



## Exchange during a pandemic in Germany

### Before departure

When I discovered that I could apply for an Erasmus exchange, I started to do a lot of questions to my master coordinator, exchange coordinator and Erasmus coordinator. All of them were incredibly helpful and gave me the best guidance possible. Considering that I am not a European citizen, I had to do more (compared with other travel reports I have read) paperwork and questions to the university, but all of them were successful. The exchange gave me the amazing opportunity to study and live in a second country, and additionally I would get some economic support.

My top five universities were Technical University of Munich (TUM), Tallinn University of Technology, Vilnius Gedimino Technicos University, University of Texas Austin, and Delf University of Technology. When comparing their study plans, the living costs in the city, the culture I was most attracted to, and the possible nearby places I could visit, Germany was the chosen alternative.

The exchange coordinator in TUM was very clear and detailed in her emails regarding the preparations (VISA, Health Insurance, Learning Agreement, Accommodation, Student Card, Public Transport Ticket, ...). Although, I followed all the steps, I had some inconveniences with the Health Insurance that were solved with the help of the international coordinator and Erasmus coordinator.

### Upon arrival

The semester was supposed to start in October 2020 and the introductory activities in September 2020, but then with all the uncertainties of the virus and the prevention measures of the university, the semester started in November.

Even with all the corona restrictions, we got some activities in small groups at the end of October. You had to sign up for a specific package, which could include, city tours, museums, lake visits, bars, and others. For that specific package you will be one week with four people and a guide. It was a good opportunity to meet a few people and the city itself (below some pictures).



Schiersee and Tegernsee

Lastly, the university has a Sport Campus (ZHS), which has all sports and activities you could think of. You have to check in their web page for the registration period and be there on time, some activities

got full in minutes. I took kayaking and swimming classes until corona restrictions were tighter. The pools and bathing area are incredible, and I enjoyed them as much as I could.

### Financials

I receive the Erasmus grant, it was very helpful because the money covered almost the rent of each month, thus I would have only to worry about food and bus tickets. Germany is by far less expensive than Sweden, so I had the opportunity to get some fruits and food items that I would have never get in Sweden. Beer and wine are also super cheap (1 euro per half litre of beer), and you can eat outside with 7 euros.

All students in Germany must pay a fee, it is about 200 euros, but the money is worth it. There are many student organizations that function with that money, and we benefit from it. For example, the Studentenwerk is the one that organises affordable houses in Munich for students, student restaurants all around Munich (good prices and good food) and they give you a student card. With that card, you get discounts, like the train ticket for the whole semester.

The best tips to save money I could recommend depend on your priorities. One way I tried to save money was by limiting the amount of beer I drank in Biergarten. They can charge you with around 8 euros for the same beer you can get in a store for 1 euro. Another way was by checking the price of one item in several stores, at the end my mini market study determined that dm is the most affordable store for make-up and bathroom supplies; Woolworth for kitchen, house, cleaning, and art supplies; Aldi and Lidl for groceries (Edeka has more variety); Deichman for shoes;



12 euros

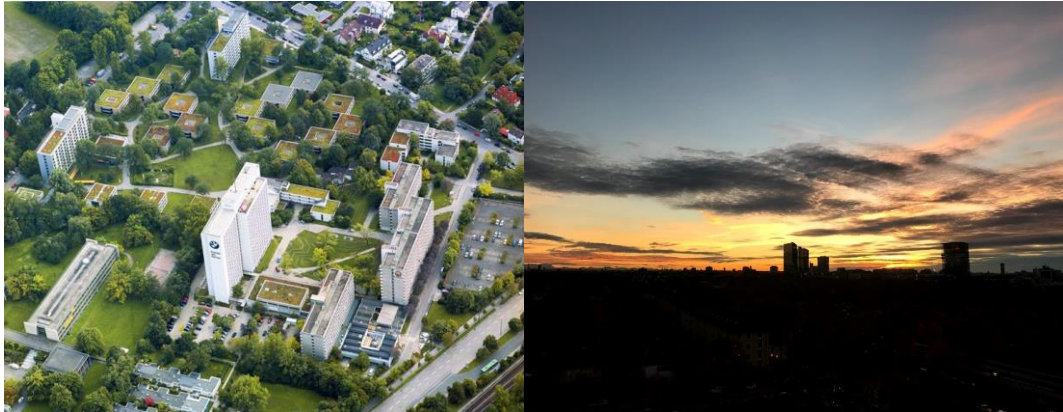


10 euros

### Accommodation

Luckily, given the situation with the virus, the university in Germany decided to give accommodation to all Erasmus students. It was super helpful because under “normal” circumstances getting accommodation for good prices in Munich is a headache. One of the conditions we got when we received accommodation, was to pay before hand the rent for 3 months and the deposit. Two months after living there, you had to pay the other three months of rent.

