



Tel Aviv University
TAU Recanati

The Leon Recanati Graduate School of Business Administration

Universität zu Köln – University of Cologne

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The city of Cologne (Köln)

Having to decide on a destination for participating in a student exchange program I would highly recommend the city of Cologne. The fourth largest city in Germany is not too big and not too small, its residents are considered to be very open and liberal, it has a vibrant student life in addition to many exiting attractions, it is rich in culture aside to being a significant business center, it is very close to many interesting places and is easy to get to and away from. In fact, the only downside of the city is probably its failing football club – FC Köln.

The university in Cologne is one of the largest academic centers in Europe. Many foreign students arrive there every year thus making the city more lively and international. Attending Cologne University is a great opportunity to meet students from all over the world and experience different doing and thinking both in your studies and in your social life.

Visa information

An Israeli passport entitles its holder a 3 months entry to Germany. In order to attend any kind of studies, one will have to enroll for a student visa, which entitles its holder 6 months of stay and a work permit. The enrollment takes place in the city's offices and takes only about 20-30 min after scheduling an appointment with one of its representatives. The process is simple, though quite bureaucratic, so make sure to arrive on time and carry all the required forms and certificates.

Further information can be found on the following website:

<http://www.zib-wiso.uni-koeln.de/visa.html?&L=1>

Housing

In general rent is not very high compared to other central cities in Europe and the U.S. the university offers to stay in a dorm, although the room supply is very limited (I didn't stay there so I'm prevented from recommending it). The rent prices range from 150-600 Euro a month, depending on where you would like live and whether you would like to share an apartment or live by yourself. The rent usually includes electricity expenses and all other payments (such as city tax). The city is divided into a few districts. I would recommend on staying in a central location such as the **Old city (South or North)** or **Lindenthal**. It is important to make sure there is a tram station near by your apartment that can take you to the university and other parts of the city.

A popular website called *Studenten WG* might be of your assistance:

<http://www.studenten-wg.de/K%F6ln.zimmer.html>

Living expenses

The living expenses in Germany are considered to be relatively low. The main expenses are rent and food. Transportation within the city is free of charge for students and if you are short on cash, you can always have a big lunch at the UniMensa for just a couple of Euros.

Transportation

Getting to Cologne and away is very convenient. There are direct flights offered by Air Berlin and German Wings.

Traveling within the city's district (Nordrhein – Westfalen) is free for student using their student card (trams, buses and trains!). Free transportation will make it easy on you to travel within the district to places such as Düsseldorf and Bonn and enjoy their offerings, such as great shopping centers, famous restaurants, busy markets and stimulating architecture and art.

Traveling in Germany is also quite easy by train (Deutsche Bahn). It will take you anywhere you want and it is always on time. There are some combo tickets that offer cheaper prices for trips across Germany and its surroundings.

Courses

Most courses are in German, though many are taught also in English. The reason for that is the faculty's aspiration to better prepare the students who intend to work in global markets. The courses change throughout the semesters and it is recommended to check the list of classes from the last few semesters. The registration isn't very simple but the international students relations office will be happy to help.

In general, most classes were quite interesting and the lecturers seemed professional and eager to perform their roles. During my stay I have had mainly good experience working with the lecturers who were always available, always inviting and were very patient (as so was I). The same goes for the administrative staff. In my experience the German students take their studies quite seriously as opposed to other nationalities. Most of the course's grades are consisted of a final exam and of a few assignments throughout the semester. I felt that most of them were not very difficult and could only help your grades. The student's age ranged from 20 to 29 when most of the students were about 24-25. The student's age depends mostly on which country are they from. Some courses are mixed and are attended by undergraduates (B.A students) and also by MBA students.

Foreign students are entitled to a German – language class. It is quite intensive (6 hours a week spread on 2 days). There is an option to arrive about a month before the semester starts and attend the language class then. I would recommend it, although I haven't done it myself because of lack of time. The German class was very helpful and allowed me to pick up some German myself.

Further information can be found on the following website:

<http://www.zib-wiso.uni-koeln.de/studieren.html?&L=1>

Recreation

Taking place on March, The most astonishing event in Cologne is the Carnival. It is one of the biggest street festivals in Europe. Officially it starts on November 11 while during that day and for a whole week on March all bars and pubs in the city are crowded with people in costumes dancing and drinking on the streets.

There are many concerts and cultural events in Cologne, especially during summer.

Traveling is very easy by train and it is highly recommended to visit the nearby cities – Bonn, Düsseldorf and Maastricht.

General experience

I had a great time in Cologne and would highly recommend going there. Germany is a very advanced country in the aspect of the living standard, business trends, arts, music and more. As I've mentioned earlier, it is not too big nor too small, meaning a foreigner does not get lost very easily on the one hand and does not get bored on the other hand. I have met many good people who are now my friends and looking forward to taking a trip to Cologne once again in the near future.

Tips & important things to be aware of

1. In Cologne you will find a magnificent cathedral (*Kölner Dom*) which is considered to be one of the city's most famous attractions and one of the most important symbols of its cultural heritage. The cathedral is approximately 160 m high and has a lot of historic importance. Do not be frightened by its height and climb the 300 steps (approximately) that will encounter you with a great view of the city.
2. Do not reject any offers or activities simply because they are unfamiliar. As I have mentioned before, the locals are both very friendly and open.
3. Don't insult the local breweries as beer is a very serious matter for German folks!

**** If you have any questions or hesitations about Cologne or about the student exchange program in general, feel free to contact me:**

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