# The Student’s Guide to SEP in Germany

## 2009 Edition

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1. The Authors

Wang Changxiong
Mechanical Engineering
“Anyone is bound to find a piece of Europe appealing”

Jackie Loke Xiuqing
Applied Chemistry
“Happiness is only real when shared”

Wang Yi
Mechanical Engineering
“Experience it and enjoy it”

Xiao Yu
Mechanical Engineering
“No road is long with good company”

Tan Yi Han
Engineering Science
“Ich habe bären Hunger!”

Vikram Venkatesan
Electrical Engineering
“Ich bin ein Münchener!”

Special thanks go to Yu Fan for vetting the guidebook.
2. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

Hallo! If you are reading this guidebook, means you are going, or are interested in going to Germany for SEP or internship. We, the authors, have been there and done that, and learnt many things along the way. We have collected some tips in this guidebook, in the hope that you will be able to settle into Germany with less stress & uncertainty, and therefore, have a much more enjoyable experience.

However, this guidebook should not be deemed as exhaustive. Our main goal is to point out the important things to look out for. We shall not deprive you all the chance to explore new possibilities and learn how to be independent!

This guidebook has also been done in pdf form for an important purpose: To save trees! Pls refrain from printing it out unless absolutely necessary.

So here goes...

3. BEFORE DEPARTING HOME

Internship

Try to get an internship from December to March (if going for summer semester). It will help you greatly in your German. Getting an internship is not easy, but it usually helps to pull strings through your professor.

Since the Zulassungsbescheid will only come in Dec or Jan (for summer semester), for visa requirements, you can apply first for the initial internship period and then extend to cover your SEP period when you are in Germany.

Module mapping

- Check for available modules/hours required/language at the module listing [Vorlesungsverzeichnis] at the website of your SEP uni. You can also refer to the module mapping lists from your seniors. Univis.tum.de
- There are usually some English language modules to choose from
- Acronyms
  - ECTS: modular credits (Roughly 1 ECTS : 0.8 MC)
  - SWS: no. of hours of lessons per week
- Types of lessons
  - Vorlesungen (VO): Lectures
  - Übungen (UE): Tutorials
  - Seminare: Students take turns to present a topic of their choice under the main theme
  - Praktika (PK): Lab sessions
  - Kurs (KU): Workshops
- It is a good to have a rough idea of what modules you will be able to map (based on the corresponding semester in previous years) before you even apply for SEP at the university
- Once your SEP application is accepted by NUS, you need to fill out the relevant forms and study plan for approval. Pls refer to your faculty websites for more info, eg. for Engineering: http://www.eng.nus.edu.sg/undergraduatestudies/study-abroad/student-exchange-programme-sep/module-mapping/
- There is no harm mapping more modules than necessary, in case you change your mind halfway

**German knowledge required**
- Determine the mode of language of lectures. If lectures are conducted in German, German 3/4 knowledge is recommended
- Otherwise, German 1 or 2 is enough. It is advisable to apply for the German course at the SEP university. Most Germans can speak English, but they are always happier and open up a lot more when you speak to them in German.

**Exit Permit**
For NS men leaving for more than 6 months, pls apply exit permit with the necessary documents (proof of SEP period eg. letter from NUS) before you leave, so that the SAF won’t bug you for reservist. If less than 6 months, apply under “notify overseas trip”. To apply, go to [www.ns.sg](http://www.ns.sg)

**Applying for visa**
For Singapore students:

Please apply for a student visa at least 8 weeks in advance, but earlier if possible at the German Embassy (#12-00 Singapore Land Tower, 50 Raffles Place).

