



Internship in molecular and cell biology at Max Perutz Labs, Vienna Biocenter, MedUni Vienna

Erfahrungsbericht

Application Process

The application process for the Erasmus program was smooth and straightforward. I applied for the internship myself by directly contacting the group leader to inquire about available positions. I found everyone involved to be very supportive, and responses to my inquiries came quickly, making the whole experience feel welcoming and organized. I also planned for travel insurance, which was easy to arrange and provided peace of mind during my stay. Traveling to Vienna was convenient; I took the train, which made the journey straightforward and enjoyable. I would highly recommend this method of travel to future interns.

Accommodation and Cost of Living

Before my mobility, I used WG Gesucht to find a room in a shared flat. This platform made it easy to connect with potential flatmates and find suitable accommodation. I was pleasantly surprised by the cost of living in Vienna, which I found to be very fair and reasonable. The rent for my shared flat was super appropriate and significantly cheaper compared to other capital cities in Europe, making it an attractive option for students.

Arrival and Local Amenities

Upon arriving in Vienna, I was pleased to find that I had everything I needed within a 700-meter radius of my accommodation, including supermarkets, drugstores, and other essential services. This convenience made settling in much easier and allowed me to focus on my internship and exploration of the city.

Welcoming Events

I particularly enjoyed the welcoming events organized by the Medical University students. These events were not only a great way to meet fellow international students but also an opportunity to immerse myself in the local culture. I would always go again if given the chance! The university students worked closely with the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) to ensure that the events were well-organized and inclusive, creating a friendly and supportive environment for newcomers.

Internship Contents

During my internship, I worked in the [specific department or research group], where I contributed to various projects. My main tasks included:

Experimental Work: I conducted biochemical analyses, cell culture, and mass spectrometry to investigate the regulation of the unfolded protein response by chaperons of the endoplasmic reticulum. This allowed me to develop practical skills in modern laboratory techniques.

Data Analysis: I was responsible for evaluating and interpreting the data collected. The use of tools such as excel, ImageJ, SnapGene, iBright and Amica helped sharpen my analytical skills.

Teamwork: The research team of the Elif Karagöz group and the MPL was very openminded and welcoming. The close collaboration with experienced scientists and other interns enhanced my teamwork abilities and provided different perspectives on research problems.

Personal Development

This experience significantly impacted my view of science and research. I learned how important interdisciplinary collaboration is and how diverse approaches can be in biomedical research. The international environment of the Vienna BioCenter also helped me expand my intercultural competencies and build networks with professionals from various countries. E.g. the VBC hosts numerous cutting-edge talks that are open to interns.

Living in Vienna

Living in Vienna was one of the highlights of my experience. The city is rich in culture and offers plenty of activities, from stunning theater and world-renowned opera performances to ballet shows and fascinating museums. The artistic atmosphere is inspiring, with historic venues like the Vienna State Opera and the Burgtheater hosting top-notch performances regularly which are affordable for students (special offers for people U27 years or U30 years).

Moreover, the vibrant community of Erasmus students made my time in Vienna even more enjoyable. The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) groups from the Medical University of Vienna and other universities in the city were incredibly welcoming and organized numerous events and activities. This openness created a supportive network that made it easy to connect with other international students, share experiences, and explore the city together.

Challenges

Like any experience abroad, there were challenges. Adapting to a new city and working styles was not always easy. Language barriers and different academic standards required me to be flexible and adaptable. However, with the support of my colleagues and the excellent guidance from the lab team in both hosting and receiving, I was able to overcome all obstacles.

Conclusion

In summary, my internship at the Max Perutz Lab was an amazing opportunity to apply and expand my theoretical knowledge in practice. The skills and experiences I gained during this time will be immensely beneficial not only in my studies but also in my future career. I am grateful for the support I received from my university, the Medical University of Vienna, and my mentors at the Max Perutz Lab and TU Braunschweig. This experience has strengthened my passion for biomedical research and provided me with valuable insights into the international research landscape.

I can only recommend that every student undertake an Erasmus internship. It is a unique opportunity to grow not only academically but also personally, all while enjoying the cultural richness and community spirit that Vienna has to offer.