



## **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:** Università della Svizzera italiana

**Study Programme at IT University:** Informatics

**Exchange agreement or Free mover:** Exchange agreement

**Courses studied abroad:** Advanced Java, Data Design & Modeling, Software Design & Modeling, and User Experience Design

**Period studying abroad:** 9. semester (autumn) 2024

**If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here:** Simon Johann Skødt, [sijs@itu.dk](mailto:sijs@itu.dk)

## **Your stay abroad**

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

Università della Svizzera italiana is a small, but quite modern and diverse university. I can only speak on behalf of the software engineering program at the master's level, but here, USI has been awarded the number one spot in Europe in terms of research. I felt like the teachers were passionate, and the ratio of teachers to students was rarely more than 1:10, which made for a good forum to ask a lot of questions and have the format be more interactive. Unlike ITU, there was not much reading and fewer assignments, but I liked this part, since it gave more time to explore the beautiful nature of the southern part of Switzerland.

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

My motivation was to explore nature abroad, going on lots of hikes and skiing. If this interests you, I don't think there's a better place than Lugano. You can reach Milan in a 1-hour train ride, and the Swiss Alps are just as close. Lugano, and Switzerland in general, is a very privileged place to live. The infrastructure is amazing, you rarely see any litter, and this Italian-speaking region feels like the perfect blend of Swiss and Italian culture. The people are kind yet outgoing. Overall, the stay really

met my expectations. I went there with my girlfriend who studies at CBS, and we quickly found like-minded exchange students to travel with. Having this great group of people made the experience even more memorable.

**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 took several engaging electives that deepened my knowledge in computer science and learned to work effectively in multicultural teams, managing deadlines despite varying expectations across different working styles.

During my time there, I had wonderful experiences exploring the Dolomites, hiking in Switzerland (including the Stoss trail), visiting major Swiss cities, touring wineries in Piemonte, traveling to Milan, and taking day trips near Lugano (including Ponte Tresa's excellent sushi spots and hiking Monte Brè and Monte Boglia). I shared these adventures with people who have become close friends, united by our passion for both nature and cultural experiences

## **Arranging your stay**

**Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay:**

My girlfriend and I road-tripped down to Lugano in our camper. We initially stayed at a nearby campsite while getting settled. After some weeks, we started looking for accommodation and found the nicest place with an old lady in Cureglia, a city just outside Lugano. The location was perfect—we could park our car and had an amazing view of the mountains, while connecting buses made commuting easy. Many of our friends lived at USI Home, the student dorm just a five-minute walk from the university. We initially wanted to live there too, but they had no options for couples. Instead, we found our place through the USI alloggi page. This is a great option if you want to live in an apartment with a few other students or have your own place.

**What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?**

Check the USI official page for their recommended housing options. Be cautious of scammers when using Facebook Marketplace. If you're interested in USI Home, sign up early since there's a waiting list. Otherwise, explore the other suggested housing platforms on the USI website. We found accommodation at the start of the semester, so it seems there are always various options available. Keep in mind that many local residents may not speak much English.

**How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?**

This was done somewhat ad hoc, since we didn't know how long we wanted to live in our campervan. This was mentioned in the previous comments. We were able to receive additional money on top of SEMP for carpooling to Lugano (eco-friendly traveling), which includes train, buses, and carpooling options. Instead of flying to Milan and taking the train, this is another viable option.

## **Expenses and Financing**

**Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad**

Switzerland is, as you probably know, quite expensive. Housing at the dorm is actually reasonable, and we managed to find something relatively affordable. However, centrally located apartments can be quite costly. Shopping is also relatively expensive, but using Lidl and Aldi keeps prices similar to Denmark. We traveled around Switzerland mostly by car, as taking the train is quite expensive—unless you buy the half-fare train card (which is recommended). This card gives you 50% off all train tickets and access to many major hiking and skiing destinations, making the connections fantastic.

The USI exchange committee organizes many trips and events both in Lugano and other major Swiss cities. These are partially funded and quite attractive for students. Since we had a car, we did most of our shopping in Italy. For dining out and general shopping, trips to Italy are very convenient and definitely something I would recommend. Cities like Milan and Ponte Tresa are great options for these trips.

Take advantage of day-pass cards that include funicular rides in Switzerland—they're perfect for hiking. There's also an initiative in Lugano where you can get discounted travel passes for 10 trips per year at the municipality center. We enjoyed operas in Zurich, ballet in Basel, and concerts in Lugano by arriving 1 hour before showtime to buy last-minute tickets for just 20-30 CHF, which is a great deal.

**Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?**

Yes, I did. I received four grants, plus around 15,000 DKK from the Swiss SEMP. If you also get SU (which is likely), the financial situation is actually fine. Just keep in mind that dining out in Lugano—and Switzerland in general—will be quite expensive.

**Recommendations for other students:**

Go to Lugano if you want to be surrounded by mountains and beautiful lakes while enjoying excellent hiking and skiing. However, this isn't the place for those seeking big-city nightlife and regular weekend clubbing. The lifestyle here, to me, strikes a perfect balance: 80% nature and 20% city life.