**Documents required (original and 2 photocopies)**
- Passport & Matriculation Card
- 2 completed application forms
- 2 passport photos (Passport photo size is same as Singapore’s but requires a very big head. Pls take note of the required dimensions in the link provided below.
- Letter from NUS stating that you have been accepted to SEP
- Acceptance letter from university [Zulassungsbescheid]
- For internship: Letter from company
- Proof of insurance in Germany (even if you intend to buy on arrival in Germany, you still need to get 1 month travel insurance)
- Visa fee in cash

For latest requirements, pls go to: [http://www.singapur.diplo.de/Vertretung/singapur/en/01/Visabestimmungen/Visabestimmungen.html](http://www.singapur.diplo.de/Vertretung/singapur/en/01/Visabestimmungen/Visabestimmungen.html)

For foreign students, you are also recommended to apply your visa in Singapore. If you insist on applying in your home country, please check with your embassy well in advance.

For PRC students, if you have to apply it in China, please note:
1. Apply visa at the embassy respective to your place of residence. (Beijing/Shanghai/Guangzhou/Chengdu/Hongkong)
2. Apply your visa at least 6 weeks in advance, preferably 12 weeks in advance.
3. Arrange an appointment with the embassy as early as possible.
4. For the detailed requirement documents, please refer to:
   http://www.china.diplo.de/Vertretung/china/de/01-Visa-und-Konsularservice/01-visa/00-visa-
hbs.html. Please take notice of the requirement for the proof of insurance and the proof of
financial ability.

**Air ticket**
Air ticket prices are constantly changing, so we cannot recommend a specific airline. But in general,
since cheaper tickets are sold out first, do start booking early. Some airlines and STA travel offer
extra luggage allowance for students (30kg check-in luggage). Trust me, you will need it!

**Accommodation**
In Munich, the student council [studentenwerk] will provide housing for all exchange students. They
have students hostels scattered in the city and on the outskirts. A room is guaranteed but you may
not get a room you like. So it is encouraged that you do some research and make a request (state
your preference, but don’t assume you can always get what you want) when applying for
accommodation. You may compare factors like location, facilities and rental fees. The following
website may help you: http://www.studentenwerk-
muenchen.de/wohnen/wohanlagen/muenchen/muenchen-suedwest/heiglhostrasse/. It’s also
possible for you to rent a room yourself if you don’t want to stay in a student hostel, but that might
take some effort and cost more.

For summer semester, accommodation period from April-July is recommended.

**Insurance**
German law requires all university students have medical insurance, and it applies to exchanges
students as well. You can buy one either from a German company (encouraged) or from one in your
own country.

- From a German company

You can go to this website http://www.deutscheinsurance.com/ and make an online request for
medical insurance for students. After that you can choose to buy insurance from a list of companies,
e.g. AOK, Barmer, etc (they all charge the same amount and provide similar service). Normally you
can choose to pay the premiums by semester or by month. It’s advised to pay by month otherwise
you may end up wasting money to pay premiums even when you are back in Singapore. Take note
that in some regions it’s compulsory to pay for the whole semester. In any case, please check with
the insurance agent if you can terminate the insurance before the end of semester.

- From a local company

It’s possible to buy medical insurance from a local company but it’s discouraged. The reasons are
that 1) your local health insurance package doesn’t usually cover as wide as the one mentioned
above; 2) it may be problematic during reimbursement. If you really want to do so, make sure your
insurance policy is recognized by the German government.
Also note that you may need an insurance policy for visa application, so you need to acquire one before going to Germany.

Packing list
1. Passport size photos (~8) and all important documents
2. Travelers’ adapter (for power socket)
3. Bags. Please be informed that in Germany, supermarkets do not provide plastic bags for free. Bring a shopping bag. Bring a small travel bag for light travelling.
4. Umbrella.
5. Clothes and shoes. Germany could be snowing at end of March! Bring winter clothes as well. Weather in summer will be quite similar to Singapore (minus the humidity).
6. Toiletry, towels, hangers
7. Seasoning and flavoring and any other Singaporean food you might miss
8. Stationery
9. Laptop, camera, mp3 player...
10. Medication, moisturizer, mosquito repellant/ balm
11. Optional:
    a. Swimming costume
    b. Pillow, quilt, bed sheet (can also be bought cheaply there --- see “shopping”)
    c. Cooker, knife, spoon, chopsticks, plate, etc. (can also be bought cheaply there --- see “shopping”) Consider bringing a small rice cooker if you are used to eating rice.

