

Go Global with Fisher

WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management - Vallendar, Germany: From a Student's Perspective



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This booklet is designed by past Student Exchange participants in order to share their experience and knowledge with students participating in the Fisher International Student Exchange. Items in this booklet are not endorsed by the Office of Global Business at Fisher College and information contained in this booklet is subject to change.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Housing

- There are a couple options that incoming students can choose from. These are likely to be individual apartments.
- The International Relations Office (IRO) can help you with the search of apartments because most are listed on the WHU trading board. You will not have access to this resource until you arrive at WHU.
- Facebook Marketplace can be a great way to find a sublease for the semester. Just as Fisher students are travelling abroad during the fall, so too are students from WHU. This could be an opportunity to sublease each other's apartments.
- Beware of Craigslist. There are a number of scams out there and it has happened to Fisher students in the past. If you are unsure, ask for help from the Fisher International Programs Office staff.
- Keep in mind that if you lock yourself out of your room or lose the key, you must call the landlord and pay approximately 50 euros to get in or replace the keys.
- Past students have said that apartments are the best way to live; it is relatively easy to find a room because all WHU students are required to study abroad.
- Dorms are nice but expensive with the exception of Campus Krautkramer, but the internet there is slow.
- The deposit is typically 500 euros for any type of housing. Try and keep things tidy and undamaged to ensure retrieval of security deposits.

Other Options and Tips

- You will hear people referring to "the island." This is a secluded housing area which results in a long walk to and from school every day. Past students have suggested living on or as close as possible to campus.
- While no past OSU students have lived in Old Brewery, they have heard good things about it and suggest looking into it as an option.

DOCUMENTS

Passport

- Passports should be secured as soon as possible. They are required not only for travel overseas, but also for application to WHU among other things.
- Check the expiration date. In the past students have failed to realize that their passports expire during their trip which can cause serious issues with reentry to the United States.
- It is a good idea to keep several copies of all relevant documents on you at all times: licenses, residency cards,

passports, visas, enrollment verifications, whatever has been issued to you. This is not required but you may find yourself in a situation in which these things would be extremely helpful to have and save time.

Student Visa

- For American students, visas are not required by WHU as of 2012. Upon arrival, students will give their passport to the IRO and they will obtain a residency permit for you. You will then go to the town hall with your passport and report that claims your enrollment. Currently, there is nothing needed prior to departure other than a passport. For more information visit the schools website or : <http://www.wordtravels.com/Travelguide/Countries/Germany/Visa>
- If you plan on traveling after the semester ends, make sure your health insurance covers you until the day you plan on leaving Europe. They set the deadline on your residence permit based on your health insurance coverage. (2012)
- If students have any questions about obtaining a visa, Travel Solutions can help. Found here: <http://controller.osu.edu/travel/travel-agencies.shtm>. Or call Travel Solutions by phone at 877-678-8785 or 614-750-4020, ask for a Visa Expert.
- If you are still in Germany after the expiration date you can be fined or imprisoned, but if you travel around Europe after this date it is still okay. The cost is around 50 euros.



Health Insurance

- Ohio State requires that outgoing students purchase the HTH Supplemental Insurance, this will cover the student's time while studying. However, if a student decided to travel before or after specific program dates, the HTH supplemental insurance will not cover any illness or injury. It is recommended that students contact their health insurance providers before traveling. In the case that a student requires medical attention out of the HTH time period, it is important to know how to deal with copayments, insurance, etc. Specific questions about health insurance can be directed to Office of International Affairs (OIA).

Proof of Enrollment

- When traveling, some situations require a proof of enrollment from your host institution or a student identification card. Ask the exchange administration and they will point you in the right direction if the proof of enrollment is necessary.
- A student ID card will be given to you upon arrival. This will get you into any building, 24 hours a day. You should always keep it with you if you think proof may be required.

FOOD AND DRINK

Grocery Stores

- There are three grocery stores that students can choose from. Rewe is the closest and a bit more expensive. Lidl

and Aldi are further away but cheaper.

- Keep in mind you must buy the bags to carry your groceries home in; the store will not give them to you. Hold on to them and bring them with you when you return.

On Campus Dining

- There are two places to eat on campus, New MENSA and Old MENSA. Both have good food and are relatively cheap. They are perfect for the 45 minute lunch breaks given by the classes.

Dining Customs

- Sometimes servers are slower to provide service than here in the states. You may have to wait a while for the check.
- If you ask for water it will be carbonated, if you want water that is not carbonated, ask for water without gas, or still water.

