

International Study Program Fall 2011 Sep'11-Nov'11

I participated in the ISP (International Study Program) of fall 2011 in HSG University, St Gallen Switzerland.

The ISP is not a regular exchange program; you are not joining ongoing master studies but participating in a full special MBA program. The ISP provides a unique opportunity to gain profound and lasting insight into the European business world in particular and Strategy in general. Designed exclusively for MBA students, the 10-week ISP is distinguished by its interactive teaching style, small class size and intensive focus. Company visits and excursions to locations such as BMW in Munich, Roche in Basel, SwissCom in Zurich and the European Free Trade Association court in Luxembourg enhance the rigorous core curriculum.

I had an amazing time, met many interesting friends from all over the world. I've experienced the European world, learned a lot about strategy and the business world.

ABOUT SWITZERLAND AND ST GALLEN

Switzerland is a small country in the heart of Europe, as a result it has 2 major advantages: The first advantage is that much like Israel (another small country), everybody speaks English fluently. The second advantage is that it is very easy to travel inside the country and to any destination in Europe.

There are 4 official languages: German (75% including St Gallen), French (In the west part close to the French border), Italian (In the south) and Romansh (only 40,000 people)

While you are there you can travel a lot. There are many „school trips“ and you have most of the weekends free. My group were very close and we traveled together all over the country and to Germany and Spain. Switzerland has amazing scenery: snowing mountains, lakes, old cities, parks and hiking trails. Most of the traveling is done by trains. When you get there you should buy the half-price ticket. The ticket cost 165CHF (2011 prices) and give you 50% discount to all the transportation tickets (cable cars, buses and trains). If you travel a lot it is worth the price of it.

St Gallen is the main city in the east of Switzerland, close to the border with Germany and Austria. It is a student city therefore has very active student life (Be'er Sheva with style). It is a small town, and you can walk everywhere by foot.

For Israelis, the Swiss autumn is like the middle of the winter. I arrived to St Gallen in the beginning of September when it was very nice and left in the end of November when it was freezing. However, there is a very good heating everywhere (included in the rent...).

LIVING IN ST GALLEN

Switzerland is not part of the European Union and therefore use Swiss Franks (CHF). It is an expensive country but, there are ways to save money (cook at home, shop at Germany etc...). You can arrange your accommodation through the university housing office. The housing office arrange your apartment you can choose if you want roommates or not. Usually they will give you apartment with another exchange student so you don't need to worry about any language barriers. The rent includes all the bills and the internet. It is dependent on the size of the apartment and its location. The university is on a hill while the city center is in the valley. Walking from the city center to the hill is about 25 minutes (ofcourse there is also a bus). You can choose whether you prefer to live close to the school or the city center (I recommend the city center). In the university there is a free Gym and classes (aerobic, pilates, boddypump etc'). The classes are in very high quality.

SCHOOL

During the ISP you have to participate in 7 courses. 4 are mandatory and 3 electives. Besides the courses there are company visits and other social events organized by the program. The classes usually based on discussions and presentations held by the students.

Core Courses (Mandatory)

1. European Cultral History (ECH)- intorduction course to Europe in order to have better understanding of the enviornment you are at. It includes guided tour in St Galen.
2. Leadership in Euriopian companies- theories in leadership and change management. The study is done through lactures, case studies and presentations, guest lactures by proffessionals from leading comapny.
3. Strategic Management- this course focusing on the strategic process using analytical tools. the class is based on group discussion. The final assignment is heping a real worldwide consulting company with a real given problem.
4. European Companies Governance-This seminar will introduce students to various aspects of corporate governance, with a general focus on the particularities of the European approach towards the issue. The course moves from general questions about the nature and objective of corporations to a discussion of the most important actors in corporate governance and their relationships: company management, boards of directors, shareholders and other external stakeholders. While this discussion will focus on the public US firm as a starting point, we will also discuss corporate governance in other settings: in European countries, in entrepreneurial firms and in family businesses. The general approach to the course is discursive. Corporate governance is a rather amorphous issue, and dealing with the challenges it poses is not straightforward. Class discussions and interactive exercises are designed to generate an experience as close to first-hand as possible. A further objective of the course - given the variety of backgrounds of students – is to enable students to become”reflective practitioners” with respect to corporate governance and leadership.

Elective Courses

1. Europeam Business Low- The course covers some of the most important issues of European Business Law. After an introduction into the methodological problems of business law and the basics of European history and European law, the focus will be on the fundamental freedoms, in particular the free movement of goods, business competition law and selected fields of harmonized law. We will arrange an excursion to the EFTA Court in Luxembourg.

2. Global Managerial Communication- The course on global managerial communication introduces students to one of the most frequent tasks in management - leading effective dialogues. It provides an overview on the rich theory on managerial communication, particularly in knowledge-intensive, complex, and intercultural situations, and sensitizes students to the challenges of management communication, ranging from leading interdisciplinary teams, giving feedback, asking the right questions to spark innovation, to leading meetings in different cultures or interacting with potential clients or conducting negotiations. The main goals of the course are thus to build a solid, theoretical understanding of the key mechanisms that shape effective managerial communication in a global context and understand its potential pitfalls, as well as to learn about effective practices of leading communication on an interpersonal and group level.
3. Internation entrepreneurship- The ability to understand the link between entrepreneurship and value creation has become crucial to succeeding in today's business world. The course is designed to provide students with insights from the latest strategy, innovation and entrepreneurship thinking to better understand how individual entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial companies create strategic value with a special emphasis on the European perspective.

In addition you can learn Germany with a very very nice teacher. Her target is not to teach you all the grammar but to provide tools to get along in Switzerland. The "Course" includes taking you out for Beer and cooking traditional swiss dishes.

Company Visits:

In each company we visited we met different managers and discussed aspects relevant to the company's core business.

We visited at:

1. BMW
2. Nestle
3. Roche
4. UNSHR

5. SwissCom

Other Activities:

1. Visit Mizerani chocolate factory
2. Trip to lake Constance
3. Outdoor training- Team Building: Leadership and Team Competencies. This intensive training takes place at the end of the first week of the academic term for ISP students. It offers an opportunity for students to get to know one another better while learning some valuable team and leadership skills. It takes place on campus and in the forest not far from the University of St. Gallen.