Financial aid
- NUS Award for Study Abroad (NASA). Usually S$3000 for Germany. Not so easy to get if you have an existing scholarship. Apply online together with your SEP application.
4. **JUST AFTER ARRIVAL**

**Administrative stuff**

Pls follow in order (and always bring passport photos and passport):

1. Collect keys and sign contract with your hostel (Studentenwerkoffice)
2. Register your place of residence [Wohnsitzanmeldung] at the Kreisverwaltungsreferat (For Munich: [http://www.muenchen.de/Rathaus/kvr/37584/index.html](http://www.muenchen.de/Rathaus/kvr/37584/index.html))
3. Apply for bank account (you should ask and make sure that no account/ATM [Bank-automat] fees are required ie free account).
4. Buy insurance if not yet done. (Wohnsitzanmeldung form, Bank details and Zulassungsbescheid required.)
5. Matriculate [Immatrikulation] at university (Proof of insurance and some fees may be required)
6. Apply for residential permit [Aufenthaltstitel]. This extends your visa to cover the whole semester. Bring all the documents from the previous admin matters as well as proof of insurance.

**Handphone**

- Best option is to buy a pre-paid SIM card. Fonic (9c/min) can be bought at Lidl supermarket counters. The other brands eg. Vodafone/ O2 are cheaper when you call to other phones of the same company, but more expensive otherwise. Eg ALDI is 3c/min between ALDI users, but 13c/min to other phones.

**Shopping**

- Hostels usually only have the basic furniture (bed, mattress, table, chair). Pillows and blanket can be bought at IKEA and Woolworths.
- Bicycles, plates and utensils can be bought from the Flea markets [Flohmarkt] at cheap prices.

**Transportation**

Most universities offer a semester pass [Semesterticket] for the whole semester. The semester pass usually covers a wide area around the city, and can make for really cheap travelling.

Munich, unfortunately, doesn’t offer the semester ticket. After matriculation, you will be able to apply for a [Kundenkarte] at the main train station. This then allows you to purchase monthly pass or weekly pass for the local transportation. The price of the pass depends on the distance between your place of residence and the school. You can extend the range of your pass by buying the [Grüne Jungendkarte]. Since there are 2 main campuses, when applying for the Kundenkarte, you should choose the campus nearer your place of residence to save money. If you do not have a pass, you can also buy a single ticket or a day ticket. Detailed information is available at: [http://www.mvv-muenchen.de/en/homepage/index.html](http://www.mvv-muenchen.de/en/homepage/index.html).

To save lots of money & keep fit, you may even choose to cycle to school!
5. **DURING STAY**

**School matters during SEP**

- Module registration: In TUM, there is usually no need to apply for lessons, other than language lessons.
- Exam registration: However, you will need to register for exams. Do ask the Prof/ Secretary/International office for details. Most likely, you will need to take some oral exams as the written exams may take place very late. Approach your Prof early to set a date.
- Transcript of records: Do approach the examination office or International office to ask about how you can obtain your transcript of records. For TUM, each faculty has its own examination office, so if taking exams from other faculties, pls make sure that your home faculty gets your exam results from the other faculties.

**Traveling around**

With its multitude of cultures and natural wonders, it is no wonder that many exchange students travel around Europe during their stay there. However, it is important not to get carried away by the travel fever and visit places because everyone else is visiting them. Choose your travel destinations based on your own interests eg. some may prefer Eastern Europe for its more guerilla culture and to experience life in the post-communist bloc, while others may prefer the Mediterranean coast for its sunny beaches. If you are a nature-lover, there are plenty of beautiful places to trek, cycle or even do rafting. For eg, 2 of the authors spent 6 days cycling around Bodensee, while another 2 rafted down the Isar river in Munich on inflatable rafts.