MONEY

Using an ATM

- Students have found that some banks charge a percentage of the amount that you withdraw internationally. Some charge a flat fee when money is withdrawn and this usually proves to be a better option. Talk to your bank about the different options they offer.
- There are two ATMs right next to campus where you can withdrawal money.
- Past students have used a refillable travel debit card from AAA and had no trouble withdrawing money from German ATMs.
- There are basically no places in Vallendar that accept debit/credit as payment, so make sure you always have enough cash to cover your expenses wherever you are going.
- While cash is the only form of payment taken at many places, be smart about the amount that you carry at any given time. Carrying an excessive amount of money makes you more vulnerable in certain situations. The stores that have high price tags will most likely take credit cards.



Establishing a bank account in your host country

- The university may be able to help in this process. Some students have found that it may not be worth the time and effort to do so, rather they utilize their American cards despite the fees. Others have found the process to be simple and money saving.
- Past students have not opened a bank account in Germany and been able to survive with their American cards and ATM machines.

- Get a credit card with no foreign transaction fee before you go abroad (ex. Capital One) (2012)

Credit and Bank Cards

- Again, make sure you check bank fees. If students choose to use their card for minor purchases the fees can accrue quickly. It is a better idea to carry some cash around with you for this reason.
- Students are encouraged to write down the customer service numbers on all credit cards and keep the numbers with them in case cards are stolen and cancellation is necessary.

Travelers Checks

- Though travelers' checks may have once been the safest way to manage money while traveling, they may not be the best option. Traveler's checks are only good once converted. Therefore, if a student plans to use traveler's checks, it is recommended that this be only part of the whole money management scheme.

Other

- Past students have recommended having backup solutions to problems you might face in advance. For example losing your credit card. Come up with backup plan to what you would do if this were to happen because it takes a while to get a new credit card to be sent overseas. (i.e.: have a second credit card stored in a different place, pay for the entire group dinner when going out and then have everyone pay back in cash, etc.) (2013)
- Past students have recommended making a rough budget for your expenses abroad to avoid missing out in activities at the end of the semester. For example, one student limited her expenses to \$2000 a month while abroad. (2013)

For more information about using credit cards and ATMs abroad and the related fees, visit http://www.flyerguide.com/wiki/index.php/Credit/Debit/ATM_Cards_and_Foreign_Exchange



PHONE AND INTERNET

Using a phone from home

- If planning to use a phone from home, do homework with respect to cost. In the past students have realized that using devices such as smartphones with international capabilities can be much more expensive than planned.
- An international SIM card will be necessary and can usually be purchased fairly easily from a variety of places. One reliable store is Saturn.
- If you chose to use a phone from home and do not purchase a SIM card you will most likely pay massive phone bills.

Buying an international phone

- Students can go to phone providers and purchase a cheap phone along with prepaid minutes. Talk to university friends about the best place to buy a reliable phone. A cell phone is recommended for coordinating plans, handling business, and safety reasons.
- You can purchase phones from tech stores such as Saturn or even gas stations or grocery stores. You need to purchase a SIM card in addition to your phone.
- Most students bought pay as you go phones that can also be reloaded from the gas station or grocery stores.
- If possible, provide your number and country code to close family in case they need to have emergency contact with you.

International Communication

- When calling home, Skype video use is free with wifi access! This is a great option for keeping in touch with friends and family from home as well as those met while traveling.
 - o Help parents and friends set up and learn how to use Skype before traveling.
 - o Purchasing Skype credit allows students to call a landline or a cell phone back home at lower costs. When internet is available this can reduce the hassle involved with international calling cards. Users can also pay \$6-\$10 for a month of unlimited calls to any landline or cell phone in the U.S. from their computers.
- G-chat is also a favorite channel of communication for students. It has a G-Video option as well. It can be more convenient than Skype because it is more user-friendly. Which mode of communication you choose ultimately depends on your preferences. It is recommended to explore both programs before departure so you can inform family members which you will be using.
- If you want friends to be able to call you, leave voicemails, or leave text messages like a regular cell phone, you can sign up for Google voice. You will need to use a VPN (virtual private network) but students have said that it is well worth it. With Google voice, you receive a US telephone number that works like a landline. If you have to make business calls while abroad, this can be a great tool! For more information go to: <http://www.google.com/googlevoice/about.html>.

SAFETY TIPS

- Just because Vallendar seems extremely safe, be aware of all surroundings and keep your personal items close at all times. If staying in hostels it is advised to bring a lock to protect your valuables. Avoid bringing anything of extreme sentimental value.
- Keep emergency numbers specific to your host country with you at all times.



TRANSPORTATION

Public Transportation

- The bus can take you into Koblenz for about 3€, from there you can get to anywhere. You will quickly become a pro at navigating the bus.
- It is approximately 70 euros a month for a bus pass.

