

Exchange semester field report spring 2010

Where? I did my half a year exchange studies in Switzerland HTW Chur for the spring semester 2010. This was an Erasmus exchange since I came from Finland. In Finland I had studied for one and a half year for Tourism and here I continued with some second and third year Tourism courses.

Why? I have lived abroad before and I really value these kinds of chances to go some different environment to live for a while. Switzerland was one of my choices because I found it interesting by its location and culture. It was easily reachable, being in the middle of the Europe and also Chur is in the middle of the Alps, something totally opposite to Finland's landscape. Also, one strong factor was the fact that German was the language spoken and English the language studied.



Experiences? I experienced a lot. First of all, experiencing Swiss style of life, I had two Swiss flatmates and they thought me quite a lot about life in Switzerland. I got to do alpine skiing finally at the Alps which was really nice and I was also introduced to sledging: the funniest snow sport on the earth! I learned quite a few expressions in Swiss German. I also experienced the mountains in a way that they are always in the way, really made me appreciate the flatness of Finland! Though I also managed to do a whole day hiking trip from Chur 595m to Montalin 2266m and that was quite possibly one of the greatest experiences in my life! The beauty of the Alps up there in their meadows is something one can only see in Switzerland. The Hills are alive with the sound of Music...



I was impressed by the smoothness everything works in Switzerland. Everything might not be as punctual as everybody claim Swiss to be, but still it was nice that everything worked out well. I was impressed by the mountains and by the people. Everybody at school was really nice.

I will profit of my exchange semester in many ways back in Finland. I had some courses that are not available in my school, but which were closely related to the course of study. I think this benefits me most and I'm really grateful I had the chance to study in HTW Chur where there were many splendid lecturers and guest speakers.

How was HTW Chur? Support from HTW Chur was good. I got help whenever I needed it. I liked the way how the application process was handled in the first place; I was sent a timetable of the process and that was really good. Courses were really interesting, for example the selection of Cross-Cultural Competence course was really impressive and the modules were GREAT! Especially lessons taught by Mr. Gregory Root were really eyes opening. In overall, the modules were really good and I'm very happy I chose HTW Chur. Everything worked out well though in the school information download wasn't always that good. For example the exchange students didn't always get the emails or notes of cancelled classes since we weren't in the normal database. That was really annoying.

Dislikes? In one course (Sport Marketing) its main written work was decided to be kept in German! This was an English program and the sport courses were one of the reasons why I chose HTW in the first place. Now it happened that the exchange students couldn't get anything out of the course just because our German wasn't on that high level. That was a huge disappointment. It's important that the course works are real life cases sometimes, but if there're English speaking students and it's an English course, the work SHOULD be in English!

Also, one thing that really bugged me was the fact that the exam dates were decided so late. In Finland in the beginning of the course students get the summary of the up coming course plus the exam dates, which are decided in the very beginning. Smooth and it works! Now, being an exchange student with limited budget, I needed to buy flights well advanced even before I knew exactly when I would be finished with all the school work. And it happened to turn out that the exams finished way before said in the beginning. This is also very frustrating if there was a summer job search going on. We couldn't wait for end of April to start applying jobs just because we wouldn't know what time we'll be finished. So please, decide the dates before not after the courses have begun.

Also, the last point of slight criticism and this is my very personal view of the matter. I think it's great that teachers have created splendid, informative hand outs for the lectures. But is it really necessary to provide each student a copy in every lecture? I mean, I really liked it, it's very efficient and so on, but one also thinks about the ecological side. All that paper used! And the documents are usually anyway on Claroline and many students use their laptops on the class, so why waste such amount of paper when they're in electronical form also?

Would I do it again? I would do exchange studies anytime again! I don't know if I would choose Switzerland again, but that's not because I didn't like it here, but because I would like to have new experiences. Chur is nice, in the middle of the mountains, but it's a little small and there isn't that much to do. Hopefully the exchange student activities would be more frequent. Now there really wasn't anything regular going on between the small number of exchange students and that resulted that not all of us socialized with everybody that much. More excursions and stuff, though the Swiss night and trip to Crestasee were fantastic. I just hope there would have been more activities.

I would recommend exchange in HTW Chur to my colleagues with some head ups. I think HTW Chur is lovely place, I really enjoyed the courses with their great lecturers and think they were something valuable, something I wouldn't have gotten back in Finland. I've heard stories that this wasn't the case with all my course mates back in Finland who went to other countries for their exchange so I consider myself very lucky.

