one of which I've already mentioned before), excursion around the town and a 4-week language course, during which we got to know each other and got used to the University.

Campus facilities

The campus facilities are very good. There is a big library with places for both individual studies and group projects, a Netbook café, where you can always get IT-support for your computer, and a Wi-Fi

zone in all the buildings of the university. There is a copy-center in Asta office. You can find computers at the library and at the copy-center.

Courses

The exchange students are allowed to enroll to both bachelor and masters courses. The courses are available in Paul - one of the university web-sites used for registration for a course. There you can also find the description of the courses. I need to mention that there are 4 websites for students and teachers: Paul, Moodle, Koala, eSeminarapparate. Sometimes they have the same functions and it is difficult to remember which site you need for a particular purpose. I would suggest not to worry if you haven't registered for a course you wanted, or your profile in Paul doesn't work: the teachers are very benevolent to exchange students and in most cases you can explain your problem to your professor and register for a course later. The workload is not heavier than in Russia. You need only 30 credits during a semester and at the Economics department the credits are 5 or 10 for a module (a set of courses in one theme). The academic focus of Paderborn university is information technology, they are the third best IT-university in Germany after Munich and Aachen. The economics department is also well developed.

Teaching

The teaching process is much more democratic than in Russia. A student can come in or go out during a lecture or even bring a cup of coffee. For each course there are presentations available in the internet with a few exceptions. Some of the courses I visited were indeed entertaining, some were less interesting. The depth and difficulty of the subject depends on the lecturer. The master courses are significantly more difficult than the bachelor ones. I took the courses that were recommended by my buddy, those were of a really high quality. There are much more different types of lessons in Germany: lecture, seminar, main seminar, block seminar, project and some more, be careful when choosing one. The courses require more self-study than they do in Russia; there are also more group projects and presentations during the semester. The courses are not very difficult because the teachers don't demand excellent skills from exchange students, exchange students have a less strict regime than the local students do. Finally, I can give some names of professors: Prof. Dr. B. Michael Gilroy (a fantastic professor), Prof. Dr. Andreas Eggert (also a very good one), PD Dr. Stefan Jungblut (easy to pass but a bit boring), Prof. Dr. Martin Schneider (haven't been to his lectures but he was recommended as a good professor), Prof. Dr. Thomas Gries (haven't been to his lectures but he was also recommended), if you have an opportunity to take a lecture of a guest professor (the course usually lasts for a week in this case) this is probably a good choice too.

Language courses

Lots of language courses – definitely an advantage of Paderborn. The courses are very useful, and involve levels from A1 to C1. There is a 4-week course before the semester starts and it's free. During the semester there are 3 kinds of courses: 1) DSH-course (about 480 hours – 360 Euros); 2) afternoon course (about 240 hours – 100 Euros); 3) 2-hours a week course (20 hours – free). It's very useful if you can already speak German when you come to Paderborn, but, on the other hand, you won't face big difficulties if your only foreign language is English, there are courses in English and the German students speak English as well.

Housing facilities

There is an office which helps students to find an accommodation. Mrs. Muller sends you an offer before you come to Paderborn according to the request you mentioned in your application form. There

are 3 basic accommodation facilities: to live at the dormitory (at the campus – 5 minutes walk from the university), to rent a room in an apartment with other students, to rent an apartment for yourself. In the beginning and in the end of the semester there are plenty of students' ads who want to rent out their accommodation for a semester. You can find it all around the university. Last year there was a renovation of the dorms. I found it a very nice room for a student (of course the condition depends on the previous roomer). The town is not so big, that's why the way shouldn't take longer than 50 minutes by bus from any other place. You can stay in the dorms until the beginning of the next semester, if you rent an apartment your stay during holidays depends on your contract with the landlord. In the dormitory you have to share your kitchen with 4-6 other students.

By the way, the food facilities are outstanding comparing to my university! There is a big cafeteria, a café (my favorite place), a snack bar, a candy shop, a wok (Chinese food) and a pub (!) inside the university. The food at the university is quite cheap (meat/fish of the day with garnish at the cafeteria for 2 Euros and the cheapest coffee in the town: for 75 cents only). There are enough of middle-size supermarkets and about 3 or 4 big hypermarkets in Paderborn. But most of them close at 20:00 and only a few work until 22:00. There is a big shopping center Südring next to the university, but most of the shops are concentrated in the center of the town.