Note that your german visa also covers all the countries in the Schengen Agreement ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schengen_Area](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schengen_Area)).

Below, we present the various ways of travelling without bursting your budget!

**General tips**

- Hostelworld.com is a good avenue to look for cheap accommodation, it might be good to invest some money and sign up as its gold member as future booking fees would be waived for up to a year.
- Contrary to many beliefs, the international student card might not be as useful since its usage is quite limited and many are quite useless for an exchange student. Your matriculation card by the partner University would suffice in getting you student discounts to places of interest.

**Germany**

- **Travel by train**
  - Länderticket (State ticket) for unlimited train (for a day) within the state on regional and local transportation ie. RB, S-bahn, but not ICE, ECE, EC.
  - Schönwochenendticket for unlimited rides (for a day) on regional and local trains around the whole of Germany, not just states
  - Germany pass for unlimited rides (for each day, min 4 days) on all trains. It entitles you to travel up to Basel (Swiss) and Salzburg (Austria)
  - If booking early, you can usually get discounted fares on single tickets. But unlike the above options, the travel date and time cannot be changed. Book at [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de)
• Travel by bus
  o Berlin linien bus (www.berlinlinienbus.de), Eurolines (www.touring.de)
• Travel by car-sharing
  o www.mitfahrgelegenheit.de

Italy
• Eurail users must include Austria in their purchased countries if your route passes by Austria, e.g. from Munich
• You might not be able to make a reservation on the City Night Line (CNL) from Venice to Munich so you should arrange your itinerary such that you do not return from Venice. Making reservation on the CNL in Italy cost 15 euros (seats) compared to 4 euros in Germany

Austria
• Bavarian ticket allows travel up to Salzburg
• Buy standing tickets (<5 euros) for opera or orchestral performances for best value of money

France
• Take note that a reservation is required for taking ICE to and fro France from Germany even though the Eurail train booklet might not state it. You risk a fine if you do not have it.
• Get youth day ticket on weekends which is much cheaper than normal tickets and entitles you to unlimited travel throughout the day

Czech Republic
• From Munich, travel by regional train using Bavarian-Bohemian ticket up to Plzen and buy supplement at the Czech side (supplement about 5 euros)
• Exchange rates for krona are better in Czech Republic than in Germany

Benelux
• For travel to Luxembourg by Eurail, take train to Saalsbrucke and then transit to Trier before heading to Luxembourg
• For a faster but more expensive alternative is to take the bus from Saalsbrucke, but it cost 20 euros. Depending on your luck the bus driver might let you off with a eurail pass.
• For Eurail users going to nearby towns, e.g. Haarlem from Amsterdam might be ‘free’ since you might not be checked by conductors along this short journey

Spain
• If you would like to travel by budget airline, book early (maybe 2-3 months in advance) for the best rate
• Bus travel are more flexible than trains for inter-city travels in Spain

Switzerland
• If you are in South Germany, it might be cheaper to use a Länderticket or Schöneswochenende ticket to the border and buy a country pass for Switzerland

Greece
• EU students (including exchange students) enjoy free entry to most of the museums and galleries and many other places of interest in Greece. You will need to show your matriculation card by your partner University

6. JUST BEFORE DEPARTING GERMANY

Follow in the given order as documents are needed for closing of insurance account:
1. Deregister your place of residence and exmatriculate from university
2. Close insurance account (check if you can get money back from unused months)
3. Close bank account (if desired)

7. USEFUL LINKS

http://ssag.eu/ (check out the guides)

8. FINAL WORD

Be proactive, talk to people, ask around for help when needed, and you will find the germans very helpful and caring! Mix around with the other international students too. Then you will feel like you have travelled the world!