

My Exchange Evaluation



Basic Information

Host University	University of Cologne
Semester & year of exchange	First Semester
Otago degree (s)	Marketing management
Major(s)	Marketing

Academics/ course load

Brand management	English	300xxxx	1 paper
Services and media marketing	English	300xxxx	1paper
Human resources	English	200xxx	½ paper
Introduction to environmental climate change	English	200xxx	½ paper

Accommodation

What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?

Finding accommodation in Cologne is a struggle to say the least however is not impossible. I arrived in Cologne with no accommodation pre planned apart from hostel living. I highly advise not doing this as finding accommodation can be stressful. Cologne University does offer student accommodation however this is not a reliable source. If you want to go into student accommodation (essentially a halls of residence) you need to apply months in advance and check your emails regularly as well as send follow up emails. Don't do what I did and go see them daily in person as

simply put they don't care unless you have your "Buddy" with you who can berate them in German until they give up and give you a room.

The accommodation I managed to luck into was arguably the best outcome for those who are social. I lived in a flat share which is essentially like flatting with Randoms in Dunedin so was an easy transition. Unlike most accommodation options all the residences were other international students. In total there were eleven of us from around the world living together in a house close to the university. My flatmates soon become some of my best friends while on exchange and led to many great experiences and memories. The place I ended up living at if interested is offered regularly by the host university or you can email the landlord directly through the email below.

villa@schmitter-koeln.de

One keynote is due to German property expenses and laws the landlord lives on the property as well. He is a bit old school however pretty understanding since he has lived with young people for the last few years. Rent at his property varies from 300 euros to 450 euros a month and all inclusive. I would highly recommend this place if you want to meet others, don't mind sharing living space and don't mind having a 68-year-old man as a room mate (its not as bad as it sounds and is quite common in Germany)

Important note on average it will take you 30-40 minutes to go to and from the university. look for accommodation around the 9-train line as this stops at the university. I was fortunate to live within walking distance.

Money matters

Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance

Costs	
Food	30-50 euros a week
Accommodation	450 euros per month
Flights	To get to Europe (1500) Flights within Europe (50 -100 euros)
Insurance	Varies on provider (around 100 a month)
visa	50 euros

What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)

In order to get your Visa within Germany you are required to have 750 euros per month for as long as you intend to stay in Europe within a German bank account. The easiest way to access your finances is to open a bank account with a German bank and transfer money from your New Zealand account to your new German account. I would recommend opening account with Sparkasse bank. They have the most ATMs in Cologne and have an ATM on campus. To Transfer your money, I would use Transfer wise as it offers the lowest conversion costs from Dollars to Euro and lowest international transfer costs. As you now have a German bank account you get given a debt card with it which you can use everywhere in Europe with zero transaction costs. Don't ever use Euronet atms. These ATMs are littered everywhere in Europe however charge ridiculous transaction fees and all-round dodgy network.

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?

The Visa process can only be described as an experience you will never forget for all the wrong reasons. To get the visa it takes multiple attempts one of which requires you to get the form in person to see what you need to acquire your visa. There are also specific locations where you can go depending on which district you live in. The issuers of the visa can understand English however chooses not to speak English back to you unless they have to as they honestly don't really want to give you the visa so it is advised to bring someone who can speak German with you or roll the dice like I did. In saying this it took me 2 attempts to complete the visa process which was a lot less than others. As you are likely a NZ resident the visa will cost 50 euros instead of the normal amount due to a legal arrangement between Germany and NZ and allows you to reside anywhere in the Schengen area.

Some of the necessary things include

- 750 euro per month for every month on your visa
- Passport photo
- Copy of your passport
- Letter of acceptance from Koln university
- Registry with the city
- Letter from the landlord

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Insurance was mandatory however it is easy to get an exemption. To do this you need to go to a German insurance agency and let them review your travel insurance policy. They should give you a piece of paper which says you are exempt and inform the university. There are two insurance agencies on campus so easy to find. I Used TK insurance and had a travel insurance policy with southern cross with the required items to go on exchange.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

As I was a business student, I was placed in the WISO business incomings group where all the other business exchange students. Here you will meet many other students who will be doing the same papers as you and make friends. The head of the Group Melina is extremely nice and welcoming, the group organise events throughout the semester for you to enjoy. One event was a bus trip to Amsterdam for Kings Day in the Netherlands.

In terms of sports they have a website where you can register for sports. They have a vast range including rugby so more than likely you will find what you are looking for. I would recommend becoming involved in these sports as you will meet new people as well as meet locals which you won't meet if you are only participating in the WISO club.

What was the university/ city like?

The University itself is not bad. It's a higher rank than Otago university so can look good for the CV however it looks a bit soviet. Its pretty old looking and divided into facilities like Otago with all your classes likely be in the same area. The City itself is unique. Due to bombings in WW2 the city was destroyed outside the cathedral so has been rebuilt into 5 story town houses. The city also expands out to suburbia through trainlines becoming a rustic German village.

The city is an absolute party mecha. There are numerous clubs and bars minutes from the Uni, and you can have a beer in your hand anytime you please as there are kiosks everywhere. Its not uncommon to drink on the street and on Uni as they sell beer there to. Koln also has some of the biggest clubs in Europe which put 10 bar to shame. If you want to go out, you can literally any day of the week and is common to stay up till the next morning. In Germany all major retailers close on Sundays, so it is important to plan when shopping for groceries and other items however still able to buy food from certain kebab shops.

Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

Main recommendations are to check out the Dom. It's a gothic cathedral and is the main tourist attraction in the city. I would recommend eating currywurst which is sausage covered in curry tomato sauce with fries and mayo and Doner sandwich which is all the goodness of a kebab but in a larger bread roll. Doner sandwich was the fuel that made you last the night and reduce the hangover later in the day. I recommend getting it from Beef Burger One which is on main street next to all the bars. The best bars where Hillebrand which offered free beer night with a 5-dollar entry and Odenian. The Odenian is the absolute king of clubbing and offers an environment unlike anything in Dunedin.

Any tips for future students?

Knowing some German is ideal however I knew none and managed to survive. Plan any travel you want to do in Europe in advance as it can get pricy in summer and on short notice. Also never say no to anything for the first month. The first few weeks are the most important in making friends and meeting people so make the most of it.

Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!

Ultimately this exchange has been amazing. I've met some great and interesting people from all around the world while still being able to study. Koln was perfect place to be after all the admin work is completed. Its close to everywhere in Europe so allowed me to travel to all parts of Europe at a lower cost. Koln was an awesome place to live with with many opportunities and close neighbouring cities to explore. The city changes at night to bustling student zone with many clubs and student hangout spots to seek out. I understand Koln is not the first place that comes to mind but I would highly recommended it if you really want to explore a new culture and be out of your comfort zone as it offered some experience and opportunities to travel unmatched by many other exchange locations.

