

Welcome to Vienna

Before departure

As a high-school student I had the fortunate opportunity to partake in an exchange with students from Vienna, and once I returned from said trip, I was eager to come back one day for a second, longer stay. As such, my choice of exchange city was already fairly straight-forward. Additionally, as a German speaking nation (and city), I thought this an excellent chance to improve my German abilities. Not to forget that the city itself offers many stunning sights and cosy cafés as well as easy access to a large part of central Europe (should one want to explore the nearby region).

Upon arrival

I arrived three weeks before school (though only for a few days) to make sure everything with my apartment was in order, which turned out to be good because there had been a communication error with the renting company of my flat. Luckily this could be sorted out until I would fully move to Vienna a week later.

Once properly settled in Vienna I partook in the Erasmus+ reception week (which I can highly recommend!) meeting new friends and getting to know the city as well as campus. During this time, I also got to meet the Urban planning chapter, who were very helpful with helping me choose courses, in addition to giving some tips about the city as well as being generally welcoming.

One very important thing to do as soon as possible is to register as a resident in Vienna ("Meldezettel"), which can be done at any of the district offices (or online in some cases depending on the district). The waiting time for registering in some districts can be a bit long, but I was lucky and could sign up right away.

Economy

The cost of living in Vienna is generally slightly lower than in Stockholm, with especially things such as restaurants and transportation being a bit cheaper. With regards to transport, you can get a discount on the Semester ticket (Semesterkarte) if you register Vienna as your main residence (Hauptwohnsitz).

One important thing to note with both Vienna and Austria as a whole, is that they do not always take card (e.g., Kebab/Würstelstands usually only take cash) so be prepared to always have some cash on hand, just in case.

Accommodation

I was quite late with finding a place to stay, which led to me paying way more than any of my friends. I stayed at a student housing company (they called it a WG, but it really wasn't) called The FIZZ close to Hauptbahnhof (in the 10th district). Although both the accommodation and area I lived in were very nice, the rent was by Vienna standards exceptionally high at around 630 € for a (somewhat spacious) one room apartment. I did have both my own kitchenette (although there existed a large communal one too) as well as bathroom though, which was nice. You can definitely

find something cheaper than that in Vienna through for example OEAD (student housing service), some smaller Studentenwohnheims or living with roommates (there are some websites for finding these too).

As an aside, if I were to live in Vienna again, I would probably try to find something in one of the 5th - 9th districts. I really enjoyed the vibe in those five districts and the central location makes for an easy time getting around the city.

Studies

The courses at TU-Wien are usually 3 ECTS, meaning that, if you wish to study the ECTS equivalent of KTH you'd have to take 10 courses. Now, the courses can vary vastly with how work intensive they are, so asking some Austrian students for some tips might be a good idea. In addition to the normal university courses, there are also language courses through a partner institute to the TUW. They do cost a bit of money, but you can apply for reimbursement/a scholarship through KTH up to a value of 5000sek.

The courses I attended were:

Deutsch B2.2 semi-intensive course (6 ECTS)

The classes were held in groups of around 10 students. The teacher was great, and I learned a lot. Can recommend! (Does cost money, but can be reimbursed as mentioned above)

Deutsch C1.1 semi-intensive course (6 ECTS)

Like B2.2 but the next level. Another teacher, but she too was amazing. The German courses were both very good.

Everyday life, differences, and intersectionality in urban studies (3 ECTS)

An interesting course, where most of the studies were done during one week in Thessaloniki in Greece. Both the Greek and the Austrian teacher were great, and it was fun to get to know yet another city during my exchange. Quite intensive during that week though...

Das Einfamilienhaus (3 ECTS)

An interesting course about the role of the single-family house in Austria. The course was held in German, but I was allowed to do any submissions or presentations in English. Super helpful teachers.

Global learning: policies, institutions, and actors on the global scale (3 ECTS)

An interesting course, though probably better in person. The teacher was nice, though some of the deadlines were quite vague...

Land use ethics (3 ECTS)

Tackled various questions regarding land use. Very interesting in concept, but the structure was a bit chaotic. (Though this might be because it was held at several different universities at the same time)

Human resource management and leadership (3 ECTS)

One of the few courses that didn't have many prerequisites, this meant a large class. Most of my friends also attended this one.

A thing to note with the courses is that many of them have an attendance limit. As such, some of the more popular ones might become full. The problem with this is that, as international students, we arrive after the sign-up date, meaning that courses can already be full. The international office recommended that we email the teacher to ask if it was possible to join still, but this leaves you at the mercy of the teacher.

Additionally, there are way more courses in German than in English (at least in the Urban planning department). As such it could be an idea to brush up on your German a little before the trip.

Vienna and Austria

Now, I really like Vienna. The city is beautiful, with countless cafés, bars, restaurants, museums, and other cultural activities to visit. Should that not be to your liking, there are also numerous parks and other green spaces to enjoy.

Austria as a country is also very beautiful, with a varied landscape and planet of interesting or historical places to visit. I strongly recommend taking the train to travel around Austria, there are some really wonderful views and sights to behold.

Non-school activates

Firstly, I want to strongly recommend partaking in the ESN reception or if you have the time the Vienna discovery week (which I didn't). Both of these will be great ways of getting to know new people as well as making you acquainted with the city and the university. The ESN people also organise many more activities during the school year such as a trip to Salzburg/Hallstadt and ski-trip (although sadly cancelled due to Covid).

Secondly, if you are interested in doing or trying some sports activities, then there is the Universitätssportsinstitut Wien (USI) which offers numerous different sports courses for students (though at a cost (250-350 sek for a whole semester) and with a limited number of participants). I joined one of these courses and got to learn how to do some basic trampoline acrobatics, which was great fun.



Pizza party with my buddy group.



A very snow and stormy ski trip to Zell am See

Finally, I can wholeheartedly recommend using some of your time in Vienna to travel around, both in Austria and in/to the neighbouring countries. During my stay me and my friends made trips to several of the neighbouring countries as well as to the Alps. Should you want to do the same one hot tip is to buy the ÖBB Vorteilskarte, one trip to Salzburg and it has already paid off.

Miscellaneous tips (from me and friends):

- If you travel from/to the airport and have the Semesterkarte (or similar), you can tick a box at the ticket dispenser and not have to pay the extra fee of traveling inside the city (though this only works on the RegioJet trains) which makes it way cheaper than the equivalent to Arlanda express.
- If you want to visit the Wiener Staatsoper and not have to pay a fortune, the opera offers places in the stands for max 10 €. Though this offer only becomes available 80min before the performance.
- Bring some hiking or outdoor cloths, Austrians like to hike and also good just in case you decide to go skiing...