

Introduction

I am currently a final year student of PGDM (Post Graduate Program in Management) at Indian Institute of management, Bangalore in India. I was Master's exchange student in Business Administration at University of Mannheim, Germany for the Fall 2010 semester from September 2010 to December 2010. I was a recipient of Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM for this period. This document is the personal record of my stay and study during that period and contains some useful tips for future exchange students coming to University of Mannheim..

Preparation of Stay

This was my first visit to Germany and Europe and second visit outside India. Before this, I visited United States of America for a summer internship at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor during my undergraduate studies in 2008. My preparations for the stay in Germany began with the application for VISA in the first week of July. I applied for a Student VISA (for more than 90 days). The VISA process was two-step. First I submitted all relevant documents with the filled application at VFS center in Bangalore .Second step was to go the German embassy in Chennai, the appointment for which was scheduled during submission of documents at the VFS center in Bangalore. Then I started to search for accommodation. I could not find accommodation in Students residence halls in Mannheim. Most of these require a minimum stay for two semesters. There were five students from IIM Bangalore who were going to University of Mannheim for the exchange program. We rented an apartment online in Schriesheim, which is about an hour by tram from Schloss, Mannheim. Along with this I also booked return flight tickets from Bangalore to Frankfurt. Other preparations included packing enough warm clothes, as Mannheim's climate is extremely colder compared to Bangalore. I already had an international credit and an international debit card with me. I also took around 600 Euros in cash. In

addition to this I also included some common medicines and important documents in my baggage. I also took laptop, hard drive, mobile phone and camera with me.

Study in the host country

I took four courses – Security Valuation and Financial Statement Analysis; Alternative Investments; Empirical Methods; and Logistics Management. I took these courses as I am more interested in Finance and Mathematics. Another reason was a very positive feedback for Finance courses from my seniors from IIM Bangalore, who went on exchange program the previous year. As expected all the four courses were really good in terms of learning and knowledge. I found the faculty to be of very high quality and the course structures to be well thought. To sum it up, I was completely satisfied with the courses that I studied during my stay in Mannheim.

Stay in the host country

My stay in Mannheim was very pleasant. I stayed in a rented apartment along with four other students, all from IIM Bangalore, in Schriesheim. To reach Schloss Mannheim, it took about 45 minutes by single tram and around 45 minutes by combination of tram and bus (bus from Schriesheim to Seckenheim and tram from Seckenheim to Schloss Mannheim). The weather was ok when we arrived but it became really cold towards the end of November when it also started to snow heavily. This was the first time for me to see snowfall and it was quite nice and beautiful in the beginning. There were three super markets – Aldi, Lidl and Rewe at a walking distance from the apartment. The tram and bus stations were also close by. There were a lot of good food places in Mannheim in the vicinity of the University. There were 4-5 Indian restaurants. Since I am a vegetarian, this was very helpful for me, as I was initially worried about finding variety in vegetarian food. I found the students in the University and people in general in Germany to be very friendly and helpful. Apart from studies, I also travelled in Germany and other

Europe countries. In Germany I visited Berlin, Munich, Bonn and Stuttgart. Outside of Germany I visited quite a few places like Paris, Amsterdam, Rome, Vienna, Switzerland etc. Traveling in Germany and Europe was a memorable experience.

Personal evaluation of stay and study in the host country

I am more than satisfied with my stay in Germany and studies at University of Mannheim. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn about the German culture and academic system, in addition to study really great courses which offered so much to learn. In all it was an experience to remember forever. I will definitely recommend my juniors to choose University of Mannheim, Germany for student exchange program.

Tips

Following are tips for students who are planning to come to University of Mannheim, Germany for exchange program or for full time studies:

- Try to find accommodation in one of the student residence halls. To do so start looking early as soon as your decision to come to Mannheim is final. If you are unable to find accommodation in student residence halls, look for apartments in places close to Mannheim. I rented an apartment in Schriesheim, which was quite far from Mannheim.
- Apply early for VISA, as getting VISA might take significant time in some cases. Also try to book air-tickets early as they become expensive later on.
- Make sure that you have enough warm clothes, especially if you are coming from a place which is not so cold.

- To get feedback regarding courses, try contacting seniors from your home university or students in Mannheim who have already done those courses.
- If this is the first time you are coming to Germany, you should definitely visit places such as Berlin, Munich and Stuttgart.