



WHU Exchange Report

Prepared by: Alicia Girard and Charlotte Thibaud

Introduction



Between May 13 and 25, 2018, three part-time Sauder students attended the WHU (pronounced Veh-Ha-Oo) MBA Summer Study Program in Vallendar, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, a small, bucolic town located 1.5h north of Frankfurt.

WHU puts a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship and a large percentage of German startups (most of them operating out of Berlin) were launched by graduates of the school.

The program was very enjoyable with high quality teaching, carefully scheduled activities and great class dynamics. This program is well designed for students who seek to gain perspective on how business is done in Europe in general with emphasis on Germany, and who wish to understand how some aspects of European companies, particularly German “Mittlestand”, fundamentally differ from the North American corporations.

Note that two Summer Studies sessions are run at the WHU campus during the month of May with the first session overlapping the second by a few days (the two classes never mix). This report will only cover the second session.

Orientation

Orientation occurred on the afternoon before the first day of class. The afternoon started with a tour of Vallendar and the campus facilities. The tour ended in what would be our classroom for the duration of the program. There, everyone was seated with their respective study team (teams remained the same all classes) and the program coordinator gave a run-down of the program for the next two weeks. This was followed by approximately an hour of team building exercises (spaghetti and marshmallow tower, etc.) and the afternoon ended with a dinner. The evening ended up fairly early to allow students to rest and recover from jet-lag before the first day of class.

Courses & Registration

During our exchange all students followed the same curriculum, tailored by the school for the purpose of the program. A schedule was sent ahead of time although it was amended a few times before and during the course of the exchange.

The general theme of the two week program was “The Changing Environment for International Business in Europe” and the curriculum was designed to cover as much of the current topics as possible. The program can be found at:

<https://www.whu.edu/en/international-diversity/european-summer-programs/mba-european-summer-program/>

The course included:

- European Trade Integration
- Luxury Brand Management
- Finance (note: most of the course actually took place at Commerzbank)
- Doing Business in Eastern Europe
- Entrepreneurship
- EU monetary integration
- Competing in EU markets
- Businesses Taxation (note: this course was actually much more interesting than its title indicates)

However, note that topics will likely vary from year-to-year to adapt to the ever changing global politico-economic environment.

Registration was extremely simple since all courses were pre-set. A 4-page application form was the only paperwork to be filled out and included information for both the program and the

accommodation. Note that the earlier the form is returned to WHU the higher the chances to get into the newest and closest accommodation to the campus (see Housing Facilities section).

Teaching

Nearly every day was taught by a different instructor, and they were all very high calibre. Classes were taught lecture-style with breakouts in the afternoon. For some modules there were presentations. Each module had a graded component, which was usually the presentation. Overall, the teaching style was fairly similar to UBC. There were pre-readings, but no homework other than studying for the final exam.

Campus Facilities

WHU has a small campus in the middle of a small village (Vallendar) next to the Rhine. All the university buildings are within a 5 minute walk from each other at the heart of the village. As it was such a small town, we felt very safe on campus, even late at night. The university had amenities we could use, such as a gym and cafeteria. There were also break out rooms for group work and independent study. The Rhine was only a few minutes away by foot.



Housing Facilities

Housing was arranged by WHU, with four housing options available. All were within a 10 minute walk from the campus. There were variations between the buildings, but all the rooms were quiet, clean and had sufficient supplies. Each room had a kitchenette with supplies (enough to make things like fried eggs, pasta, etc.). Laundry was available in each building (although it was

broken in one building for the duration of our stay). Note that you need euro coins to operate the laundry and to buy your own soap. One key variation was that not all buildings had wifi. It would be a good idea to bring your own connector cable just in case you need to connect to a modem directly. Heerstrasse and Gothestrasse both had wifi in the rooms.

Being located in the village meant there were a number of food options (bakeries, gelato, pizza). You were fed lunch at the cafeteria, but they did not always take into consideration dietary restrictions. For breakfast, the bakery was the best bet as it was delicious and quite cheap. For dinner many people went out together to the various restaurants every night. You could also buy groceries at the nearby Rewe (pronounced “reh-vay”; has free wifi), which was much cheaper than eating out and a nice alternative as German food can be quite heavy (think meat and carbs). Note: most coffee is terrible! Bring your own supplies if you are fussy.

Heerstrasse, pictured below, is the closest to campus, the most modern, and right across the street from the best bakery in Vallendar.





GoetheStrasse, pictured above, is approximately 8 min away from the campus. The rooms are slightly older than the Heerstrasse accommodation however the building is located in a quieter and greener area.

Costs/Expenses

During the course of the program reading material, lunches (at school and during field trips), student bus pass to Koblenz (one for each week), and transport to and from field trips were covered by the tuition fees (€459 for the May 2018 exchange). Housing fees varied between €300 to €370 for 2018 depending on the type of accommodation selected (single up to 5 person). Both tuition and housing fees had to be paid before the program starts. If students come accompanied an extra fee of €285 is applied per additional person to cover for field trips.

Airfare - not included in the tuition fees - was approximately CAN\$1400 for direct flight from YVR to FRA although prices may vary depending on the time of the purchase and travel days.

Any other meals (breakfast and dinner outside of those scheduled during field trips) as well as extra-curricular trip (after class outings and weekend travels) had to be purchased by students. As mentioned earlier laundry machines were available in most housing and cost €2 per load (during our stay the machines only accepted €2 coins so plan accordingly). Prices in Koblenz are fairly comparable to Vancouver with restaurant meals revolving around €10-12 and medium sized coffee for €2.

Study Tours/ Field Trips

There were several field trips involved in the program and included in your program fee, including:

- Local brewery tour

- ECB tour
- Commerzbank visit
- Burg Eltz tour (castle pictured below)

We also had the opportunity to spend two optional evenings in Frankfurt (although there is not much to see).

The weekend was a good opportunity to go see another part of Europe. Some students organized to go to Amsterdam via rented car, while others organized to go to Basel by train. These trips can be quite expensive depending on where you stay and how you get there (e.g. Amsterdam hostel was \$250 USD for two nights because of late booking and car rental and gas was \$90 USD).



What to Bring

- Cash - credit cards are barely accepted anywhere in Germany; plan to use cash for all purchases
- Casual clothes for class
- An umbrella
- Walking shoes (do not pack heels!)
- Gym clothes if you plan to use the gym or run along the Rhine
- Small packets of laundry soap (otherwise you have to buy a large container for two weeks)
- Network cable and adaptor for laptop, as not all rooms had wifi

General Impressions

Highlights:

- Making friends with people from other exchange universities (primarily American and Australian)
- Daddy-O's speakeasy bar in Koblenz
- Restaurant Mediterraneo Rheinufer in Vallendar with a patio on the river
- Bäckerei Klingseisen's Schokobrotchen
- Die Traube in Vallendar

Travel recommendations:

- In 2018 Canadian and European citizens did not require a visa, however keep Sauder's letter handy in case some clarifications are needed.
- Plan to arrive in Frankfurt a few days early to get adjusted to the jet lag and ensure that you arrive on time for the bus ride from airport to Vallendar.
- No school activities are scheduled during the weekend and students came together to make travel arrangements (Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands). It is possible to get organized ahead of time however there is plenty of time during the weeknights to make plans.