

Saint Gallen University (HSG)

International Student Programme (ISP), Spring 2015

Introduction

I decided to spend a semester at the University of Saint Gallen (HSG), HSG is the one of the best business, law and economics in Europe and well-known in Germanic-Europe.

The university (HSG)

HSG is a small university, it looks a lot like Tel Aviv University, all made of concrete. About 8000 students are studying in the university, most of them are from Switzerland but about 20% are from Germany. The first year of the regular students is an assessment year and only in the second year they choose what to study. An interesting piece of information that all the students know is that only 30% of the students are girls, even Prof Martin, the academic director of the ISP told us about it on our first day.

In the university there is a small student bar named AD-HOC, a cafeteria in the building number 1 and a Menza that serves food at a relatively reasonable price for Switzerland. The university is on the top of a hill and it takes about 15 minutes to walk up there or it is possible to take bus number 9 or 5 (9 is better) from the Bahnhof (train station).

Switzerland

Switzerland is a very small but beautiful country that does not belong to the EU, the citizens speaks mainly 3 languages: Swiss German, French and Italian. The most important words one should know are:

- Thank you = Danke schön
- Hello = Gruetzi
- Please = Bitte
- Excuse me = Entschuldigung

The prices are very high, it's one of the most expensive countries in the world and therefor many Swiss people go to do shopping in Konstanz in Germany (45 minutes from St. Gallen). During the winter the country is covered by snow and the temperature is usually around 5 during the day and up to -3 during the night.

Saint Gallen

The city of Saint Gallen is named after the monk Gallus, and it's a very small city, only 78000 people. It has quite a big train station and you can reach everywhere from there. The main shopping area is the Marktplatz, there you can do all kinds of shopping and more important go out for a drink. It's a nice quiet city and you can go to see the famous 3 lakes, artificial lakes that people go to swim in them during the summer days. For food shopping there are 3 important chains:

- Migros – The cheapest and the biggest, has the largest number of choices, located really close to the BahnHof (Train station). Migros doesn't sell alcohol.
- Coop City – more expensive, they sell alcohol and the excellent Cailler chocolate.
- Avec – open 24/7, located in the train station.

Everything is closed on Sunday, and Migros is closing on 5 on Saturday.

I found a place in the Marktplatz that sell nice hotdogs and burgers, they are of nice quality and quite cheap, around 6 CHF. The place is right in the beginning, in the main Marktplatz Street and colored green.

Another nice place to see in the city is the Abby.

Visa

The programme last only 11 weeks, therefore there is no need for a visa as long as you stay up to 90 days in Switzerland. I heard it is pretty difficult to get a student Visa in Switzerland but it's unnecessary.

Accommodation

I heard there are many choices of apartments, however, it's not easy to find one just for 3 months. The university housing service is pretty convenient, you need to pay a small fee of 250CHF in order to get their assistance. I lived on Paradiesstrasse 11, top floor and paid 715 CHF a month. However, I would not recommend this apartment just because it is the only one in the building that contains 4 rooms instead of 3. In the apartment you can find everything you need, including heating, internet and washing machines, the only thing one should bring is a towel. The housing service is very serious, they actually made a cleaning check in the middle of the program.

Cost of living

The cost of living in Switzerland is very high, it's difficult to find a cheap place and a cheap dinner will cost about 20-25 CHF.

Transportation

The transportation in Switzerland is very good!

The buses in the city are very punctuate, a ride cost about 2.30 (2.10 with the half fare card), and daily ticket cost 5 CHF with the half fare card, it is also possible to buy a few daily tickets at the main station (Bahnhof) and save some money.

The best part is the trains, they are very punctuate, Swiss punctuate but also very expensive. The trains are very convenient and are the best way to travel in Switzerland and outside. A train to Konstanz in Germany will take about 45 minutes, a train to Bregenz in Austria will take about 40 minutes, and it is also possible to take a train to Paris or Milano, only 5-6 hours.

It is very important to buy the half fare card, it cost about 75 CHF but reduce the ticket price to half. It is also possible to order cheaper tickets online on the SBB website.

The Program

The program last 11 weeks, it was very dense and combined European oriented courses and company visits. My class had 35 students from all over the world, 4 local students and a majority of Americas. During the programme there is a week which is destined just for traveling in Europe.

During the programme we went to visit many companies, to hear about the company and see their factories, this is the highlight of the programme.

The company visits:

- WEF – World economic forum
- Roche
- Apenzeller
- Goba
- Buhler
- BMW

Courses

The programme contains 4 core courses and 2 elective courses that we had to choose of 4.

The Courses:

- European Corporate Governance – Nice course that talk about Governance methods in European companies.
- European Culture and Management – The first course and the most unique one, the course talk about cultural aspects of Europe, pictures, statues, poems and stories and their unique historically connection to European management. The course also includes a tour in the city and to the Abby and the ancient library.
- Leadership in European Companies – a very nice course with a funny prof about leadership in a European companies.
- Strategy Management – a strategy course that focus in the European companies, it also include a real case study that we have to help a company in real life.
- Global Managerial Communication (elective) – This course talks about communication aspects of different cultures and countries. It teaches how to behave and act in the global business world with different cultures.
- International Entrepreneurship (elective) – very interesting course that teaches different approaches about entrepreneurships, it also shows there is a big world of non-high-tech entrepreneurship companies. This is one of 2 courses (IE and IB) that includes an exam instead of presentation and papers.

I didn't choose European business environment (EBE) but I heard from my classmates that it's the best course and it is highly recommended.

Night Life

Even though St. Gallen is a small city, there is a rich night life (not on Sunday), on Wednesday all the students go out and the beer price are sliced in half. I added a list of pubs and clubs:

Pubs: Oya (one of my favorite places), O-five (sports bar), picante (one of my favorite places), Caliente (dance bar), galleria and Rockstory (one of my favorite places), and US-Mex.

Clubs: Elephant, Backstage.

If this is not enough, it is always possible to take a train to Zurich and come back in the middle of the night, its only 1 hour ride.

Traveling

Switzerland is a great place to travel, the country is in the center of Europe, but the flights are cheap only in Basel or Geneva. However, it is very easy to reach everywhere, especially by train, it is possible even to take a night train to Amsterdam, about 12 hours.

The country itself is very beautiful and it is much recommended to see most of it. It is a great paradise for people who like skiing.

From St. Gallen it is possible to arrive everywhere because of its great train station, and if you look for a flight, it is only 2 hours from Basel. Bregenz is a nice place to go and eat sushi and it's only 40 minutes away. Konstanz is a nice city on the lake, it is very cheap, has nice thermal baths which are highly recommended and it is only 45 minutes away.

Shay Barkan shay.barkan@gmail.com