

University of St.Gallen (Second semester)



Things to know before departure

VISA

HSG will send you the pre-accepted VISA. What you have to do is to bring that paper and go to the Swiss Embassy in Bangkok, queuing up, and paying for the fee of BAHT 5,000.

Accommodation

If you would like to have the housing office find the accommodation for you, you must go pay the fee at any bank that does the international transfer before October. It will be roughly ten thousand BAHT. Then email the housing office all the necessary documents. They will find an accommodation for you no later than December. The accommodation provided is among those that are owned by the university. So all other residents in the building will be students of either HSG or FHS (a new campus of the University of St.Gallen)

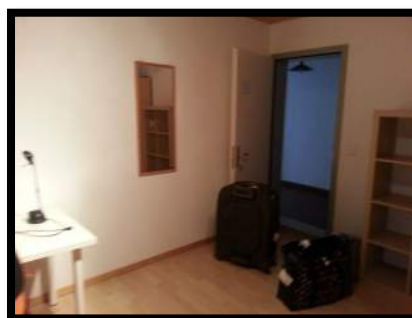
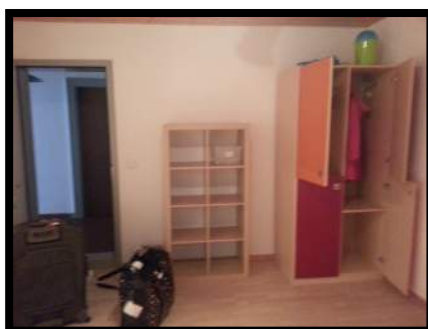


You have other alternatives to find your accommodation without the help of the housing office; therefore, eliminating the unnecessary fee of CHF250 that you could have paid to the housing office just to find your place to stay.

First, you can join 'Sharing Is Caring University of St. Gallen (HSG)' on Facebook. There will be students who want to rent out their space once their semester ends or they have free room that they want to share and rent out.

Second, you can join 'Mitwohngelegenheit in St.Gallen' on Facebook. I prefer this site because there are more updates about renting out spaces.

For me, I went for the housing office because it will be too troublesome to find by myself when I have no idea how St.Gallen looks like and I want to live with other exchange students.



HSG Buddy System

This is what you cannot miss! The Buddy System of the University of St.Gallen is awesome! They really organize a lot of activities such as the city tour, Fondue night, Day trip to Lucerne, Casino night, Bowling night, Ice skating, Skiing camp, and Pub crawl which happens every Wednesday night and sometimes more often. In this 2nd semester 2014, there were more buddy babies than the Buddy sisters and brothers, so some of them shared the same buddy nanny. It all depends on your luck for the extent that your buddy nanny will take care of you. Some never showed up. Some met their buddy very often. My buddy and I met once in



a while and we still keep in touch. She explained me a lot of unseen sides of Switzerland like the educational system for each age range and the political issues so it is a great opportunity for me to have the buddy.

Most importantly, I have my own group of friends who I am very close to until now because of the first and second orientation and the buddy system's activities.



Weather

During my time, St.Gallen was cold but I only saw snow a few times because the weather went strange in this year. Usually the road will be piled up with a metre or more of snow in February. However it was still very cold. You need the gloves, thick socks and a thick coat. Some days, even in a flat, it was cold that you cannot walk with bare feet. The sky was mostly cloudy so when it was sunny, a lot of people would come out to the Lake Constance, which was not far from St.Gallen. Until the day I left Switzerland on June30th, St.Gallen was still pretty cool at 14 degrees.

How to Survive in the first week

My first impression was a motion of a businessman in a long black coat walking towards my opposite seat in the train from Winterthur to St.Gallen. He was holding a cup of hot coffee in one hand and a black small suitcase in the other hand. He put down his things and pulled out the table, putting down his coffee and taking out his newspapers. At that moment, I realized what a good living quality was like. People was given free newspapers and read it with joy in a fast train that was speedy and well-maintained in a peaceful morning,

When I reached St.Gallen, I was stunned by its bus system. Not everybody can speak English. People speak Swiss-German and so it is very important to understand a bit of basic German. Most of the old people I talked to did not speak English. Language

became my first obstacle. Luckily, I applied for the intensive German course before the semester started here. My German teacher was cool. She was very casual and she taught me in a high speed, students learned from that course enough to use in the daily living.

