

Erasmus Experience Report

Study programme: Organic Agriculture and Food Systems

Home university: University of Hohenheim Stuttgart, Germany

Host university: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Austria

Period of stay: 30/09/2015 to 29/09/2016

Reasons why I chose Vienna as a place to study

I am enrolled in master's of Organic Agriculture and Food Systems and I studied about half of my degree's ECTS in my home university and to study the remaining ECTS, I decided to go to another well-known university. I had heard that Vienna would be an exciting and beautiful city with a good living quality, which is also very centrally located in Europe and offers great travel opportunities.

In addition, the national language of Austria and Germany is the same, so I also improved my German language skills. Studying in Vienna I had the opportunity to gain another perspective on the language, culture, history and politics in the German speaking region, more than the usual "Germany-focused" approach.

Practical things to know before Erasmus stay

It is good to arrive in Vienna well ahead of the starting date of lectures. I traveled to Vienna in late July and took a German language course (A-2) during August and September.

There were different dates of orientation for Erasmus students (see your welcome letter for details) and we had to attend at least one of them for proper understanding of student and course registration and other basic information of living in Vienna.

Here, the course registration can be quite complicated, as you have to understand how to register for the different courses. Before you can register for courses you must register yourself with the Incoming Erasmus Office.

Information about the city of Vienna can be easily found on the internet, for details regarding the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna go to their website (www.boku.ac.at). Nevertheless, you will get the best idea on how the system works once you arrive in Vienna.

For stay more than one semester, there should be visa requirements or travel limitations if you come as an Erasmus student from Germany (Non-European national), but you must register with a Bezirksamt within three days after your arrival. However, this listing is only a formality and just takes a few minutes to do.

Arriving in Vienna and getting to know the city

An Austrian buddy helped me a lot after reaching Vienna. A colleague told me that he spent countless hours trying to find out for himself about the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna procedures, which can be quite frustrating. My Buddy helped me understanding the University system, assisted me in the registration for different courses, etc.

Student Housing in Vienna

I got the residence in 12th district that was arranged my cousin who was already living in Vienna for many years. The residence of my other colleagues was organized by the University's housing department, which they arranged before arriving in Vienna. The housing service of university also worked well. The rent of the rooms is quite similar as in Germany.

Social integration and leisure

The Erasmus Student Network organizes many events and trips, something can be found for anyone. Once you register, you receive their monthly e-mail with information about all the events. I did not use this offerings myself very often because I was more interested in spending time with my Austrian friends and my cousin.

When it comes to spending your free time in Vienna, there are heaps of options for everyone: Vienna is a city of culture and music, so you have concerts of all kinds, several operas and lots of theaters as well as plenty of different clubs and a diverse nightlife. In short, there is always something happening in Vienna. There really are a lot of people in Vienna, so it can be difficult to associate with them in a quite anonymous big city.

Specifics regarding the studying in Austria

In University of Hohenheim, every course has a minimum of 6 ECTS while here in Vienna, every course gives little ECTS points. To take 30 ECTS you must perhaps take more than 8-9 different courses because most courses are worth 2-4 ECTS. Furthermore, due to more number of courses, there might be an overlapping of course timings. So that's why most of the courses I took were lectures (VO), without any practical part, and I regretted that I did not take more practical subjects. However, in the 2nd semester I did my master research (practical work) in Food Science and Technology Department.

The exams were generally at the end of the term, which can therefore be quite stressful having all the exams in the same week. This means there is not enough time to immerse you in the subjects before the exam. However, every module has three exam dates and you can choose any of them.

In most subjects, we were given copied slides or were even able to download the presentation. You can also borrow all the necessary books in the university library and use them for several months (by renewing them).

Final Remarks

My Erasmus time in Vienna was very enjoyable. I found Vienna is very beautiful city within a lot of museums, theaters gardens and I really thank to the people who were around me during my stay in Vienna. This experience I can characterize more positive than negative. Visa process timings was only the problem that took a bit longer than in Germany. I would recommend spending an Erasmus semester there, if there is the chance to do it.

