

IT University Travel Report

Dear Student, this is a template – the aim is to inspire other students who may wish to follow in your footsteps. You are free to give your report the shape you want and to go beyond the questions. You are also very welcome to include pictures and contact information – but you need not.

Note that by filling in and sending the report you automatically consent to publishing it on ITU student.

Host university: Frankfurt School of Finance and Management

Study Programme at IT University: Global Business Informatics

Exchange agreement or Free mover: Exchange Agreement

Courses studied abroad: Microfinance, Environmental Economics and Energy Finance, International Trade and Economic Integration, Challenges of the European Union and the Euro Area, Strategic Competition.

Period studying abroad: semester (autumn/spring) Spring year 2024

If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here:

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Your stay abroad

Some students will find studying at Frankfurt School of Finance and Management very rewarding, and some will find it less rewarding. Understanding the culture and profile of the school and matching your expectations beforehand is crucial.

I personally had a great time and that is (in part) because I had specific priorities in mind when going on exchange:

1. Exploring a completely different curriculum that could make me attractive for future employment,
2. Gaining skills in economy and mathematics and trying different examination methods than semester-long reports which are prevalent in GBI (there were lots of multiple choice in Frankfurt, which was 'refreshing')
3. Learning and practising German in an international city,

4. Winding down from my very social life in Copenhagen and finding focus and time for hobbies and reading, and
5. Travelling around Europe by train, trying to understand a rapidly changing Europe (how different are we from the Germans?? What the hell is up with right-wing extreme nationalism).

What was it like to study at the university (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

The university had completely different teaching methods than in GBI. They have a philosophy of “max 3 days of being in the school” to ensure that you can work adjacent to studying. Thus classes were often full days with 6-hours lectures that had little to no exercises or interaction. It was rough to begin with but I got used to it. It also allowed us all to trauma-bond next to the cafe manically buying coffee to stay active.

As the school didn't offer that many courses that we can get pre-approved from ITU, we often took classes that had micro/macro-finance prerequisites. Thus, some first lessons were hectic because they expected us to understand trade models, etc. Many teachers however were friendly and changed the contents and speed of their lectures and some even removed some difficult aspects of the exam. It required hard work to get a good grade, but I enjoyed the challenge.

My dream was to get invited to a German social group at uni but that proved to be hard. The university is a place for mainly rich finance bros and I desperately missed the cozy, inclusive, and warm environment of Analog. We were a staggering 90 (!) exchange students on bachelors, a bunch who were quite younger than me (I was 26 when I was there). I joined the crazy parties and drinking for a month but people were young.

However, by being honest with my priorities and interests, I did find some good friend groups who wanted to do silly stuff like go to the sauna weekly and write food-related poetry. (more on that in a later section)

The school also has a really big selection of groups, councils, and extracurricular activities. They also do crazy stuff like have a wine tasting (chugging) council that plans a trip to a french vineyard twice per year, host the german university sports competitions, and the school owns half of a local club (??) so they have great parties there with the school bands playing on top of the DJ set with saxophones, etc.

There are many many internationals in the school and you can find amazing friends if you keep yourself open to befriending people who are wildly different from you. As a dane, I catch myself being square and sometimes not wanting to befriend people unless

they are 90% like myself. This school is a good place to practise being less Danish and more open and human.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

I didn't go on an exchange to drink coffee in the sun or get drunk every day (which are totally great reasons to go on exchange, but I've just done that before). Instead I wanted a break from Copenhagen, a break from the same routines at GBI every semester of doing long reports, and get some time for myself for running, relaxing, reading books, programming for fun, and casually socializing - all expenses paid by EU 😊. I achieved that and had a very introspective and reflective semester which was exactly what I needed. I also made some friends on the way and went on some trips with ESN which was great too.

Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies?

I personally enjoyed the many perspectives I learned in my subjects.

- In Microfinance I learned the tragedy of how traditional banks cannot serve poor people due to their unprofitability and how to solve that since access to banks is one of the more crucial aspects to increasing life quality.
- In Challenges of the European Union I studied the history of the EU and the current economic challenges it is facing, how it happened, and how we move forward.
- In International Trade and Economic Integration I understood exactly what consequences it will have to the US and the world that Trump wants to impose tariffs and how the complicated economic system globally responds to a tariff.
- In Environmental Economics I learned why it is so hard for us to cut down CO2 and how to finance a solar park.
- And in Strategic Competition, I learned how intricate market structures are and how legislation can impact companies competing with each other.

Though none of these can contribute to my bachelors degree directly, that doesn't mean I didn't get smarter and got a broader perspective which I find very attractive. I also believe knowing something about world/micro/macro-economics, trade (not stocks, but trade between countries), finance, and more can make me more attractive for future employment.

Arranging your stay

FS school has a partnership with iLive, the dorm next door. It is full of people and life. However, I opted to live with two great German girls I found on wg-gesucht.de (the go-to accommodation finding platform). I liked living with locals and understanding their perspective and they let me into their friend groups and I got invited for birthdays, courtyard dinners, and casual beers. I cannot stress enough how nice it was to live with two similarly-aged students rather than the student dorm which had more people from ages 19-24.

Tip for WG-gesucht: I wrote a standard message to send on wg-gesucht and personalised it for every place I applied to. I sent around 20 messages and didn't get an offer so at the last minute I just updated my profile with the text from my standard message and I instantly got an invitation to the flat. So it pays off to update your profile and make it really attractive, not just send out requests. But please do both. I think I was lucky. I wrote it in English to express myself better.

Expenses and Financing

Germany is relatively cheap to Copenhagen in terms of food and drinks. Be aware that some people and friend groups in the Frankfurt school have higher spending habits. However, sometimes that can also work to your advantage. I drank for free in many bars because some rich students just ordered like 3 liter vodkas to share.

All students have to get a (relatively cheap) Deutschland Ticket which entitles you to unlimited local transport. That was great. There is one Swapfiets shop in Frankfurt and I biked everywhere. Don't park at Hauptbahnhof, the crackheads will steal your bike. Actually just avoid Hauptbahnhof altogether. The rest of the city is very safe (speaking from the perspective of a white male).

Recommendations for other students:

People generally study a lot in this school (but are very active on weekends too), so I got a lot of social time from joining my co-years in study sessions which was very nice. I also found good friends who, like me, didn't want to drink that much and rather do other activities like running or being in the sauna. Being honest about your own preferences, hobbies, and favourite activities can pay off in the long run even if it means losing the interest of a lot of the people who just go on exchange to party.

PS. Go to Oktoberfest. Wow. That was beautiful and crazy.