The second obstacle was for my luggages. I had five bags along with my first arrival. Interestingly, Switzerland cares a lot about its old generation so it provides slopes at the train exit and even on buses.

First thing I had to do was to visit the housing office to receive the key for my flat and the room. I was again stunned by the working hours of Swiss people. People in Switzerland do not work for long hours. On weekdays, everything in St.Gallen except for restaurants closes at 7pm. Only on Thursday, shops will be open until 9pm. On Saturday, shops close at 5pm. On Sunday, nothing opens except for Avec at the Bahnhof.

After receiving the keys, my two friends and I went to the dorm that was three stops away from the main station. We bought the monthly bus pass at the bus office for CHF59. The men there could not understand English. Fortunately, my new Hongkong friend whom I met at the housing office that morning could speak German a little bit so we all bought the pass successfully. At first we took bus all the time. However, once we were used to the way of living, we walked more.

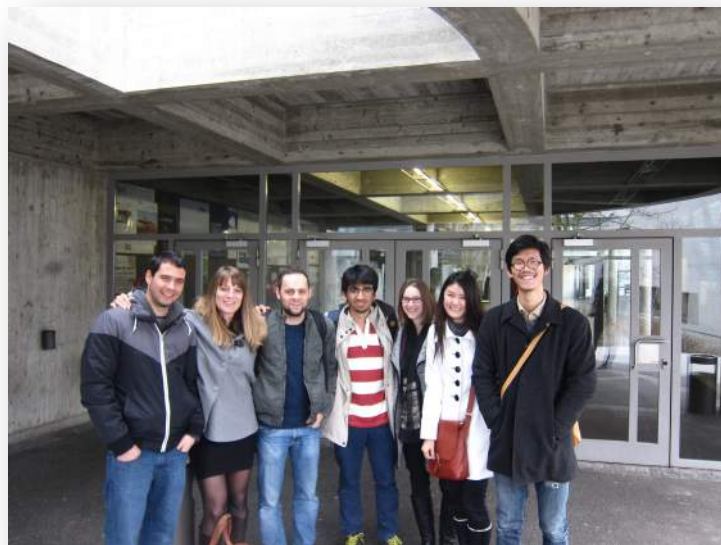
In my room, I received a welcome package from the university of St.Gallen. It contained everything I needed to know to begin my life in St.Gallen. You will also have a city map from this package. It can be easily ripped off so you must take a good care of it. The Marktplatz was quite complicated but when I walked there myself with a map, I could understand the roads easily. St.Gallen is pretty big regarding the boundary but the city center is rather small in comparison to other major Swiss towns such as Zurich, and Bern.

My flat was owned by University of St.Gallen. As I mentioned earlier about HSG and FHS, my flat is the only flat that was shared among FHS and HSG students this year. There were six Thai students including me. Out of this number, only two students were from Thammasat University. The rest was from Mae Fahluang and they all went to FHS which was new campus at the Bahnhof. My flat has five levels. Four people lived one each floor. Each storey has one bathroom, a kitchen, and a toilette. Most of the residents here in this semester were Asians so we all got along pretty easily. We had



a few Europeans from France, Czech Republic, and Russia. There was one French man on the floor who was at FHS for one year so he had lived there for one semester already. I could ask him a lot of tiny things like how to do the laundry and so on. When I reached the flat at the first time, all Thai students were already there. So they showed us around. We all went for grocery shopping and came back to prepare for dinner. It was my first time cooking a proper meal so it made a good chance to learn cooking.

If you cannot cook, it will be impossible to survive your days inexpensively. Going to restaurant is a very luxurious and wasteful because Swiss restaurants are very expensive in relation to the taste and quality. The major supermarkets in Switzerland are Migros, Denner, and Coop. Coop is rather expensive and smaller than Migros. Denner is the cheapest in terms of food. Migros is cheap in overall and has more variety of products. It always has the promotion for frozen food such as cheese sticks, sausages, dumplings and yogurts, and sometimes for cheese. I shared ingredients with my other flatmate in the first week only. Afterwards, I realized that it was not a good idea since we did not cook together and sometimes I did not want to eat the same dish.



