Report about my Erasmus semester in Tübingen

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Tübingen, 16.01.2019
Hello!

Introduction

My name is Viki Szenyéri and I’m studying International Business at Corvinus University of Budapest. Besides I was spending my Erasmus semester as a scholar of Campus Mundi in the beautiful Tübingen of Germany.

I’ve always wanted to try out this experience what everybody speaks only in superlatives about. It’s an amazing feeling, because finally it was happening with me also. Moreover, I chose Germany, because I wanted to live in a German environment, use the language, get to know the culture in first hand, which I’ve learned about so much.

The choice of Tübingen was slightly complicated (maybe I will speak about it later). But all in all I was really grateful for being here and I hadn’t regretted for a moment putting this town to the first place. Otherwise Tübingen is the geographical centre of Baden-Württemberg with its wonderful, historical university, many foreign students, beautiful oldtown and perfect places: also, it is a quite perfect Erasmus location.

Start Kurs: the best beginning of the Erasmus

Unfortunately, or fortunately, here in Tübingen the semester begins relatively late, just from the middle of October. But I wouldn’t like to stay at home from the end of the summer to this time, so I applied for a pre-univ course called Start-Kurs. Ah and what a fantastic decision was it! Not only I could see Tübingen in summer time, when it’s the most beautiful, but also from any other aspects the course was one of my best decision of my life.

During the course we could attend German lessons and besides we go a lot of help from our coordinators in order to start the life easier here (matriculation, opening a bank account, getting to know the uni life). Maybe it is the biggest disadvantages of the Erasmus semester: you have to face such many bureaucracy, but here in the course we get a helping hand to solve the problems together and it’s an enormous ease.

So, after three weeks and the end of the Start-Kurs I felt that I could get to know the city. Three years ago, it took me one semester in Budapest. But yes, I know, Tübingen is a small town. Funny, because one day I bumped into the taxi driver who took me with my luggage to my dormitory. Maybe Tübingen is a small town, but this made the city so lively and likeable to me.

During the course we were divided into different groups according to our language level. I was in the highest group, but even it was just B2 level. I have a C1 (advanced) language certificate,
so therefore most of the material was familiar and easier. However, my speaking skills were needed to be developed, because I forgot a lot not using the German for many years.

But fortunately, as fast as you can forget a foreign language, as quickly as you can get it back. I got many praises from my foreign friends and other German accountancies that I could speak German very good and I have a quite enormous vocabulary-knowledge. It was a big compliment for me, because at the beginning it was very hard to use German instead of English.

Besides the course and the different organised programmes, we were always together, the whole Start-Kurs group and after the course we were making many programmes together during the semester. That was for me a very positive disappointment.

**About Tübingen from bird’s-eye view**

Now it’s time to write something about Tübingen too. Sincerely, last year I didn’t want to study here, instead of this town I would rather have chosen Heidelberg or Freiburg, where I had other contacts and relations also. But unfortunately, Corvinus doesn’t have partnership with these cities and Tübingen seemed the nearest and most promising town. Nevertheless, I don’t feel any absence, because Tübingen was a perfect choice for me.

As I’ve written previously, the city isn’t too big, it has about 90 000 permanent inhabitants. Just few people know that Tübingen is „the youngest town” in Germany, the average age is here just 39, therefore you can see quite only young people on the roads.

Moreover, the university is fascinating. The uni was established in 1477 and now it has more than 28 000 students, about 10 different faculties and countless building in every part of the town. I’m really lucky, because I’ll have courses also in the beautiful main building. In addition, Tübingen is one of the best German university and maybe because of this fact there are so many (about 3000!) foreign students also.

**Just step by step**

3000 new faces mean really a lot of people. There was an opening ceremony just for international students where there were also incredibly many people, despite not everybody took part on that event. I was lucky, because I had many friends and accountancies in Tübingen, despite it was really good to get to know more new people. There were countless social programmes every day (ceremony with champagne, pub tour, town rally, excursion), where many international students participate and in every moment there is the possibility to meet a new friend.
As a resident of Tübingen

I should talk about my accommodation, of "my home in Tübingen" too. But why do I think so?

First of all, you have to know that Tübingen is a green city, which fact is both true for the environmental protection and the current local government party. The mayor doesn’t allow the city to expand territorially; construction of new houses is therefore not possible. However, the population of the city is constantly increasing, more and more university students and young families want to live here. Because of this, it’s really hard to find good accommodation in Tübingen. Of course, as a foreign student, if you apply for in time, you’ll certainly be provided with a private room, but it’s also important where and how much for it.

I lived in the southern part of the city, completely in the settlement border, which was not really Tübingen but another part of town. There was no bus service at the end of the week and in the evenings, which meant that I’m almost always walking, but at least the enough daily walk was guaranteed. Apart from this, I got a room in a very good apartment. I was living with two fantastic, nice German girls. So, life was quite different here and this was a very strange thing for me, because since my university years I had been always living in a dormitory with many people and in a room shared with a roommate.

