

**LAPPEENRANTA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY,
TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT GRAZ**

REPORT OF ERASMUS STUDIES IN GRAZ, AUSTRIA



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Introduction

My name is Matthias Kampe and I study industry electronics at Lappeenranta University of Technology. I had always in mind to go somewhere abroad as an exchange student and as my studies were coming closer to the end I finally decided to realize this dream.

A good friend of mine had been in Graz before and I visited him there. Already at that point I liked the city very much. As the Graz University of Technology offered many good courses for my studies, I decided to apply there as an exchange student of the Erasmus program.

Before leaving

There wasn't any ready Erasmus relations between the electrical departments of the universities, so it took a little of paperwork to get an agreement to switch students between the departments. This was mostly done by the offices of international affairs of both universities. After this it was officially possible to make an application for the Erasmus program. A learning agreement was also required, for which I had to choose the courses I wanted to join. The selection was not to be final at this point though, so it was possible to do some changes to the agreement later. The courses with their descriptions could be found from the homepage of the university.

After getting a positive answer for my application it became time to buy plane tickets and search for accommodation. The easiest way to get to Graz was to fly from Lappeenranta to Vienna and take a train to Graz. The plane ticket did cost about 200 € and the train about 40 € (one bicycle included) I did an application for accommodation to an organization called ÖAD, which was suggested in an information booklet that I got from the TU Graz. ÖAD replied, that they had reserved a room for me at a student dorm at Elisabethstrasse. I had to pay also a caution of 650 € for the room.

After all this was done I just had to pack some stuff I wanted to take to Graz with me. I basically just took my laptop, some clothes and my mountain bike. Everything else I bought in Graz.

Housing

The student dorm I lived in appeared to be a almost 50 year old and never renovated building, that was ruled by an organization called “Akademikerhilfe”. The dorm consisted of furnished single rooms on long corridors with common kitchens, showers and toilets (shared by approx 30 people). The rent for my 8 m² room was 238 € (+ an 18 € administration fee) pemoth. I also had to pay once a 30 € cleaning fee and 15 € for the internetconnection.



Elisabethheim

This was the cheapest accommodation the ÖAD could offer, but I guess also the worst in the whole city. The room I first lived in had a serious mould problem. Nothing happened until the 3rd time I complained about it. After this the problem was fixed by just putting new scrapping on the mould, so finally I had to change my room. The rooms and the furniture were also very old and worn.

The good thing in this dorm was the big amount of other (mainly foreign) people living there. I made many new friends and learned much about other cultures. We had a lot of parties, cooking and BBQ events, movie nights, sport activities etc, so it was very easy to meet new people. I surely will also stay in contact with many of these new friends also in the future.

The university

The Graz University of Technology has about 9000 students, was founded in year 1811 and has 7 faculties.



Main building of the TU Graz

I visited mostly courses from the faculty of electrical and information engineering. These were lectured at Inffeldgasse, one of the 3 sites of the TU Graz. It was about 3 km from my dorm and the easiest way to get there was by bike. Signing up for courses and exams was done with a system called “TUG Online”, which also served for E-mail, time schedules, room locations, completed studies etc. The lecturers were on almost all courses very good and the course material was of high quality. Many buildings at Inffeldgasse were or had just been under renovation, so many lecture halls and laboratories were new and well equipped. The university had also the biggest high voltage laboratory in Austria, named after Nikola Tesla.



TU Graz at Inffeldgasse



Nikola Tesla Laboratory

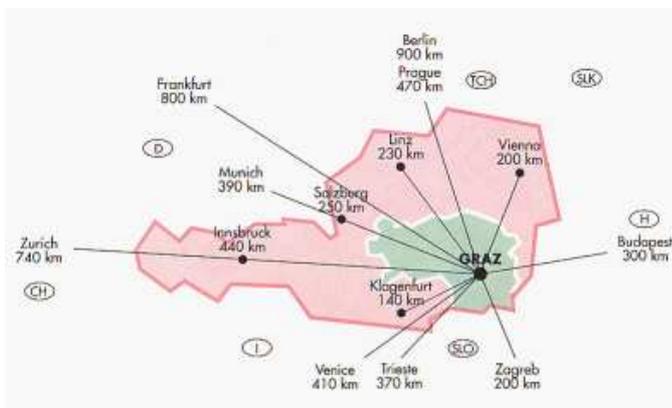
There was also a common room for students of electrical engineering called “Hochspannungszeichensaal”. It had a kitchen (with a beertap ☺), computers, tables and space for studying and a balcony. I did often go there between lectures to eat, or in the evenings to meet people and to have a beer after the day.