On the next day, I went to do the resident permit and had a meeting with my Swiss buddy. She introduced her friends and showed me around the campus. After that, I checked out the Marktplz. It was confusing at the first few times because the structure is not a block shape.

The rest of the week was all about making new friends from each activity. I met up with my Swiss friend whom I knew at Thammasat. He gave me a lot of ideas about each class at HSG. So I could bid what I wanted and survived courses.

On the third day, there was the first Orientation for the students who arrived in the first week. There, I met many new friends who later became my best friends until

today. The orientation handed out free packs of Lebara SIM card with free CHF10 each. It was not free to call other Lebara numbers; however, the buddy system told us the other way around so all of us misunderstood and used up that free credits in a short time. After the orientation is the campus tour (again.) I met new friends along the tour that was divided into many smaller groups. Afterwards, my new friends and I organized a dinner at one of our apartment and went for the Buddy system's first meeting at the student meeting point. Although you do not drink, please do not let go of this opportunity to meet new people. The first two weeks are very important to make long-lasting friends. After that, they will all have their own groups and it will be difficult for you to get close to them later unless you travel together. I also knew one of my best friends in this first meeting. It was just a place to drink and listen to a loud music. I left after I tried the rock-paper-scissor at the bar. If you win, you will get a free drink. If you lose, you pay the full price. If it's equal, you pay half of the price. With these buddy system's organized events, I got to know other CEMS students. They studied for the master degree and also considered exchange students.

On the next day was my first day of the intensive German course. My German teacher introduced three second-hand shops in St.Gallen after the class. It was interesting to see how people got rid of things here. They gave the stores for free. I later learned that there was a bigger one nearby my flat at Vonwil Stop. It has a broader range of products from furnitures, postcards, housewares, to clothes, bags, and shoes. In that evening after 7pm, we all went to Konstant, Germany to do grocery shopping at Aldi. It located on the underground of the mall called LAGO which is next to the train station 'Konstant'. Most products were really cheaper than in Switzerland. Not to forget, it was more than worth it to buy a yearly pass of a half-fare card and a gleis7 if you do travel around by trains and trams a lot in Switzerland.



In the intensive German class, the teacher also taught me the map of Switzerland. She suggested many places to go including the lake Konstanz and Rhine Falls. The buddy system organizes many events and they are with charges so it is better to follow when to make a payment at the school cafeteria. I went to Lucerne trip on the

next day and joined the Fondue Night in the night after. The Lucerne trip was well planned but the Fondue night was quite disappointing for those who did not drink a lot of beers and alcohol. Yet, it was the only time that I had Cheese fondue in Switzerland.



How to prepare for studying

HSG is famous for its finance and management classes. It is very important to bid for courses that you really want to study. In this campus, classes are more quantitative and theoretical so if you do not like the subject, you will soon give up easily. The grading system is tough also. There were a lot of readings. Finance and Economics courses involve a lot of proofs and theories. If you plan on travelling, it is better to plan your study as early as possible. It is not a good idea to study before the exam because you can get an overload of lectures and case studies to cover.

The school has printers so you only need a printing card that costs CHF5. You can share this card with your trusted friend because the card requires your student



username and password that should be kept in secret. Printing lectures out to read works better than reading on your laptop that can distract you anytime. Most students also use the laptop in class to follow the lecture. I revised every lecture after class and also brought along those papers to read during my long trip before Easter holidays. The school library is huge. You

can ask for the Oxford English-English dictionary to bring in your exam room but it was not really useful for me when I did that because I had too little time to use it and ended up not using it at all. Exams here last for only 90 minutes. The vocabulary is not too difficult and you can get used to those words by revising class lectures.

Not only studying on your own, but also you can find other exchange students in your class who are willing to study together with you and set up a study group or a revision group before the examination.

Lifestyle

I spent most of my time with exchange friends in my dorm and outside the dorm. Sometimes I visited my friends and most of the time, we travelled. I did not waste my time on the laptop watching series and I only talked with my family once in a while because I wanted to optimize the time here as much as possible. On Sunday, nothing opens so I usually stayed indoors or went out around the neighborhood with friends. Most of the time, we went to other cities for sightseeing but shops did not open so we had to pack our meals along. In the flat, I also cooked and shared food with other flat mates. Then we would sit and eat together, talking about our countries.



