

Erfahrungsbericht: My home in Salzburg

First, I will provide some overview about my courses, which were worth 26 ECTS and organized as follows:

- 1) ECTS Range: My courses gave between 2 and 5 ECTS
- 2) Class size: Small, between round about 10 - 40 people
- 3) Course-Schedule: Some lectures start at the beginning of the semester, others in the middle, and others towards the end; some lectures also end much earlier than others.
- 4) Course difficulty and quality: Courses are –on average- slightly easier, nevertheless quality seemed to me –on average- higher, as courses zoom in on most important topics. My favourite lecture was Corporate Risk Management, taught by the former CFO of Sony Austria.
- 5) Exam-Schedule and workload: Over all, workload is nicely split throughout the whole semester; there was always enough time for leisure activities and good grades, every week I had a little bit or a little bit more to do, but seldom a lot. I finished my first class on 19th of May, my second on 3rd of June, and my last on 15th of July.
- 6) Grading: “Zwischenklausuren” (two), presentations (two), project work (two), homework, and class participation are part of the final grade. This contributes to the comfortable allocation of work throughout the semester, simplifies final exams, and gives easier access to good grades.
- 7) Attendance: I did not liked that attendance in all courses was mandatory – but Corona kind of solved this.
- 8) Corona-Version: All classes online, one “Zwischenklausur” online, two final exams online, the rest of final exams in the FH-Salzburg, as we were allowed to re-enter the building at this time.

Saving the best for last, my Erasmus-Semester in Salzburg was disturbed by the appearance of COVID19. The government reacted early, after the first cases occurred in Austria, most economy and all educational institutions were closed. Restrictions dealt a heavy blow to many opportunities we (incomings) would have otherwise liked to realize. Things happened fast, restrictions were aggravated from one day to another, until everybody was forbidden to leave the house unless:

- For work that could not be postponed
- For necessary purchases (food and drugs)
- To help someone in need
- To go for a walk, either alone or with one other person with whom you live together

During this time a lot of things helped to endure this rough situation with a smile. Even through the semester had already begun, FH-Salzburg managed to keep all of my lectures going, utilizing online-lectures. Furthermore the International Office organized a weekly “virtual coffee hour” so everybody interested could see and talk to each other online.

I live(d) at the dorm near the campus, together with most of the incoming students. From my room I have a beautiful view at the garden with its volleyball field and grill station. The end of the garden is surrounded by huge trees, behind which, in the distance, the majestic Mountain View presents itself, merging with the sky. From the room I can spot birds, flying from tree to tree, sometimes close to my window and - during the early morning hours- two rabbits, running through the garden. Between the mentioned row of trees and the distant mountains, a river (Salzach) flows; I cannot see it from the Dorm, nevertheless I know it is there. Alongside the river a cycleway and footpath frames its course, connecting nearby villages in a peaceful scenery. Students can either study in their room or outside in the garden, keeping enough distance to each other. A grocery store and the train station are behind the corner of the dorm, after all I consider myself blessed spending the COVID19 restriction time in such a place.

Towards the end of the semester restrictions were gradually reduced and Austria “reopened”, metaphorically speaking coming back from the undead. Incomings and regular students had once again access to the “Common Room” of our Dorm and we were finally allowed to gather outside in bigger groups. Eventually we could start visiting attractions again like the “Unterwasserwelten” in Vienna. To me those attractions offered by nature remained the most interesting, the many mountains, which offer hikes between one hour and a whole day, the eagle nests on top of the higher mountains, the feeling after reaching the top and the almost infinite view in all directions of the sky. Usually we spend a while at the top, to drink a beer, to have lunch, and to recover, before we start our journey back home. An exception are shorter hikes in the evening, these are relatively easy and primarily for the purpose to watch the sunset, two pictures can be found on the next page. On sunny days one is spoiled for choice: Nice places alongside the river and numerous lakes are serious competitors to hikes.

Last but not least I would like to talk about the people I spend the semester with. A big group of people came from Finland, which is considered the worlds’ happiest country¹. Indeed they inhabit an astonishingly good humour, very honest and -as far as I am concerned- the most relaxed people. Another big group came from Spain, they stayed here for two semesters and we met in their second one. They were as positive as creative, to give some examples: They “invented” weekly Beer pong in the Common Room, created a WhatsApp group for all Incomings, and invited to food sharing events (everybody who wants to join cooks something from his home country and brings it to the Common Room).

It is impossible to mention all the great people I met here or all the things we did together, so I will select a few more to end this report with. After a friend from Germany told me about a Austrian coffee recipe, called “Kosakenkaffee”, I got inspired and bought all the special ingredients needed for it, afterwards I asked an Italian girl, who I knew had a coffee machine, to assist in the making of a special morning coffee recipe. Little did she know, so she was happy to start her next morning like this and quiet surprised when I appeared with some red wine and vodka in my hand in the next morning. Needless to say that this turned out to be a good start in the morning. For the course “Tandem Learning” it is required that students decide for a foreign langue they would like to learn and offer a langue they are willing to teach, then everybody tries to find a matching partner and those who do meet for activities of their choice to practice together. My match and I planned to cook together, showing each other a common recipe of the others country. Since Corona forbid us to meet, we did the whole thing via video-call. So I cooked something from Azerbaijan and taught my match something from Germany.

¹ According to the United Nations World Happiness Report.