Stopping by for a beer at the balcony of Hochspannungszeichensaal after a lab course

The city

Graz is located in south Austria, it is the second biggest city of the country and the capital of the federal state of Styria. Graz has a population of about 290 000 of which more than 44 000 are students of 6 universities.



Location of Graz

The main building of the TU Graz is located at the Rechbauerstraße, which is very close to the city center. Most of my courses however were lectured at Inffeldgasse, about 2 km from the main site. From the student dorm it was about the same way to both places.

The city itself has a very nice atmosphere. It has a beautiful old town and a hill called “Schlossberg” right in the middle of the city center. The city picture consists of smaller old buildings and small streets with restaurants, cafes, pubs, shops and parks. The public transport works very good, and you do not need a car to move in and around the city. Closer to the center the public transport is mainly run by trams, more far you get by bus or train. It is also a good city to drive with a bike, because many of the streets have special lines for bikers.

Trips to other places

Because Graz is located quite in the middle of Europe, it has a good location for making trips to other countries and cities in Europe. Of course it makes also sense to visit other Austrian cities as well. Trips are easy to arrange by yourself, but there are also organizations which arrange many kind of trips. One example is ESN.

I joined a trip of the ESN organization called “Weinroute”. It was a one day drive with a bus trough the wine region of Styria. We visited some local wine farms, made some wine tastings and ate very good traditional food. I would absolutely recommend this trip for anyone!



Winetasting in a cellar of the Liener winefarm

Austria offers also a large variety of festivals, of which I visited “Novarock” and “Metalfest”. Novarock was a bigger festival with more known artists. It was arranged near the Hungarian border, so I decided to walk to Hungary on one day. The weather was good and the atmosphere was amazing! Metalfest was smaller and offered mostly just metal music. The bands were good and the people in an excellent mood but it was raining all the time. My tent also appeared to be not waterproof, so after the festival all my clothes were wet and my mobile phone was broken by the moisture ☺



Novarock



Metalfest

On one weekend I visited two friends in Rijeka, Croatia who I had met earlier in the student dorm. It was very cheap to go there by train, only 19 € per direction (bought in advance) and the trip proved to be worth the money. Rijeka is a harbor city located at the northern part of Croatia. I also went to an island called “Krk” just below Rijeka. There were many beaches and small bars selling cold beer. The water was also crystal clear, so it’s a very good place for diving.

One of my hobbies is mountain biking, so I took my MTB with me to Graz. It appeared to be a good decision, because there were many good tracks and routes in awesome landscapes. About 0,5 km from the student dorm there was a forest called “Leechwald” so it was always easy to go biking. There were also many good road routes for bikers, so it was impossible to see it all in 10 months.



Somewhere between Graz and Weiz

After my studies ended in Graz, I decided to go to Belgrade in Serbia by bike and fly from there back to Finland. I made stops in Ptuj in Slovenia, Zagreb in Croatia, Gradiška in Bosnia and Novi Sad in Serbia. I used 10 days for the trip. The original plan was to go all the way by bike, but because of the ~40 C° heat I decided to go from Gradiška to Novi Sad by bus. Most of the nights I slept in hostels, but in Gradiška I stayed at a friend of mine who I also knew from the student dorm. It took 500 km on my bike and 250 km by bus to get the trip behind me, but it was an awesome challenge and experience of new places and people. An excellent way to end my exchange year.



Ptuj, Slovenia



A cow taking a bath in the Sava river in Gradiška, Bosnia.

Conclusion

The 10 months I spent in Graz were an experience that I will remember the rest of my life. I got 42 ECTS and much of knowledge from the TU Graz, made much of new friends and saw places, cultures and nature that were new for me. It was absolutely a good decision to go abroad for exchange studies. It was also good to stay for two semesters, because only one semester would have given so much less. I only can recommend this kind of an adventure for everybody!