**With a double click you can edit the information above!**

**Studying Abroad Experience Report**

1. **Are we allowed to publish your report anonomiously on our webpage (without your name and e-Mail)?**

[ X ] Yes [ ] No

1. **Are we allowed to forward your report and contact information to a Viadrina student on request?**

[ X ] Yes [ ] No

1. **Please confirm hereby that you did not mention names of a third party (lecturer, landlord etc.)**

[X] Yes [ ] No – in this case your report won‘t be published

1. **Please be aware that all the published photos in this report have to be taken by you and are not the property of a third party. By sending this report you are giving us the legal right of use for your pictures (if we publish the report). The copyrights still belong to you after all.**

[ X ] Yes, I confirm that all photos are mine.

**We would appreciate it if you could include the following topics (the report should be at least two pages long, there is no maximum):**

* **Preparation:** Recommendations about preparing to leave, for example (if applicable) Visa, insurance, travel? How was the application process at the university abroad? Were there any introduction events? Were they obligatory and when did they take place? Was there a Buddy program or tutors?
* **Accommodation:** How did you find your accommodation? Any tips about mistakes that should be avoided? Were there any special student accommodations? The cost of rent? Which area of living would you recommend?
* **Studying at the university abroad:** How was the day to day life on campus? Was the attendance mandatory? Which courses did you take? Were you allowed to take courses from different faculties? Please attach links to the course list if possible. How did the exams take place? Were there any language courses? What is your overall opinion of the university in general? How well did the university take care of international/exchange students?
* **Day to day life and free time:** How high are the costs of living in total? How much money should be accessible monthly? How much does the public transportation cost? What can an exchange student do in their free time? What did you do?
* **Conclusion:** worst and best experience
* **Suggestions/Feedback:** In your opinion, how can we improve our exchange program especially considering consulting, information, application process at the Viadrina? – This section is just for the department of international affairs of the Viadrina and will not be published.

**Preparation:**

I will attempt to share to the best of my recollection my journey to Montpellier Business School. As with any embarkment such as moving to another country, there are key preparations to be made before hand. As a non-European citizen, my first course of action was securing the necessary documentation for the required student-visa. Having gathered what was needed (valid passport, letter of acceptance from the receiving institution, valid insurance in Europe, proof of financial means while abroad, CV & cover letter, etc), one can then proceed to book an appointment at the corresponding French consulate.

Appointments can be booked on-line, however, availability varies greatly, so the sooner you can book an appointment, the much better position you will be in having your visa on time before your mobility. Another point to keep in mind, the French consulate in Berlin does not process visas for “ordinary citizens” (the consulate only handles visa request for government officials, diplomats, and such). In my case, my visa could only be processed at the French consulate in Frankfurt Am Main (it was a logistical hassle having to go for the appointment, and then one week later return once again to pick up my visa). Again, this process only applies if you are not an European national, so be prepared to make all of these arrangement before hand.

Regarding the application process thru Viadrina, it‘s pretty much straight forward. The necessary documentation required by the outgoing office, for the most part, is clearly stated via the outgoing-wiwi website, where all necessary forms are readily available.

Upon arriving, be prepared to spend quite a bit of time going thru the immersion process, and basically getting the hang-around of how the school operates, who to go to, where things can be found, etc. Understanding that it’s quite of bit to intake during your first days of arrival, Montpellier Business School staff strive to make this process as easy, informative and helpful as possible and having student coordinators and advisers readily available in case you need personal assistance for any reason whatsoever. All of these information session events are not obligatory per say, however, they are extremely helpful and highly recommended that you attend all of them, even if they last through the day (some do!). Fortunately, all of these information sessions take place on school ground and you receive a detailed schedule for all of them early on. So definitely get involved from the start.

**Accommodation:**

As you might already aware, Montpellier is expensive and accommodation is no exception. My monthly rent at a student residence is in the upper €500‘s. Of course the amount you will end up paying depends on the location of your residence (how close to city center it’s located), availability, and/or if you decide to live shared flat, etc.

