

# Student Guide

Place of Study Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

## WHY BERLIN?

I chose to study in Berlin after spending a summer there and falling in love with the city. Choosing Berlin meant that I did not have the option to complete a *Masters in German Law*, however on a balance of things I just knew I *had* to spend my year abroad in Berlin.

## CURRENCY?

Euros

## TRAVEL TO/FROM BERLIN?

Travel to and from the city is very easy. There are two airports in the city, both very well connected, and there are flights to and from most airports in the U.K., including much smaller airports as well.

The cost of travel varies depending on how far in advance I booked flights/ the season. The cheapest I've been able to fly is £9.99, and I've never spent more than £100 on return flights.

## FIRST WEEK

Erasmus students are invited to Orientation before university begins. This is 2 weeks before lectures start. Here I was mainly sorting out administrative issues; you have to register with the local authorities as a resident, sort out your 'Semesterticket' which enables you to use all public transport in the city for a whole semester, I also opened a German student bank account in this time with *Berliner Sparkasse*. This was also a great time to meet new people and other Erasmus students. Once lectures began it was a matter of attending lots of different lectures to decide which ones suited you and then sign up for the ones that you enjoyed. This is very different to Warwick as you are expected to do all of this independently, there is no one to hold your hand through it, or tell you what to do, however this helped me a lot with my personal organisational skills and confidence.

## CONTACT

The main contact for Erasmus students is Grit Rother, she is very friendly and approachable and has lots of office hours where you can visit her if you have a problem.

## LECTURES AND SEMINARS

Lectures and Seminars are very different to Warwick. Every lecture is at least 2 hours long. In my Wintersemester I had 24 hours of lectures a week, which is a lot compared to at Warwick. That being said, attendance isn't compulsory and is not monitored. Many of the larger lectures are half-full, and you can get away with (*or at least try to get away with*) not going to many lectures at all and then working really hard for a month before exams. The whole system is very independent, and you get out of it what you put in.

## EXAMS

There are two exam periods in Berlin, one at the end of February, and the other at the end of July/beginning of August (goodbye long summer!)

You can do a mixture of written and oral exams. German Law exams are notoriously difficult. Oral exams tend to be slightly easier, although Warwick requires some exams to be written.

## ACCOMMODATION

The university does have its own accommodation and recommends other student accommodation around the city. This accommodation is like halls of residence, some with single apartments and others with shared kitchen facilities. The accommodation provided by the University is however very far from the centre of Berlin and many students choose not to stay there. The most popular option is to find a room in an apartment in the city. These range from about 300,- to 500,- EUR per month with all bills included! The most popular areas with students are Neukölln, Kreuzberg, Freidrichshain, Prenzlauer Berg and more recently Wedding. There is a great online network for people looking for apartments or rooms on 'WG-Gesucht' as well as numerous Facebook networks. My only advice with this is that it is much easier to find a place once you are already in Berlin, as many landlords want face-to-face interviews with prospective tenants. Book a room with Airbnb for a week or so and dedicate some time to finding your perfect place.

### CLIMATE

**In winter, it's cold. Very cold! The coldest it got for me was -18 degrees. It doesn't rain as much as in the West Midlands, but when it rains, it pours. We had snow too, which was good fun but it made everything, especially train platforms, very slippery! In summer the weather is polar-opposite. Dry and hot, reaching high 20s most days and sometimes mid-30s.**

### SOCIALISING

**Berlin is a truly social city; there are coffee shops, take-aways and bars on most corners, which are always full of friendly vibrant people. You meet people from all corners of the World who have all somehow ended up in the city. The nightlife is very different to Warwick. Nights out begin much later and carry on much longer into the morning. There is no real lad culture or culture of binge drinking that you sometimes encounter in England, people go out purely to dance and have fun. As well as a vibrant nightlife, Berlin is a city brimming with culture and history. There are many museums, art galleries, operas etc. Students can get discounted passes for all of these. On Tuesdays the Berlin Philharmonic orchestra offers a free lunchtime concert, that is a must!**

### ORIENTATION WEEK?

**There is as I mentioned above a 2-week orientation for Erasmus students to get to know each other. At this time there are also tours of the University. As well as this the university also offers a language course for students, lasting one month before term begins. I know a lot of people who made great friends through this course and would highly recommend it. The one downside of it though is that you have to pay, and it is rather expensive at around 600,- EUR.**

### WHAT HAVE YOU GAINED FROM THE EXPERIENCE?

**I have met some wonderful friends through this experience from all over Europe. I have gained a new love for the city as a local and not just a tourist passing through. My language skills have improved enormously in a short space of time. I have gained a stronger sense of independence through finding my feet in a foreign country and navigating through any difficulties I have encountered.**