People

Swiss people are very friendly. They speak English very well but older people mostly do not speak English. Switzerland consists of many Cantons. People speak English widely but there are other three main languages – French, Italian, and German. German speaking region is the biggest. St.Gallen is in this region. Although the dialect is Swiss German, the written language is the regular German. 'It is impossible to learn Swiss German unless you are here since you were born or grow up here' said my Swiss friend.



Transportation

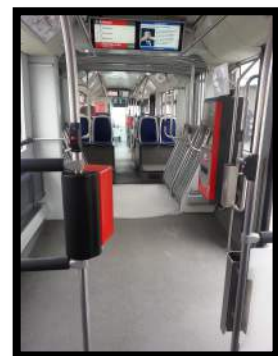
The Swiss train SBB is the most reliable among trains in Europe. It is very on time for both departure and arrival. I have not seen any train delay or strike in Switzerland. To learn more about the train, visit www.sbb.ch. It has a mobile application for you to download. You can search for the destination in Austria, Germany, France, and Italy if you want to leave from Switzerland. In St.Gallen, you must go to the back office, which is the international office, to purchase the ticket to other countries. There sometimes are promotion on the website.

The tram system works the same as the train. In St.Gallen, the tram S21 goes to Trogen. It takes 30 minutes to go and another 30 minutes to go back with the same tram. Trogen is a nice little faraway town in St.Gallen Canton. You can use the half-fare card and gleis7 with tram also. But the gleis7 is not clearly accepted by buses. My friends and I have asked the bus driver several times and they said yes only twice out of twenty times. The penalty of freeriding is very severe in Switzerland. You can be charged over a hundred Swiss francs. One of my Thai friend brought his monthly bus pass without his photo on the pass so he was charged CHF100. The bus officers are not flexible so you must be careful to have your ticket with you every time. The bus check was random but the train check happened in almost every time I took the train.



There is a cable car to go up to Die Drei Weiher. Moreover, St.Gallen has its own little airport but none of people I know ever used it before.

Buses are the most convenient transportation to go around St.Gallen if you do not live on Tellstrasse or in Marktplz. It is not always on time but it is better to take a bus than to walk in the cold of St.Gallen's winter. To go to the university, you can take bus5 from Bahnhof towards Rotmonten and get off at Universitat/Dufourstrasse. Besides, you can take Bus9 at the Bahnhof (next to FHS building) to Universitat.



Bus9 will stop closer to the main building and you will not have to walk up a high slope that you must walk through when you take bus5. Nevertheless, Bus9 comes less frequently than Bus5. You can also take bus 7 to Aldi in St.gallen but it is not as big as the one in Konstant, Germany. There is also a bus to IKEA and the shopping arena.

Food

Nobody is crazy enough to live in St.Gallen without cooking. Restaurants and fast food are very expensive in Switzerland. In St.Gallen, eggs are cheapest at Denner. Bread tastes the best at Coop. Meats have more variety at Migros. You do not need to buy Thai Jasmine rice from the Asian shop. Carolina rice by Migros can also give you the same sense of Thai rice. If you want some Thai vegetables, Asian shop at Bahnhof has everything you need for most of Thai famous dishes such as Green curry and Pad Thai. My friends and I usually went to Konstant on Thursday because the mall there would open until 10p.m. on Thursday only. Edika is another supermarket you can check

out but the cheapest supermarket in Konstanz is called Kaufland. Almost everything was on discount!

You can also make your own swiss national dishes – Rosti, Cheese Fondue, and Raclette - at home. Raclette is good for a small party. Stickerei is a very good restaurant for its burgers and fries. It is the only restaurant in St.Gallen that I think worth the money paid. Schuzengarten beer is not extraordinary. I would rather ask you to try Rivelli which is a Swiss soft drink that you can only find in Switzerland.



Travel

Travelling in Europe is a must for any exchange student here. Switzerland is regarded as the center of the Western Europe. It is in the middle of four countries so you can travel easily from Switzerland to other countries including the Eastern Europe. You can take a bus from St.Gallen to Prague, Czech Republic. Moreover, there is a direct bus to Munich, Germany from Bahnhof.

