



EXCHANGE REPORT

FH SALZBURG, AUSTRIA



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Academic Experience

1. How helpful was the receiving school in the process of choosing classes and settling you in?

The international coordinator was very helpful with the learning agreement. When I arrived in Austria nearly half of the classes that I choose was outdated and not available. The coordinator gave me an updated list of the courses including many exciting new courses that I found interesting and useful. The process of finalizing the learning agreement was in the welcome days/week and continued through the first couple of weeks of the semester. In the welcome days they were busy setting us up with relevant information regarding organizational aspects of my exchange (e.g., examination regulations, opening hours, schedule, school email), important things to consider in my first week including mandatory and recommended checklists, internal IT systems of FH Salzburg, important issues I should know for living in Austria in general and for housing. I found the welcome week extremely useful and professional, and I got the chance to meet most of the international office.

2. What classes/study experiences did you find the most rewarding? Why?

I found Engineered Wood products course very fascinating because it provided me with an insight into the wood processing technology in the manufacturing part. I learned a lot about the connection between the properties of the raw materials, production process and how industrial plants works. This made me realize how much effort, glue, wood, and fuel e.g., one cross laminated timber panel needs. This course opened my eyes to new sustainable wood products and composite products, and it really inspired me to choose wisely when building and designing in the future.

Another course that I found very rewarding was Process Engineering and Bio composite materials course because I gained so much new relevant knowledge regarding wood and other biogenic raw materials as the basis for bio-composite materials. Furthermore, I learned the chemical and biological processes for the breakdown of ligno-cellulose of the different materials. What I found the most rewarding was leaning about the manufacturing processes for bio-composite materials and its mechanical, physical, and ecological properties of bio-composite materials with comparison to conventional composite materials. Before I took this course, I had no idea of what bio-composite boards was out there. Now I know 10 different bio composite boards that I know for a fact is more environmentally friendly than raw plywood boards which is usually used in construction.

Through Carbon Footprint of Wood Products course, I learned about carbon footprint characteristic to wooden products and why it is important to reduce it. This course gave me a huge insight of how the forest industry works and I personally learned a lot about the environmental product declarations, terms of carbon footprint and carbon storage and their application to wood products.

I was happy learning about Life Cycle analysis and carbon footprint calculation for buildings because I was already familiar with it and having a chance to refresh it was

good. The overall experience of this course made me realize how important it is to have a forest that is controlled and managed so that there is a constant growth with enough capacity to supply the wood industry.

3. What classes/study experiences did you find least relevant or least valuable to you? Why?

The course that I found least relevant was the International Timber Trade. In general, on paper, I learned the basic principles of international wood marketing, the Legal environment of international timber trade and the export and import order process in Wooden Businesses. The course was way too advanced with no explanation and required a lot more time compared to what the ECTS showed me. I was really excited in the beginning but I quickly realised that the course was boring.

4. What classes would you advise other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose?

I recommend these five courses because it offers new innovative learning of the wood industry specifically for construction and the teachers were well educated and were also familiar with the newest technology. FH Salzburg also offers a lot of cultural courses which helped me understand Austria a lot more.

- Process Engineering and Bio composite materials
- Engineered Wood Products
- International forest production
- Carbon footprint of wood products
- CLT & LVL innovation processes in the forest products industries

Cultural/Personal Experience

1. What challenges did you experience culturally while Being abroad?

The preparation beforehand was very stressful because of the corona pandemic. I felt like what I was doing was a little bit illegal and I did not know how strict the Austrian government was about the rules.

The trip to Austria was hard but only because I had to carry three huge suitcases and a snowboard. I must mention that I travel by train which made it a lot more complicated.

The first couple of weeks was a little rough because I did not have any idea of how many students were living in the dormitory and everything seemed so quiet, but as soon as the courses started, I took full initiative to meet with my new people.

The FH Salzburg was very helpful in introducing us to the other fellow exchange students. Some evenings in the Welcome week we had early nights with games where we had the chance to get to know each other.

The language barrier was challenging as some of the Austrians I meet had a small English vocabulary. I eventually learned to communicate with them also because my German was getting better.

2. What was the best cultural/personal experience during your studies abroad?

Living in a dormitory on the country side surrounded by mountains and beautiful nature was the best cultural experience. I became more open towards people because I was living so close to them and eventually they became my small little family. A quiet evening consisted of 4-5 people for a good dinner and games. I fell in love with the nature and the extremely hobbler Austrians.

I spend most of my weekends snowboarding with two Swedish friends I met on the train to Austria and then my friends from Kuchl. I managed to snowboard in most of Austria and I recommend Flachau, Obertauern, Schladming, Bad Gastein and Kaprun.

The highlights started when the weather became a lot better. Most of the weekdays started with volleyball, hiking or chilling and in the evenings, it was often barbeque outside with music. In the weekends we usually got together all of us from the dormitory and had parties, which was also a good way to bond in the beginning.