I strongly recommend that students engage as early as possible in finding accommodation as I witnessed quite a bit of students struggling to find a place to live even after two weeks into the start of the semester, so you certainly do not want to understimate this point. Accomodation in Montpellier at around the start of the academic year tends to fill up quickly and you can be left with less-than-desired accomodation options. I was fortunate enough to secure a private studio (16 m2) at Résidence le Clémenceau, 20-minutes walking distance from city center and a 10-minute walk to tram lines that take you directly to the school’s tram stop (take line 3 from St. Denis to Hôtel du Département)

**Studying at the university abroad:**

Let me clear as possible in this section. Be prepared to spend quite a bit of time at the university as you will have weeks where classes run as early as 8:30am and end at 8:30pm (this is especially true if you’re taking the evening French language courses). Additionally, be prepared to simultaneously work on various group projects, as it seems for almost every class you will be required to participate in such projects and group presentations. It can be overwhelming at times, especially towards the end of the 1st block where examinations come immediately after the projects. Nonetheless, don’t let this discourage you. You will find plenty of play, social and drink time (that is without a question!).

Having said this, you will have weeks in-between your studies with hardly anything going at school, giving you time to either catch-up with school work, or travel around, your choice. In my opinion, I believe the load Montpellier Business School exerts on you is manageable and fair, all things considered.

**Day to day life and free time**

As previously mentioned, cost of living in France is among the highest in Europe. Considering my rent expenses (internet, water, heat included) and an additional €60/week for groceries, you can imagine how necessary it is to administer your finances as efficient as possible. Evermore so if you decide to drink out (one beers costs around €6!). To save money here and there, be mindful of where you do your shopping and compare between grocery stores to fit your budget. Getting the monthly (or the semester) tram pass will also save you some money.

Bringing up again the matter of day to day life at Montpellier, like I already shared, you will have sometimes have very busy school days, where it seems you barely have time to “grab a bite” in between classes (some courses are scheduled to last as 4 hours long per session!). However, after school is done for the day, anything is fair game. I mostly made time after school to go to a gym near my residence, however, sometimes the need to get a drink after a long day at school persevered more.

There are endless choices of bars, clubs, restaurants and pretty much anything you can think of. If drinking and rowdiness is not your kind of scene, the city offers beautiful parks and promenades to enjoy during your evenings, especially during the holiday season when the city is adorned with beautiful display of lighting arrangements for the public’s viewing pleasure.

**Internship**

Chances are you will need to do an internship as part of the exchange program with MBS. You will finish your elective courses by the end of February, then you will need to find an internship that to my understanding needs to be at least 6 months and it must be paid (more on that when you arrive here in Montpellier, everything thing will be explained). By this time, hopefully you already know in what direction you want to take your internationally inclined career. You will meet many guest lectures from a wide variety of industries and professions that will always gladly share their insight and any address any questions you might have. For instance, there was a speaker who worked in business consulting, lived in so many different countries, and spoke a wide range of languages … very interesting stuff if you had your eye on that industry or something similar. As for myself, I went for supply chain in the aerospace industry and I was fortunate enough to find an internship precisely in that area, however, the internship is in Toulouse, where I will be relocating to. You are not restricted to stay only France. It could also be back in your home country or anywhere for that matter. Moreover, to validate your internship, a “convention” (or written agreement) will need to be made between MBS and the company whom with you will be doing your internship. There‘re signatures involved, but it is mostly done electronically thru the MBS student platforms that you will have access to early on your arrival.

**Conclusion: worst and best experience**

In general, my experience here in Montpellier has been great. I deeply enjoyed the city and it’s ssurroundings, the vibe, the school environment, the people you meet along the way, and of course, having access to the beach and mostly reliable sunny weather. Enough said.