



Tips on Studying Abroad at Technische Universität München in Germany

Want to know what it's like to study abroad? Want to know what your peers think? Your fellow Georgia Tech students who have previously gone on this exchange program gave their opinions so that future participants have the inside scoop on their host institution and host country.

Preparation & Getting Started

- At the TU Munich, and I believe at many other German universities, you don't register for lecture courses in advance. With seminars or praktika (lab courses), it's usually necessary to just email the professor in advance to make sure that you have a spot (and to get an assignment for a presentation or group). All you have to do for lectures usually is register for the exam, usually around two to four weeks after courses start. It's best to ask the Übungsleitung, the teaching assistant(s) that guide the recitation sections, as they usually have more to do with it than the professor.

Classes

- I've heard that many classes are much bigger than even the biggest classes at Tech, but my classes weren't too big. My biggest had only 60 - 70 people, and my smallest (upper-level) classes had as few as 10 - 20.
- The classes are often quite different than those at Tech, largely due to the more theoretical slant of the courses compared to those at Tech. Despite that, my classes weren't too bad.
- I had only major courses and a couple of language courses for my minor. You'll find that many general courses such as history and economics are hard if not impossible to find at the TU. If you're looking to take a course or two in non-major courses (that aren't language courses, which are also offered by the TU), it's better to try to find it at LMU, which is also in Munich. Other students from Tech that were here with me took classes there and were able to get them transferred with no problem.
- Usually there's just one exam at the end of the semester. Many classes have no other assignments. If a class does have mandatory assignments over the course of the semester, they usually don't actually contribute to your final grade but are still required to be admitted to take the final exam. Some classes have mid-terms, but this is the exception to the rule, and it seems that that's also usually only for admission to the final.
- Language classes are offered by the TU at each of the three campuses in lots of different languages (overall the same languages as are available at Tech plus one or two extras). The courses usually meet only once a week (usually for either an hour and a half or three hours), and you must pay 30 Euro (supposedly for photocopies throughout the course) to take each course.
 - Grades are given on a scale from 1.0 to 5.0 with 1.0 being perfect performance and 5.0 being the worst grade that you can receive.
 - You'll likely find that you have a lighter course load than most of the regular students that you meet which is a good thing.



Housing

- There's no housing on campus like at Tech, but there is the Studentenwerk - student services - that organizes subsidized apartments for students from all colleges. For this program, you should have housing already organized for you ahead of time by Tech and TUM, and there shouldn't be much of an application process at all. If you end up staying in Munich for the second semester and don't want to move to a different apartment, make sure that you extend your contract (since you'll probably initially only make the contract to last until the end of February). Make sure to do that well ahead of time - that is, at least before the end of the month before your last month on the contract - otherwise it may not be possible for them to extend the contract. If you have to move to another place, either in Munich or in another city, then the process of finding an apartment is more or less just like at home.
- If you participate in the Summer Uni Pre-Study Course, then housing for the month of September will be arranged for you by the TUM international office. The housing arranged by the university for you for the actual semester will probably be (i.e. was for our entire group) either at Studentenstadt (known also as StuSta) or Knorrstraße. I was assigned to Studentenstadt, which is really great - it's basically just a huge apartment complex that houses a total of around 2,000 students in different apartment buildings (the largest being the green house, which is about 19 floors tall - I was in the orange house, which is 11 floors tall and houses about four hundred people). Studentenstadt also has several bars and restaurants as well as a club or two. It's to the northeast of the city and lies directly on the U-Bahn (subway) line U6. Studentenstadt is an extremely convenient location for anyone studying in Garching (CS, Chemistry, Physics, ME, Math, probably IsyE, AE, probably a couple that I'm forgetting) because it's right between Garching and the center of Munich. A 14 minute ride on the U-Bahn gets you to Garching, but the center of town is still only 20 minutes away (and a huge portion of the cool districts in the city are actually much closer than that anyway) on the same U-Bahn line. I believe the location to which you're assigned actually depends on what you study (since the majors listed above are in Garching and basically everything else a Tech student would study is at the downtown campus). All of the students in our group that needed to go to the Garching campus were assigned to Studentenstadt while all the others were assigned to Knorrstraße (which is right on another U-Bahn line that leads directly to the downtown campus in 10 minutes or less).
- Studentenstadt and Knorrstraße both have lots of private, single rooms, and everyone in our group was assigned to a single room. However, Studentenstadt does have some rooms in a Wohngemeinschaft (WG for short) which is basically just a room with private bedrooms but shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. I don't know if Knorrstraße has any WGs, but I don't think they do. Also, if you do the pre-study course (highly recommended, by the way) then you'll probably be housed in a WG for that month. If you have to find another place for the second semester, you may want to look into a WG, as they're usually more spacious with better facilities without much difference in price (if any).
- Knorrstraße and Studentenstadt both had the same basic setup for each single room: a bedroom (with a closet) with an attached, small kitchen (with sink, refrigerator, and two burners on a stove) and a small bathroom with a sink, toilet, and shower. Nothing is lacking. There are rooms in Studentenstadt that aren't as well outfitted and only have a sink in the bedroom with common toilet, shower, and kitchen facilities. However, it's not likely that you'll get assigned to those buildings (there were four Georgia Tech students living in Studentenstadt and all four of us had the better rooms in the big buildings). In any case, the washing machines and dryers in StuSta are in the basement of each building (there are only seven or eight washers and three dryers in the 400-person orange house though, so you can imagine that doing laundry is really annoying, but it works) and there's a common room on each floor of the buildings in Studentenstadt with an oven, bigger stove, and microwave (and a similar situation at Knorrstraße).
- The rooms are furnished, but you still need your own bedding (I would suggest just buying that once you get there though). The pre-study course housing provides bed sheets and pillows anyway (you have to leave them though, unfortunately), so you'll have time to buy that stuff before you move into the rooms that don't have it. The only thing that I can think of to bring is an Ethernet cable because there's no wireless.
- The prices at the places I've mentioned are really great. I pay only 220 EUR a month for my room.