3. What advice would you give other KEA students going to study abroad at the receiving school?

I invested a lot of time in the beginning connecting with the Austrians from the dormitory and I quickly became very good friends with them. Ones you become a part of the people from the dormitory and the locals you will discover all new traditions and cultures. I took every opportunity I had to make new friends which meant that most of them I still facetime with on a weekly basis. Enjoy every day and embrace it because time goes by very fast. Please do not make it hard by isolating yourself from the people around you especially the locals.

For the more general advice, make sure that your accommodation/dormitory is equipped with a GOOD bed, kitchen, toilet and most importantly WIFI. Make sure to save money in advance and apply for grants so you can afford the rent. I made sure to have some extra money in my pocket so I could experience Austria and what it offered.

Practical Experience

1. How was the application process?

a. What did KEA help you with?

b. What help did you receive from your school abroad?

There were specific requirements such as motivational letter but in general it was plain sailing. I was afraid not to manage the deadlines of the different hand-ins and waiting for the acceptance was long-lasting. What KEA helped me with was to stay calm during the process. The communication with KEA was almost not existing mostly because I was engaged with other stuff, and I did not feel the need for guidance.

2. Did you have any practical difficulties settling down in at your destination?

I realised travelling by train with all my luggage is not the smoothest way and the train to München was cancelled.

On top of that I had to pick up my keys at another destination a little bit outside of Salzburg, but I ended up taking a taxi from Salzburg main station.

a. How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

FH Salzburg was very helpful and gave all the new exchange student clear and structured guidance for everything.

3. Where did you live?

I lived in a dormitory called Matador. Matador is located right next to FH Salzburg university in a small city called Kuchl.

a. Was it difficult to find accommodation?

There were multiple companies renting out rooms, but I ended up renting from the Salzburger Studentwerk. I was unsure in what city I wanted to stay, but eventually I chose Kuchl. I was pretty early in the application process when I decided to contact them, so it was not a problem for me to find accommodation.

b. Was it expensive?

The price of the accommodation was student friendly and around 3000dkk.

4. What kind of expenses did you have in general?

Most of my monthly budget were spent on rent and food.

a. Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted with?

My budget was pretty accurate.

Appendix 1: Living in Kuchl (Essay)

Living in different places always have advantages and disadvantages. Growing up in the capital of Denmark has made my life easy to a certain degree when it comes to gaining new relevant knowledge, understanding different cultures and finding a social network of people with same interests. My family and friend were never far away, and I always had the opportunity to visit them easy using public transportation or bike. There is plenty of entertainment and exciting things to keep you occupied and it is not far from home. You can go to theatres, cinemas, public parks, and restaurants with food from all over the world if you fancy.

Because I did not experience it myself, I have always wondered why people want to live on the country side. Two months ago, I took the opportunity to do an exchange abroad to see it with my own eyes. Currently I live in a beautiful small city in Austria called Kuchl. Kuchl is a small market town in the Hallein district and is situated in the broad valley of the Salzach river. The city has no more than 7000 inhabitants and is dispersed though the green landscape. Having the first proper walk after I arrived in Kuchl was incredible. I could finally feel the ground beneath me while listening to the wind howling and the birds singing with a view towards the enormous mountain terrain.

Kuchl offer multiple well-preserved outdoor and indoor activities such as beach-volley, training racks, football fields, skatepark and basketball courts. In the hot summertime the hidden gem in Kuchl is a lovely lake next to the river where you can swim in cold mountain water. There are several places you can walk or dive into the water including a bathing bridge, jumping platform and ropes. The river is also surrounded with a walking path all around the lake. Additionally, there are several places to have a break and chill, or you could even have some fun by using the slacklines in between the trees. Usually, the lake is quite attractive in the summer and it gather all locals to enjoy the hot summer breeze. From the lake there are small narrow paths curving through the captivating nature and along the wild streams of Salzach river. By following one of the walking paths towards Golling you will come across an excellent walking trail which includes Golling waterfall. Kuchl is also a true playground for active winter sports. With cross-country skiing or hiking you can experience the glorious winter landscape using the tracked ski trails ranging from easy to challenging. One of the outstanding cross-country skiing trails starts from the town centre with a total length of 2.2 km. The excellent infrastructure in Austria makes it very easy to travel from Kuchl to numerous ski areas within an hour. Bad Dürnberg is a local ski area which is only 35 minutes away in the S-Bahn and bus. Not far from the train station of Kuchl you will come across a colourful pedestrian street in the city centre. The street is full of local shops and there are several places to eat traditional Austrian food, Italien pizza or you could even pass by the local bars to get a drink, all at a student friendly price. The Kuchl Museum which is in close range of the pedestrian street focus on the city's history aging all the way back to the Roman and the Severin times.

I think that Kuchl is a quit city without many distractions and plenty of nature to explore. Kuchl compared to Copenhagen is so divergent in many forms, but the city provides a great cultural richness and FH Salzburg provides me with great courses in a relaxed atmosphere with well trained professors and good friends. Kuchl is the perfect place to live if you want peace and quite with space to unwind.

Appendix 2: Pictures