I don’t know why I got this area as place of accommodation because most foreign students had a room in a much larger residential park where most of the students live. At the time of the application I also chose that place and I was a little disappointed when I didn’t get my flat there. But there (now I know) were no apartments, only student accommodation, where you share with more people the kitchen and bath and not as clean and quiet as here.

The life as a local person

Nobody should think that I saw everything through pink glasses here, because the money doesn’t grow on trees here also. The weather, for example, was very cold and harsh after October. You could watch besides the poverty on the streets as well. There were trash and other for the eyes not so beautiful thing on the roads too. Nevertheless, it was far more liveable than Budapest.

Germans are often heard of being locked up, careerist, and individualists. However, I absolutely haven’t experienced it. My roommates, my Tandem partner, and every German were very kind, helpful, open.
So far, the only thing I didn’t like was that smoking is allowed in the bars and bars here. I hated it and always felt get a smoke poisoning after when I went out. On the other hand, I loved that everything was so environmentally conscious here. Separate waste collection, advertisements for shops, people's mindset were all set to this and I like it very much.

Every weekend there were flea markets in the city, great things could be found and on the internet everyone was looking for and selling many things sometimes completely free too. There were plenty of programs in the city also. You could always find a good movie, theatre, concert or anything if you feel like doing it.

And of course, there were many trips on weekends. Tübingen was a very nice place with plenty of attractions and really good cities for max. a few hours. And of course, the Swiss and the French borders weren’t too far for a longer excursions.

**University and many acquaintances**

The weekdays were about the university, but of course they were quite easy. When I had no class, I often went to the library or to the university cafeteria. I was a super place, always full of people with a nice atmosphere. I also enjoyed the lessons, and I felt that the requirements could be fulfilled by me and the best was that I was always sitting together with one of my friends and acquaintances on every lesson. I was never alone on one course, or even if I was just going through the most important university street or getting into a cafe at the university cafe, I always met someone with whom I can talk a little bit.

**Those dirty finances**

Money and cost of living have always been a critical point for a student, especially when studying as Hungarian person abroad. I tried to save a lot and work also in the summer. Fortunately, I’ve won a lot of scholarships both last and this year, besides, I also got the Campus Mundi scholarship, which helped me to spend money not just on basic living things, but also on entertainment.

Actually, I think life isn’t much more expensive than at home. In the normal stores (Aldi, DM) where I bought the most, prices are similar, and even their private label’s products, but fruits and vegetables also were much cheaper than in Budapest. In addition, it was a shocking feeling that here unfortunately or not unfortunately, but the quality of everything (from wash pulver, through nail polish to Haribo) is better than in Hungary.
This was also amazing for me because I could really see how little our money is worth at home because it’s just enough to think about where the Hungarian and German payments are from each other, and how much an average students from Tübingen have to live from and how much it’s all of my incomes for example.

It was also often funny to hear from an international student (English, Australian, French even Swiss) that it’s a little expensive. Yes indeed, and then I asked myself the question of how expensive it’s to me then, if I just calculated it to my currency.

The services were, of course, much more expensive here, so I went to the hairdresser, dentist, manicure and cosmetics only at home when I went home in December. Honestly since I arrived here I was using an app that I use to extract all my revenue and expenses from a fifty cents’ product to a hundred euros’ shopping, so it's even easier to manage with my cost of living.

Moreover, I saved the most money with meals. I shopped once a week and fortunately I love cooking, and here I had both enough time and the opportunity to do it. So, not only I saved a lot of money, but also ate healthy, which is also very important to me.

Otherwise, the university canteen (especially comparing with the Hungarian’s one) was good and was not so expensive, but it was even cheaper for me to cook what I wanted. Of course, if we went to a special place to eat, we go to a better restaurant, if we were going to a party or if we go to pubs, then I paid my order easily and with no compunction because sometimes I also could afford it. In addition, I went shopping several times and bought clothes, boots and useful kitchen tools. In value-for-money, they were as expensive as at home, and fortunately, I could afford them if I treated my monthly budget well.

Healthy lifestyle contra tiny gastro-pleasures

I must write also about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and sport in my everydays. I was very lucky because I was able to do both of these things in Tübingen. Thanks to the fact that I lived in a small town, so healthy food was also cheap. I did regular sport classes every week, my room was spacious enough to do exercises at home at any time I wanted to, and of course there were the many achieved kilometres of walking I did on a daily basis.

German gastronomy is an interesting phenomenon. I may be biased, but Hungarian cuisine (if we leave from the spell of goulash soup and forget the stereotypes of our spicy foods), is much more varied in its kind. At the same time, German food and restaurant culture is a more complex phenomenon. In Tübingen it s an important part in people’s everyday life not only eating "typical German" dishes, but regularly trying out Turkish, Greek, Asian and other national
dishes. Tübingen has a wealth of different types of restaurants and all of them are quite popular because they are much cheaper than the prices of their German competitors.

**Final advice**

The time in Tübingen was my absolute best months of my uni life. I can just advice everybody to choose Germany and choose this wonderful, beautiful cute city and experience as much as I could during my Erasmus semester.

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*Moreover, you can read my blog posts in English also under the given weblink:*

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