Costs/Expenses

- Health insurance 80 Euros a month;
- Accommodation 220 Euros a month for a dormitory;
- Textbooks – you can get it at the library; feature books about 10 Euros for a book;
- Local transport : Semester ticket (obligatory) used to be 120 Euros per semester, but it was going to be reconsidered to about 200-220 Euros;
- Food prices are the same as in Russia (from my point of view), 80-100 Euros a month without eating out;
- Entertainment is difficult to define, because it depends on the person. Excursions with Eurobiz: 5€ a normal one, 75€ a big one (2 times per semester); a glass of beer at a pub 2,5€; bowling 4,5 an hour, cinema from 5€ for a sneak preview to 7,5-10€ for a normal one, Uniparty 7,5€ for entrance.

Student health services

There is no special health care unit at the university. You have to buy a health insurance, each visit to a doctor is also paid. I haven't been to a doctor, but I was told that the dentists in Paderborn are not very professional.

Social events

The exchange students meet on a regular base at Eurobiz office; you can also join some kind of club, for example, a board games club or orchestra. It's easy to find new friends at Paderborn University, especially among other exchange students (about 80 in Winter Semester and about 50 in Summer Semester) and Eurobiz members.

Sports/recreation

Different kinds of sports are very popular among the German students. You can join:

Aerobic, Alumni, American Football, Badminton, Baseball/ Softball, Basketball, Bauch Beine Po, Billard, Body Fitness, Body-Power, Bodystyling, Bogenschiessen traditionell, CCapoeira, Disco-Fox & mehr, DLRG Rettungskurs, EEntspannung - Stressless, Fechten, Fit For Fun, Flamenco, FLEXI-BAR, Floorball (Unihockey), Flossenschwimmen/Schnorcheln, Frisbee Ultimate, Fußball für Frauen, Fußball Mitarbeiter+Studierende, Futsal, Go, GTZ-Abo, GTZ-Abo Basis, GTZ-Abo Late Night, GTZ-Abo Praev, GTZ-Abo Volltarif, GTZ-Abo Week End, GTZ-Abo Zusatz, GTZ-Abo_Good_Morning, GTZ-Abo_Kasse, Handball, HipHop, Indoor Cycling, Infos zur Onlineanmeldung, Inline-Hockey, Jazztanz, Judo, Kickboxen, Klettern/ Indoor Climbing Borchen, Lacrosse Damen, Lacrosse Herren, Laufftreff, maxxF, Meditation for mental and physical health, Mitarbeiter-Ticket, Mobile Massage am Arbeitsplatz, Musical Dance, Orient. Bauchtanz, Parkour, Paso Doble und Slowfox, Pausenexpress, Pilates, Powerbauch, Powerfitness, Präventives Krafttraining, Qigong, Reiten Turniersport, Rettungsschwimmen, Rollstuhlssport, RückenFit, Salsa, Schach, Schwimmen, Shape, Skigymnastik, Sporttauchen, Sportticket Alumni, Sportticket Mitarbeiter, Squash, Step-Aerobic, Studentenwerk - Mobile Massage am Arbeitsplatz, Swing / Lindy Hop, Tae Bo, Taekwon-Do, TaijiQuan, Tango Argentino, Tanzball, Tanzen, Tennis, Tennis freies Spiel, Tischtennis, Ultimate Frisbee, Unihockey, Unisportreisen, Unterwasser-Rugby, Volleyball, Volleyballturnier 12.12., Wasserball, Wasserski/Wakeboard, Wirbelsäulengymnastik, Yoga (Hatha), Yoga meets Pilates, Zumba 1

All of the courses are paid per semester.

Study tours/field trips

Excursions take place on weekends, most of them cost about 5Euros; there 2 big excursions per semester which last about 3 days and cost 75 Euros. The excursions are not mandatory.

What to bring

I would say that you can buy everything you need right there. Except for the invitation, tickets, passport, mobile phone and money, the things to take with you are: photos for your semester ticket, bed linen & a towel, a computer and other stuff you usually take with you when going to a different place. Don't take too much, because on the way back you will definitely have much more to pack in your suitcase, leave some space for it.

General impression

It was an absolutely fantastic year of my life.