

The Erasmus Experience in Switzerland



I did my exchange for one semester at École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in Lausanne, Switzerland. Going on an exchange was an amazing experience. You meet a lot of new people from all over the world, you learn about different cultures, you learn to become fully independent and many more.

Lausanne is located in the French speaking part of Switzerland which makes it much easier to adapt to the local culture. Because there are a lot of students in Lausanne, finding a nice place to stay is hard. I recommend to look for a house from the FMEL organisation, if you missed their deadline (which is very early) you can still go over there in the summer and ask them personally if there is something available. I agree with people saying that Switzerland is expensive, however this usually applies to luxury goods. If you buy products without brand, it's usually not that bad.

Part of the Erasmus experience is exploring and discovering new places. Switzerland has many beautiful places that must be visited. If you want to discover new places, I can definitely recommend an Erasmus exchange. ESN, Erasmus Student Network, organises a lot of these trips which I definitely recommend. ESN activities require a membership which costs about 5 CHF.

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Finally, you will also spend a lot of time at the university. EPFL is known as one of the world leading universities, ranking 14th overall in the 2015 QS World University Rankings. EPFL provides really good facilities. With an annual budget of around 800 million CHF this is no surprise. There are many research groups, restaurants and services to students (study places, printing, scanning, discounts, ...).

Depending on which courses you take, workload per course *can* be higher compared to courses at the VUB. As a Computer Science student, majoring in Multimedia Signal Processing I followed courses in the areas of computer graphics, communication, image processing and speech processing. Some courses provide a lot of work during the year, in the form of weekly assignments and mid-terms. Last but not least, you should also be aware that there is no retake. If you fail a course, you usually have to take another at the VUB the next semester.

Overall I am very glad with my decision to go on an Erasmus exchange. It's great to see the world from another perspective. If you are reading this, you are probably considering an Erasmus. My advice is to just go out there and do it, you won't regret it!