Going to Milan, Italy is easy and cheap too if you know the trick. By having the gleis7, you can take a train to Chiasso after 7p.m. for free and pay CHF7 for the ticket from Chiasso (the Swiss border to Italy) to Milan. You will reach there around 12.30a.m. At that time, Milan will be very dangerous so you should go with a lot of friends and take a taxi to the hostel or hotel. I recommend you to find your accommodation with



hostelworld.com, hihostels.com, and booking.com. At first, I used hostelworld.com but it

charges 10% of the payment beforehand so I later used Booking.com for most of the time and became its premium member. It gives me more secret deals of 20% discount. The other website that I used quite often was airbnb.com. It is better for people who are friendly and polite because the host will give you the feedback after your stay. You can even find new friends from this by keeping in touch with your hosts.

When planning, you should check out the transportation cost. If you can minimize it, your trip will be much cheaper and you can spend more money on food. Travelling in Europe is as easy as a piece of cake because there is the tourism office everywhere. Also Western Europe is pretty touristic. You need to know the baggage allowance of each airline if you want to take the aircraft. Ryanair is better than Easyjet in terms of flexibility. You are allowed to take one small bag on board while Easyjet does not allow any small bag besides one cabin bag.

I should warn you that the exchange rate in France is incredibly bad. You should do the exchange before you leave Switzerland but do not go to Western Union because there is a transaction fee and the rate is bad. 'PostFinance' is the best bank to deposit money without any charge unless your balance is below its certain amount. If so, you will be charged every month until the balance is filled.

When travelling, you should carry a bottle together with you. You can save a lot of money if you drink tap water. However, you should be careful about minerals in the water. For example, I was allergic to the water in France and Poland. Water in Greece and Italy smells strange. My friends got diarrhea but I was fine. In this case, you had better buy some water from the supermarket. In addition, you should not talk about money with any stranger; although, they look desperate and trustworthy. I was deceived once and if you want to know more, please ask me according to my contact below.

Activities

There are many activities you can choose to do either with the sports hall, with the buddy system, in town, or with your groups of friends. I recommend the meditation club that took place in the main building's sleeping room. You did not have to regularly attend. However, all other activities in sports hall require you to have an introduction with the sports staff first. You can check out school clubs and activities on the pamphlets from the welcome package.



You can also join events set by the Buddy System. In February, the group will set up tons of events as I mentioned before. However, all activities are charged. The only free activity was the campus tour and the city tour. The tourism office at Bahnhof leads the city tour. The guide will only show you around the downtown. So if you want to go further to the botanic garden, Rotmonten Wild Park, or the three lakes, you have to go on your own. There are Exchange Goes Wild event on every Wednesday at 9pm. Every time it has an after party. Otherwise you can choose to do something else with your friends such as cooking at one's apartment and having dinner together. You can also travel around Switzerland cheaply because of the half-fare and gleis7 pass.

In St.Gallen, these are main attractions – three small lakes (die drei Weiher), Abbey Library, the Cathedral, Peter und Paul Wild Park (20 minutes by walk from the executive campus at Rotmonten), the botanical gardens, and the textile museum. St.Gallen is very famous for embroidery. Many world famous brands such as Akris, Giorgio Armani, Givenchy, Yves Saint Laurent choose fabrics from St.Gallen in the manufacture.



Some Thai students from FHS also volunteered part-time at the Asian shop thanks to their connection. However, the storeowners only offer the job themselves. Students should not go ask for it. On Facebook, there is a group of Thai people in Switzerland. It sets up events once in a while according to Thai Buddhism calendar. Sometimes members went to ski together.

You should check the period for carnivals around Europe. They were some of my most fantastic memories. My best Carnivals were in Venice and Basel. The carnival in St.Gallen was quite small but it was fun because I went with a friend. Each place has its own unique atmosphere that you should try out.

During April, University of St.Gallen will have the international day for exchange students to present about their university. If you are interested, you can sign up the event and ask for the pamphlets from BBA. The event will be held in the main building. Some people brought along their traditional sweets on that day.

One interesting place that you should not miss is Rorschach. It is a public park along the lake. You can find some sunny day to go out for a picnic with friends and watch the seagulls and goose. The other place for boys is the basketball field in the back of Sports Hall at Sporthalle bus station. However, you can work out in the gym at the university's sports hall too.

I appreciate BBA Thammasat for this exchange program with HSG. I hope others will find St.Gallen and Switzerland as charming as I found. Please feel free to ask me for more details.



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