Food

- Around Studentenstadt: there's a grocery store only a (kind of long) walk down the main street (or bus 50 direction Moosach one stop or U6 towards town, also one stop) at Alte Heide called Nahkauf (literally something like near-shop - lives up to its name) that isn't one of the cheap places but has pretty good selection most of the time. If you take bus 50 direction Moosach and get off at Milbertshofenerstraße (I think it's five or six stops away), then go further in



the direction the bus was going and then turn left and go for some way you'll find a Lidl (one of the discount grocery stores I mentioned). It's interesting to note that this road is Knorrstraße where the other apartments are and that from there this place is just north up the street. Other options include Penny Market (a discount grocery store) and Rewe (much better selection, slightly more pricy) at Alfred-Arndt-Straße (third stop from StuSta on bus 50 to Moosach) as well as Marktkauf (big department and grocery store - Germany's answer

to the Wal-Mart super center. Good grocery selection and pretty good prices, though still not as cheap as Penny, Lidl, etc.) and Aldi (yet another discount grocer) at Unterföhring/Feringerstraße Ost (second stop on bus 50 in direction Johanneskirchen Bf). In addition, there are a few places at Studentenstadt where you can get a good meal for cheap (cheap is 4 Euro for a meal with no drink). The Tribühne (between the green and orange houses), the Pot (in the basement of the orange house at the south end) and the Manhattan (at the top floor of the green house) offer daily dinner specials that are pretty good. The Tribühne also has a big menu of good stuff offered every day as well as lunch specials.

- Eating out all the time is too expensive, and food in grocery stores is fairly cheap. There are plenty of things that are good that can be made without too much effort or cooking skill and plenty more things that you can cook on your own with a little effort.



- The Garching campus and the downtown campus each have a mensa and a cafeteria where you can buy food during the day. They each have specials each day and the cafeteria has a couple of warm things that are offered every day as well as a large selection of cold foods (sandwiches, breads, pretzels of course, yogurt, etc.). They're both pretty good and pretty cheap (the mensa offers 1 Euro dishes on a pretty regular basis, the average price for a main dish is 2 Euro or so, and side dishes can be purchased for 50 cents each, while a dish at the cafeteria will usually cost around 2 Euro to 2.50). Many of the buildings in Garching have a small cafeteria as well. In the Maschinenwesen (ME) building you can get hot dogs (that are really good actually) and some other smaller things. Something similar exists in the Chemistry building. The best one that I've tried, though, is the cafeteria in the MI (Math/Informatics, i.e. Math/CS) building, which offers regular items such as pastries, pretzels, and such every day as well as daily specials that are probably better than the same dishes in a restaurant where they would cost two or three times as much. It's fairly cheap, but in comparison with other cafeteria and mensa offerings it's kind of expensive - the cheapest dish is 2.85 and some can be as expensive as 5 Euro.

