
Erasmus+ Exchange

Experience Report

Winter 2022/23 Exchange Semester at Alpen Adria Universität, Klagenfurt, Austria



Introduction

During the winter semester of 2022/23, I had the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus exchange program at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt (AAU), an institution of higher learning situated in the charming small town of Klagenfurt. My selection of AAU was primarily motivated by my desire to continue improving my German language proficiency, as well as to take advantage of the institution's diverse range of interdisciplinary courses for my elective modules. Additionally, the scenic location offered ample opportunities for winter sports, such as skiing, and a chance to engage in outdoor activities, including swimming (during summers or warmer days).

AAU's curriculum allowed me to broaden my academic horizons by undertaking courses that were not available at my home institution, the Technische Universität Ilmenau (TU Ilmenau). I was able to attend lectures on gender economics, participate in study excursions, and explore social entrepreneurship. Furthermore, my stay at AAU enabled me to establish a fruitful mentor-mentee relationship with several professors, and visit prominent companies such as Phillips and Kelag through field trips. My participation in the Erasmus exchange program at AAU was an enriching and invaluable experience that provided me with new insights and perspectives on academia, culture, and business. It was an excellent opportunity for personal and academic growth, and I strongly recommend it to any student looking for a unique and rewarding study abroad experience.

Living Costs, Transportation, Accommodation and Locality

When comparing Austria to Germany, it is apparent that the former is relatively more expensive. As a student, my expenses were significantly higher while I was studying in Klagenfurt, where I paid 366 euros for rent, which was 110 euros more than what I spent while living in Ilmenau. Despite upgrading to a studio room at Studentenheim Concordia, the rental prices in Klagenfurt tend to be on the higher end. Additionally, the cost of groceries was about 10% more expensive compared to what I spent in Germany

Fortunately, as an insured member of TK, I was covered medically while in Austria. However, during my visits to the doctor, I encountered initial reluctance to accept my card, but I had to insist, and they eventually accepted it after verifying the details. In addition, if you are from an Asian or African country, you must have a tuberculosis test within three months of registering in Austria, for which you'll receive a letter. As for transportation, the student ID was insufficient to cover traveling costs, which prompted most students to buy a semester ticket or climate (Klima)

ticket from the **Kärntner Linien app**. The semester ticket costs 111 euros and is valid from September to February. This was the option I selected. The climate ticket, which provides free travel within Carinthia, costs 300 euros, while the ticket that covers travel throughout Austria costs 700 euros. These tickets are ideal for students who frequently travel within the region or country. While traveling from Germany to Klagenfurt, as soon as one enters Austria, the views are breath-taking, and one should always sit on the right side of the best views.



Regarding accommodation, my student housing was about a 30-minute walk from the university, a 10-minute bike ride, or a 17-minute bus ride with direct connections. Overall, while the cost of living is higher in Austria than in Germany, there are still various options available for students to manage their expenses. It is crucial to plan ahead and research the available resources to find the most cost-effective options, especially when it comes to lodging. Many Erasmus students also faced difficulties finding accommodation. Some students were forced to sleep in the library for a few days before finding a suitable place to live. This situation highlights the importance of early planning and preparation when it comes to accommodations. It is advisable to start searching for accommodation well in advance and to explore all available options, such as student housing, private apartments, or homestays. Additionally, seeking assistance from the university or student housing organizations can also be helpful in finding suitable accommodation. Despite the fact that Mozartheim is not the most desirable place to stay, finding suitable accommodation in Klagenfurt can be quite challenging. In my case, I discovered that many of the accommodations

near the university were only available to students who planned to stay for more than six months. To secure suitable accommodation, I applied for a place at the Studentenheim Concordia in June and successfully booked the place in July. This allowed me to have a comfortable stay from October to January. While the booking process was smooth and efficient, it is important to note that early planning and preparation are crucial in finding suitable accommodation in Klagenfurt. One can also look for a place in the city center, as there are many bus connections, and the city center is closer to restaurants and bars and has a better living quality.

There are plenty of bars and events happening around which one can get to know about through university student clubs. In winter, Klagenfurt is very snowy, and there are options to go skiing nearby, and in the summer, the lake turns into an attractive tourist destination as well as a good place for swimming. If one is in contact with the international student association, one can ask to get some household items for free that were left by previous Erasmus students; otherwise, one can go to IKEA by bus and buy necessary items at nearby stores. Most of the dorms will be furnished, so one is required to buy only bedding, cutlery, plates, etc. Below are some pictures from Klagenfurt:





STUDIES

It is crucial to keep in mind that the courses at AAU in Klagenfurt are usually blocked and rarely scheduled on a weekly basis. Especially if you're pursuing a master's degree in business or media. I had one online class in the first week of October, then bi-weekly German classes, but most of my other courses started in November. November and January were particularly hectic months, with classes from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. followed by four days off. For someone like me who had the choice of taking some courses for the elective module, I had the chance to study interdisciplinary courses on gender economics and queer studies, but one can also choose from filmmaking, decolonial studies, etc. Exams are held three weeks after the course ends, so you can accept exams scheduled throughout the semester. There are three chances to write an exam, but as an Erasmus student, you can't write an exam after the semester term ends. The German course is particularly good and is provided to Erasmus students for 30 euros, which is heavily subsidized given the course costs 350 euros for regular students. The library is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Printing facilities are available, but the student card has to be charged with a minimum of ten euros, and I didn't use more than five euros throughout the semester. My personal suggestion would be the courses *On Sex, Lies, and Economics* by **Dr. Karin Schönflug** and *International Entrepreneurship* by **Dr. Malgorzata Anna Wdowiak**.

CONCLUSION

With the Erasmus grant, one can cover their rent and utility expenses. But the greater incentive is the experience and also the offered courses. Throughout the semester student associations organize a number of events and city or country visits at a reduced price. One can also visit Italy, Croatia, Slovenia using Flixbus and have a nice day or weekend trip. Additionally, if one has a strong passport that allows visa free entry in the non-Schengen European area, Ryanair flights to Dublin and London cost on average 23 euros one way and flights to Brussels can be as low as 7 euros one way.

Personally for me this was a great experience and helped me understand key aspects of my academic career. The Erasmus department at TU Ilmenau was always an email away if I had any questions or problems through the process. At the end of the day, Klagenfurt is a beautiful town with a big Erasmus community, and I wish the best to everyone who chooses to spend a semester there.