- If you are on a budget, it is recommended to look into car sharing. You can get rides from strangers and is recommended in Germany because it is very safe compared to other European countries. Make sure to take precautionary measures when considering this option. (2012)
- Get a Bahn 25 card to get discounts on the bus and train. Make sure to cancel the card six weeks before the expiration date or they will charge you for a new card. (2012)



International Travel

- Students in the past have traveled a great deal more than originally expected. Keep this in mind when budgeting and packing. Many students over pack. Appliances such as straighteners, hair dryers, electric shavers, etc. can be bought in country; as well as toiletries, bedding, and many other bulky items. This will save room in your bag as well as solve any wattage conversion problems you will encounter.
- For the flight over to your destination and back, utilize StudentUniverse.com. Students have had great luck with affordable prices.
- With affordability comes the possibility of delays and cancellations with these airlines. They will rebook you it may just take time. Take situations in stride.
- If possible print out any boarding passes prior to arriving at the airport or you may have to pay an additional fee. Also, double and triple check your bag measurements. These airlines are very adamant on their luggage regulations and will impose hefty fees for any passengers that bags do not apply.
- Flights around Europe can be relatively inexpensive when flying with low cost carriers. Recommended airlines for travel around Europe are Ryanair.com, Easyjet.com, and BMIBaby.com.
- Students are encouraged to travel from the first half to the middle of the semester. Waiting until late in the semester makes studying for final exams difficult.
- Booking in advance is encouraged to save money. However, it is strongly discouraged to make many set plans before arriving to Germany. Students do not know their exam schedule, nor the plans of many of the other students in the program that you may want to travel with!
- With planes, trains, and ferries be aware of any bag requirements they may specify. They are diligent to check exact weights and measurements and will charge a high fee if these measurements are exceeded.
- Buy your airline ticket to Germany early.

Places to Visit

- Past students have recommended visiting Cochem, Cologne, Neustadt, Carnival, Trier (Karl Marx House), Sayn (outdoor ropes course called Klettenwald Sayn), Heidelberg (can be a day trip), Rotwinwanderweg (hiking trail in the wine region), Wineries along the Rhine and Mosel Rivers, Mainz, Hamburg (weekend trip), the Frankfurt Auto Show (in fall), and Bonn. (Moved from Tidbits)

UNIVERSITY TIPS

Applications

- Students will apply for the university during spring semester and will be provided with the necessary materials to do so.
- The university website is very helpful as a primary resource: <http://www.whu.edu/cms/en/home/>

Courses

- Most students and professors speak English well. There should be no problems with communication.
- Do not underestimate the course material, tests, or coursework. Most of the grading in the courses is based solely on the final exam. Study hard throughout the semester and you will avoid having to cram a couple days before the test.
- The schedules for courses vary from week to week. Double check times and locations every week to avoid missing a class.
- The course setup allows for plenty of time to travel, take advantage of this.
- Everyone is very nice. Group work in classes can be difficult because many of the students are competitive.
- The students usually dress nicer for class than we do.
- Bring nice dress clothes for any class presentations you may have.

Campus Life

- There are always things to do, and you will get around 30 emails a day telling you what is going on around campus. So when in doubt, just check your email.
- Students will be assigned a tauschie buddy. This will be a great resource for you especially during your first couple



of weeks in the country. They can answer any questions you have and it is strongly recommended to establish a relationship with them early because it is probable you will need to call on their German expertise sometime during your stay.

- The emergency numbers that the university gives you are not 24-hour hotlines unless explicitly stated otherwise.

MISCELLANEOUS TIPS

Shopping

- Most shopping is done in Koblenz where they have malls, department stores, and chain stores. Vallendar has shopping aimed at older audiences, so the selection there is a little smaller.

Nightlife

- Koblenz has a reputation for its very exciting nightlife. Thursdays are one of the most popular nights to hang out with friends near campus. The weekend is aimed at hitting the town and going to fun restaurants and clubs. If going to a club sounds like something you may want to do, pack a couple of nicer outfits. Clubs are stricter with their dress code than at OSU and may turn you down if you look too underdressed.

Language

- Most people understand basic English, but take it slow and be patient. Outside of the university many do not speak English. Carry around a pocket dictionary and be knowledgeable of essential phrases that may help you navigate from place to place.

Tidbits

- Past students have said people of WHU are some of the nicest people they had ever met, especially the students. People are always willing to help if any problems may arise, do not hesitate to ask.
- Generally, prepare for colder, fall weather.
- Pack light; bring a small bag for day/weekend trips.
- It is advised that you be very open minded and patient when you are on exchange. Not everything is going to go your way while abroad and you will hit major road blocks that you've never encountered before, but its best to just keep an opened mind and don't let things get you down. The times that don't go exactly as planned are going to be the biggest learning experiences. (2013)

If there are further questions or concerns, different resources are available that students can utilize. The Office of Global Business will be a resource throughout the entire trip. Past students have also volunteered to be a contact if additional questions would arise.

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