Transportation & Travel

- Buy a plane ticket early, check lots of different sites, and check with STA Travel. Make sure that you know when the pre-study course will be if you take it and make sure that you get there the day that it starts so that you don't miss anything but also have a place to sleep.
- The public transportation in Munich is excellent. It's reliable, the network is huge, and you can basically get to anywhere you need with it, and most of the time using just the subway and not even a bus.
- Deutsche Bahn offers a special ticket called the Bayern-Ticket (Bayern is German for Bavaria, the state in which Munich is located). This ticket costs only 27 Euro or so, but is valid for the entire day (starting at 9 AM on weekdays and midnight on weekends) and until 3 AM the next day, and it allows unlimited travel throughout the entire state of Bavaria (including local transportation systems) for up to five people. There's also been a similar special introduced in the last couple of months called the Bayern-Böhmen-Ticket (Böhmen is Bohemia) which has the same conditions, costs 32 Euro, and allows travel through many cities near the German border in the Czech Republic (only the western portion of the Czech state of Bohemia).



Visa and Passport

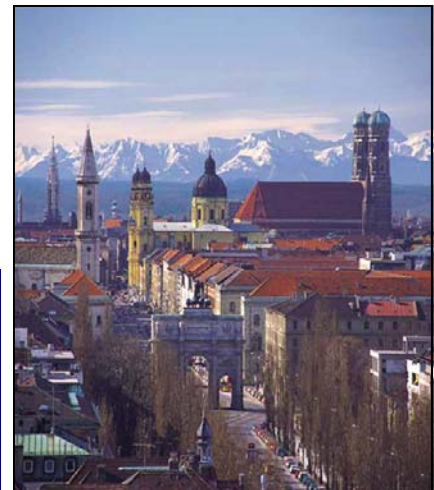
- Make sure that you get the visa within 90 days of arriving in Germany. You'll need the following: Passport; 50 Euro; letter from your parents stating that they'll support you with 650 Euro a month; possibly also documents such as rent contract, confirmation of study, etc. (bring all of the important stuff you've gotten just in case).
- The main difficulties for me were not knowing what would suffice for proof of income (and the fact that the people at the counter at the office each have different standards for that) and the fact that the office is only open from around 8 to 12 in the morning during weekdays and is closed on Wednesday.

Communication

- The best idea is to get a pre-paid phone after you get over here. O2 Loop is a good choice.
- Computer & internet availability is everywhere.
- The best way to keep in touch with family & friends is with email and Skype.

Packing

- Basics - a couple of towels and such, clothes, computer, small amounts of toiletries to last until you can buy your own, and maybe a few select books and games. Most other things can be left at home.



Finances

- Housing and transportation cost me about 280 Euro a month. You can reasonably expect to pay at least 50 - 100 Euro a month on food (depending on how cheaply you eat).
- We ended up getting around \$1700 of scholarship money without having to actually try to get it. The Department of Modern Languages (in particular, Dr. Phil McKnight) does a pretty good job of finding funding for the students for this program.
- In the U.S., you can pay for absolutely everything with a debit card. In Germany, being able to pay with debit is the exception to the rule. Bigger and/or more expensive restaurants will be able to take a debit card, but smaller places don't as often. You can pay for rail tickets with a debit card at some machines. You can almost always pay for groceries with a debit card. Other than those cases, you'll be using cash. Make sure that you learn where there are ATMs that are affiliated with your bank (the fee for withdrawing from another bank's ATMs is five Euro, and there's no warning at the machine about the fee if you try to do it, so it's really up to you to know where you can and can't withdraw money without a fee).

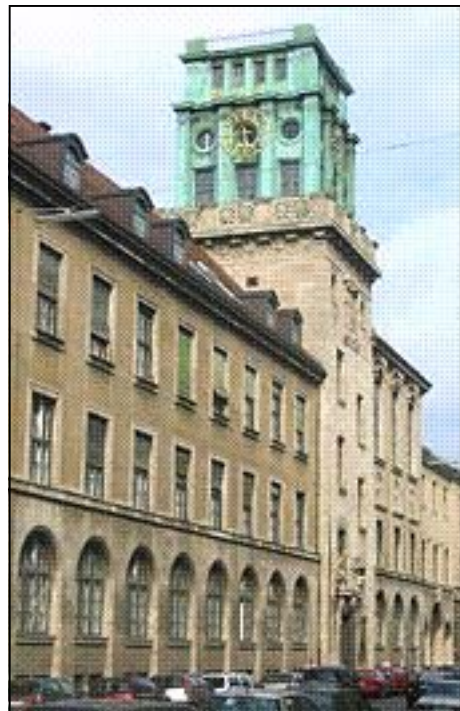
Lifestyle

- It is very easy to meet other students. There are student parties all the time, even parties hosted by the university (and yes, they're good parties)
- During the first month (the pre-study course) I hung out with almost nothing but Americans and international students, but after that I started meeting more local students.
- It was very easy to learn the local language.

Participant Profiles

Please see information of contributing students below. If a blog or website is listed, feel free to take a look! Also, if an e-mail address is listed, you may contact that student if you have any questions about their study abroad experience.

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