I got accommodation in an area called Studentenstad, it is very well located, for example, in 30 minutes you will be in the Main Campus and in 25 you will be in the city centre (Mariatorget). The apartment has around 25 m<sup>2</sup>, your own bathroom and small kitchen. Behind the area there is a huge park and a river, so there is a lot of outdoor and nice places to walk and exercise. I had a balcony with an incredible view of the whole city and everyday sunsets.



[Studentenstadt - Alchetron, The Free Social Encyclopedia](#)

## University and studies

TUM is one of the biggest universities in Munich. I only visited two campus, and I knew there were more. The university is very strong on maths, engineering, and IT. The main campus is the perfect combination of old and historic buildings with new appliances. There is a lot of history among the walls of the building.

The semester goes from October to March, and the lecture period goes mostly until January, then you will have around one or two months to study for exams (it will depend on you Faculty). This means that all credits are distributed in one whole period. The exams have a duration of one hour with many questions; thus, they are design for you not to be able to finish it all. The master courses are generally in English and the university offers German courses, but the spots are limited, so they are assigned aleatory between all the people that sign up for them.



## Courses

First, I will clarify this valuable information: one **module** can have one, two, three or more **courses**. At the beginning, you register for all the **courses** of the module. For the exam period, you register for the **exam** of the module, which will evaluate all the knowledge you have acquired in the courses of that module.

The registration period for the courses is about one month and you can deregister anytime; the most important thing is to register for the exam of the module you registered for. After you are accepted in the courses and you will have access to the Moodle course. Assisting to the first classes is very good because the professors explain all the study plan, evaluation method (one final exam, group project,

essays, exam and project, ...) and some previous knowledge you might need. That is the perfect opportunity for you to decide if you fulfil all the requirements.

In my case, it was like that. I put one course in my LA that I really wanted, but when I was in the class the professor explained that we needed coding experience, and I did not have it. So, as I had other registered courses, I could change.

Then, my recommendation when registering to courses is register to several courses.

My second recommendation is to try to choose wisely the courses considering the evaluation method. Believe me, I had 9 courses (5 modules) to fulfil 30 CR and the thought of having to study for all these exams in the same week was totally stressful. What I did was to choose some courses that had group projects along the semester and some courses with exams.

As many universities worldwide, all the courses were online. For me, the most interesting courses were the ones with guest lecturers and group activities. It was a good opportunity to meet online classmates from different backgrounds and locations (I had classmates studying from Egypt, China, India and USA). The modules I took were:

- BGU70005 Transportation Economics: One course. Weekly synchronous classes of around 3 to 4 hours. One big final project (4 people and 90 pages).
- BV520010 Land-Use and Transport - Strategies and Models: Divided in two courses, one was theory and the second was exercises and software management. Weekly synchronous classes of around 3 to 4 hours. One exam at the end of the semester.
- BV400009 Land Management and Land Policy: Divided in two courses, one was theory and the other was seminars. Weekly asynchronous classes of around 3 to 4 hours. Weekly asynchronous group tasks and a final individual project.
- BGU62041 Sustainable Architecture, Urban and Landscape Planning - for Environmental Engineering: Divided in two courses, one was theory with guest lecturers and the other was the development of a project. Weekly asynchronous classes of around 2 hours and weekly synchronous group meetings (6 people). 4 essays and a group project.
- BV560031 Transport and the Environment: One course. Weekly asynchronous classes of around 3 to 4 hours. One final exam.
- WI001223 Challenges in Energy Markets: One course. Two asynchronous classes every month of around 3 to 4 hours. One final exam.

### **City and country**

Munich is a big city with many nice parks and small castles to visit. It is also close to by big lakes, mountains, and small towns. If you love nature and hiking, Munich is the place for you. I was shocked on how much Germans love hiking. Then, I also started to love and enjoy it.

It is also true that Germans love beer and there is a big culture and knowledge around it. My biggest shock was all the kinds of bread that they have. So if you are a bread person, Germany could be your place.



**EXCHANGE REPORT**

**Name**  
Abigail Huertas Herrera

**Year and term for exchange**  
2020/2021

**Exchange university**  
Technical University of Munich

**Degree programme**  
Master programme in Environmental Engineering and Sustainable Infrastructure



Passau, a small city with old castles and churches. Three rivers (Danube, Inn and Ilz) pass through the city and merge.



Marienplatz, the central square in the centre of Munich.



Blutenburg Castle



Starnberg lake



Neuschwanstein Castle



Dachau, a small town where an a concentration camp was located until 1945.



Nymphenburg Castle



Schleissheim Palace, three palaces in a Baroque design.



Mittenwald, a town where violins are made, and glacial water runs across it



Kloster Andechs, the oldest brewery.



Englischer garden, a huge park in the centre of Munich.

### **Leisure and social activities**

I have mentioned the ZHS Campus for sports and all the hiking possibilities. Germany had a very strict lockdown since mid-November, all stores and restaurants were closed. So, most of the activities after that were open air and with one or two people. Even like that, I managed to visit around 5 small towns, all special locations in Munich and made three good friends.