

### Personal Information

**Full name: Nurit Grinstein**

**Email: g.nurit@gmail.com**

**Degree Program at TAU: MBA**

**Host University: HSG St. Gallen University, Switzerland**

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### Exchange Experience

**Incredible! Once in a lifetime! Go for it!**

**Amazing people, new experiences, awesome trips and travels. An experience like no other.**

**I tried to cover most things below, but feel free to contact me for any questions.**

- **About the country and city**

Switzerland has approximately the same size of population as Israel, but double the territory. If you ask them – "it is densely populated". Dense or not, it is a beautiful country with neatly cut grass on endless green hills. When in Switzerland, you should always be ready to click a pic. Every train ride or stroll will give you the opportunity to create endless wall pictures.

Switzerland has 3 areas: the German(-Swiss) speaking, the French and the Italian. The Italian part is in the south, close to the Italian border and has a landscape which resembles more to the Italy landscape. The French side is on the West, near the France border and, for my opinion is the most beautiful one. Beautiful lakes like the Geneva or Thun lake, beautiful snow-covered mountains like Jungerfrauoch and beautiful nature all around. The German-Swiss area is the central-northern-eastern part. The language is a dialect of German and surprisingly they don't speak much English. But don't worry – you will get by without a problem. It holds the beautiful Zurich, the traditional Appenzell and St. Gallen – the city in which the university is found.

At this point I would suggest you to google the city and see for yourself. This is a small town which lies between two green hills, is home to a UNSECO site

– a beautiful chapel with ancient library, and of course – the university of St. Gallen.

- **About the Host University**

St. Gallen is one of Europe's top 5 business schools, and is extremely renowned in the German-speaking parts. It is located on top of one of the hills, though there are buildings down-hill near the main train station (Tellestrasse building) and closer to marketplaz (city center pedestrian area). Very much to the German stereotype (though they claim they are very different from Germans), they say that "being late is weird" (according to the program director) and they are very strict with schedule and structure. However, it is an international program and they know Indians, for instance, are usually late.

While regular students might be younger to Israeli standards (22-23 year old), the exchange program is very diverse and includes people from all over the world (Canada, USA, Argentina, Armenia, India, Philippines, China and so on in my case...) and from diverse age groups and personal backgrounds (22-35, single, married, married with children). The program is unique in the sense that it is structured, 4 local students take part as well, and there are a lot of social activities (international dinner, karaoke night). There are also many tours and company visits: we had a tour in St. Gallen, in Appenzell (including a Yudell lesson), a walking tour in Zurich, Six company (like a bursa), Victorinox (the switch blades), Ikea, Maestrani (chocolate factory), schindler (known for their elevators but was very hi-techy and amazing tour), Roche (pharma), Tinguely museum, Geneva 2-day trip with Olympic Museum, UN visit and Nestle. We also had a tour to a local brewery and played a business game.

There is also a student union and buddy system with many events, and a lot of career events and services. I did not require it so I haven't tried it myself, but I know there are many options.

- **Courses and professors**

the program is structured: there are mandatory courses, elective courses and additional optional courses. I did the following:

mandatory:

team building – mandatory one-day activity with two lecturers. Very fun and interesting.

LEC – leadership – prof. Bohem. Nice guy, brought in an outside lecturer and discussed different research and leadership aspects.

ECG – European Corporate Governance – very nice prof. which analyzes cases in a very good way and through it teaches about the importance and complexity of a company's board.

ECM – European Culture. Prof. Daniel Kuonz, Starts with Greek mythology and explains the origins of Europe, its symbols, and ends with the discussion on corporate culture – with the case of Volkswagen which had a big scandal (and brought on an unpleasant discussion of the good vs. bad German).

Elective courses (minimum of 3 out of 5):

STM- strategic management. Full 3-day course, high level with an excellent professor Zimmerman.

IE – International Entrepreneurship. Deals more with entrepreneurship inside the enterprise. Brought some small startups and companies that wanted to pick our brains with their business dilemma. Maybe it is better to take EBE with the prof. which is in charge of the entire department. Supposed to be more on the economic side but excellent and very interesting.

GMC – Global Managerial Communication – with the amazing prof. Applier which is the program director. A must course.

(IB – investment banking which I heard was very tough).

Additional:

ECE – European Company Exploration – by Andreas Heironimy, the coordinator of the program. Dealt a lot with systems thinking – a visual way to analyze situations and dilemmas. I do not recommend taking it.

German – they teach German using German, and I am not kidding. No English words are supposed to be used. Very heavy. Most of us dropped after the first lesson (myself included).

In most courses you are asked to read and analyze various cases, there are group presentations and outside lecturers. Some require reflections (a learning summary report).

- **Accommodation**

Most of us took the dormitories and enjoyed it very much. You are usually paired with other people from the program, so it is very sociable and effective for team work.

There are different locations and different room types according to your preferences (like price).

- **Visa**

Not needed, as the program takes less than 90 days which is covered by the Schengen agreement.

- **Transportation**

Swiss public transportation is awesome. There is an amazing service and app – SBB, where you can check for routes, book tickets and get live status on when and where to go (useful when you need to switch platforms).

I did a half-tax card and it was worth while since you travel a lot and you get half price for all train tickets.

Buses are very punctual and very very frequent.

- **Insurance and Health Services**

You don't need local insurance. Just make sure to operate your insurance (if via the Kupat Holim or credit card).

- **Living expenses**

"Happiness is expensive" says a sign in the university – and it is true. Switzerland is very expensive.

Dorms cost between 500-850 franks, lunch in student cafeteria can cost between 10-17 franks. There are also a lot of time for traveling so prepare for a lot of expenses.

I had a weekend in Munich for October fast, 5 days road trip to Italy (my course selection and holidays allowed it), 5 days in the French area in Switzerland (you have a travel week, 9 days vacation with no school intended for travel) and another weekend near Zurich (Jewish holiday). In total it was around 45K NIS.

- **Food**

Not good -they are not renowned for their good cuisine. I didn't like the Swiss cheese fondue either (they use heavy smoked cheese with alcohol). You will find croissants everywhere, but they are not as good as we are used to. Prepare for lots of McDonalds, pasta, pizza and other junk. Though there are some good thai and Chinese restaurants – but they will cost 20-30 franks per meal.

Supermarkets like COOP and MIGROS will become your go-to-place for prepared sandwiches, some junk food and groceries. Some stores are also department stores where you will find almost anything.

- **Night life**

During the week you will find many pubs and clubs in St. Gallen: Die cube, the elephant, US-MAX, Trishli. Sud bar. On Sundays, Switzerland is almost completely closed (much worse than our Shabbat complaints). This is a student town so during the week you can find nice places.

- **Tips**

Come to this program in the middle of your studies so that all the courses will be new for you.

There is also a program in the spring (January-March). Temperatures drop to -10 or worse so I think it can ruin your experience (I started from 20 degrees until we reached -2 at the end. Got to see the beautiful fall and then some snow – it is amazing). Also, in September-October you have October fest (in Munich) and the local Olma Messen fair (in St. Gallen), the cows descending from the mountains, Halloween and pre-Christmas vibe.

Take a buffer for coming back – it is hard. It takes time to land back.

Bring a smaller suitcase for shorter traveling.

- **Photos**

Tons! The below were taken by my phone:























