

Studying Abroad Experience Report

- 1) Are we allowed to publish your report anonymously on our webpage (without your name and e-Mail)?
 Yes [] No
- 2) Are we allowed to forward your report and contact information to a Viadrina student on request?
 Yes [] No
- 3) Please confirm hereby that you did not mention names of a third party (lecturer, landlord etc.)
 Yes [] No – in this case your report won't be published
- 4) 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.
 Yes, I confirm that all photos are mine.

Preparation

Visa

All studies that take longer than 90 days require to apply for residence permit and student visa for France. In Germany it can be obtained in French General Consulate in Frankfurt am Main. It is possible to take an appointment online for document submission. You can find the detailed information here:

https://france-visas.gouv.fr/en_US/web/de

I received my Letter of Acceptance in May and confirmation about accommodation in June, so I applied for visa at the beginning of August and it was ready within the month.

Insurance

It is possible to survive with your German insurance, but you can contact your insurance institution to ask if there are any specific requirements for France.

Starting from 2018 it is possible to apply for the free insurance for foreign students under the following link:

<https://etudiant-etranger.ameli.fr>

It will be useful to prepare birth certificate translated into French as it is required in some institutions.

Application process at NEOMA

Neoma will contact to you for the further details and formalities and then you will get Letter of Acceptance which is necessary for visa application.

The biggest Welcoming day takes place in September (in my case it was 8th of September) because most of the exchange students come for Winter Semester. There is another one in

January, but smaller. This is a good opportunity to meet people and make friends before the begin of the study.

Arrival

How to get to Reims?



There are 3 main airports in Paris. Charles de Gaulle Airport is the most convenient for Reims as there are direct trains and Flixbus from there. Nevertheless, they are available only in limited hours and quite expensive (25-40 Euro <https://en.oui.sncf/en/>). From Orly Airport you need to go through Paris, and Airport Paris Beauvais Tillé is just on the other side of Paris from Reims and too far away.



There is direct night bus from Berlin to Reims. For me it was the most convenient option as I didn't need to change and to pay for luggage when I first time moved to the city. The bus arrives to TGV Champagne Ardennes station. Then you need to take the tram to reach centre city (around 20 min, with 20 min interval). Unfortunately, Google maps doesn't show public transportation in Reims. You can use the website of the public transport company:

<https://www.citura.fr/fr/itineraires/4/JourneyPlanner>

Formalities upon arrival

Don't forget to get the Letter of Arrival signed and to send it back to Viadrina International office. One of the first things to do upon arrival is to open the bank account in France, which will be essential requirement for all other formalities. You can do it during the welcoming day, as they sometimes have people from NEOMA's partner bank there.

As soon as you get your bank account details, you can apply for CAF – the social financial assistance from French government which cover part of your rent fee. Sometimes they reject applications, but most cases you just need to wait. You can consult about CAF in NEOMA, they are eager to help you with formalities.

Accommodation

There are several student residences and private accommodation possibilities.

The link to apply for student accommodation in Reims came from NEOMA too late and there were no available places in student residence (it is very tight in Winter Semester). I was in a panic at the beginning, but it appeared that there is a lot of private accommodation opportunities in Reims. I used Neoma's platform (Studapart) and I was very lucky to get my room in the city center. As you need a French guarantor to rent private accommodation in France, this service can do this job for you for extra charge.

As I've spent the whole year in Reims, I was happy to live in the center city rather than in Student residence close to Neoma, as the city center is very historic and beautiful. Campus 2 of Neoma, where most of my classes took place, is only 10 min from the city by train or 25 min walk.

The price for the room in student residence ranges within 300-400 Euro.

The private options are 250-600 Euro.

On the following map I noticed the area which is easily accessible by tram lines (direct connection to NEOMA) and usually has various accommodation options.

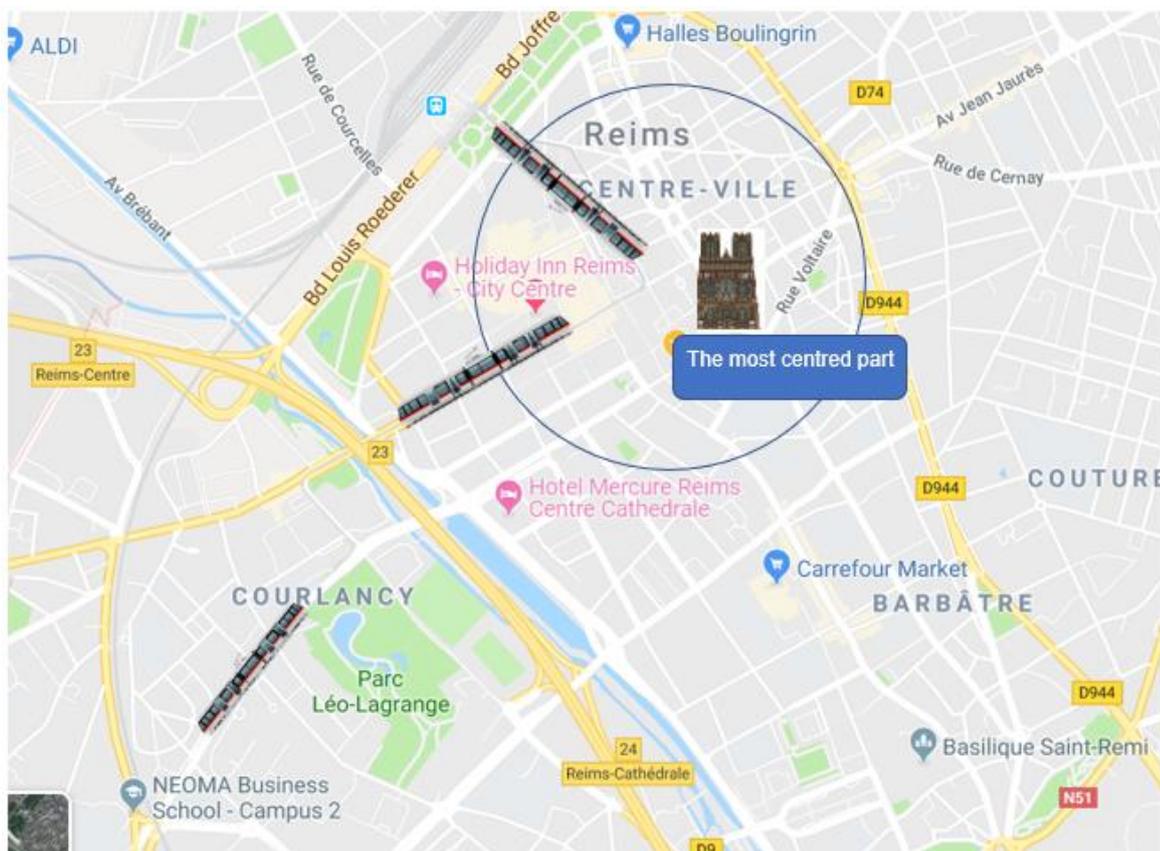
country: [France](#)
university abroad: [NEOMA Business School Campus REIMS](#)
beginning of lectures and end of exams abroad: [08/09/2018 until 28/06/2019](#)
study path at Viadrina: [International Business Administration WIWI MA](#)



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View from the Paul Fort residence



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university abroad: NEOMA Business School Campus REIMS
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Studying at the university abroad

I had opportunity to choose my specialization and select courses before I started to study at NEOMA.

NEOMA has a mobile application where you will find the schedule, grades and other updates.

Courses at NEOMA require a lot of group work. It was very useful for the improvement of presentation skills and teamwork. I found courses in NEOMA very practical oriented. There are also a lot of activities aimed at facilitation of internship and employment search. There is a good Career center where one can get advices about resume, cover letter, job interview preparation.

Course attendance was strictly mandatory and in case of missing a course student is required to provide official justification.

I found exams less stressful than in Germany because of more time given to the test question. Nevertheless, it requires proper preparation. Final grade usually consists of exam grade, participation grade and presentation in different combination.

Exam schedule is available late, and it is not practical if you want to buy your tickets for semester break in advance.

NEOMA provide selection of language courses. As far as I know you can take 2 language courses in semester for free.

Some formalities at NEOMA are took much longer than in Viadrina.

Day to day life and free time

Public transport

Monthly transportation ticket costs around 28 Euro, it is also possible buy tickets for 1 and 10 trips if you are not going to use the public transportation very often.

Unfortunately, Google maps doesn't show public transportation in Reims. You can use the website of the public transport company:

<https://www.citura.fr/fr/itineraires/4/JourneyPlanner>



Supermarkets and costs of living

Overall cost for grocery and other goods is higher than in Germany. The least expensive supermarkets are ALDI, LIDL, Carrefour Hypermarket and Supermarket which are in the suburbs of the city, but accessible by buses. Monoprix, Intermarche and Carrefour express are in the city center, but they are more expensive.

You can also go to the small local markets. They are open in limited hours in different locations. You can check it here:

<https://www.reims.fr/economie-emplois/les-marches/les-marches-dans-la-ville-8384.html>

The biggest one is in Les Halles Boulanger (in the picture), where you can buy grocery goods from the local producers and some bio products.

Going out, cafes and restaurants.

I liked to go to the Creperie “Chez Louise” with affordable prices and very delicious meals, including the big variety of traditional gallets – salty crepes typical for Nord of France.

The city has a lot of places to go out and vivid evening life, especially at Place d’Erlon.

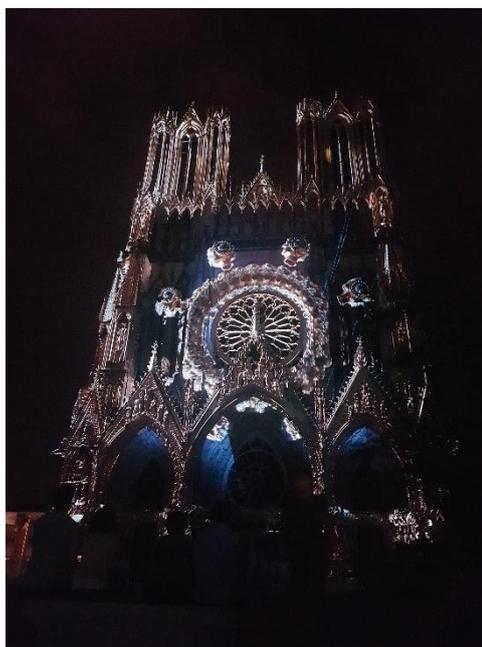
Places for good coffee are Oma coffee and Columbus. And of course, a lot of bakeries with tempting cakes and patisserie.

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Discover the city and surroundings.



Light show on the Cathedral, end May- middle of September

Reims is very beautiful city with rich history. Notre Dame de Reims and [Basilique Saint-Remi](#) are the main sights, take the chance to know more about these monuments. There are a lot of buildings in art-deco style as the city was destroyed during the WWI.



I would recommend taking the opportunity of free entrance to museums as a student and not to miss the chance to know more about Reims. You can also visit top of the Cathedral free of charge if you are under 25.



Musée-

Hôtel Le Vergeur – must visit museum! Open from 14:00 to 18:00 all days except Monday

Museum of the Surrender is located just behind the Central train station and represent the authentic headquarter of Eisenhower during the WWII.

Tourism office which is in the front of the Cathedral is a good source to get to know about coming events and places to visit. Sometimes they have free champagne tastings in the office so that it is possible to get to know small local champagne producers and book their tours to cellars or to production facilities.

I took the City pass at the end of my stay and really enjoyed guided tours to the Cathedral and all other included options.

Tour to champagne cellars is the MUST thing to do in Reims. I took a tour in Taittinger Champagne house because they use ancient Roman caves to store champagne and have good description of the whole champagne production process.

I'd also recommend visiting Epernay – the capital of the Champagne as a drink, which is around 30 min from Reims by train, and to see other small villages around the city.

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Rilly-la-Montagne
10 min. from Reims by train



Chatillon Sur Marne,
Accessible by car

Paris

Paris is 130 km from Reims. It is accessible by trains (40 min) and busses (1h 40min). You can also check less expensive trains on this website <https://www.ouigo.com/>

Disneyland Paris is located between Reims and Paris and sometimes you are offered to join the tour with other exchange students. You can also go there by yourself using trains or blablacar.

Conclusion

The worst part of my experience was connected to bureaucracy and bad organization in the city and at NEOMA. Some of my friends struggled to open a bank account for months, others had long issues with CAF application. There was some part of uncertainty in our study and exam schedules.

The best part of my experience was this Double degree Erasmus itself. I learned a lot from the academic perspective and about myself, I improved my language skills, ability to work in teams, ability to start everything from the beginning in the new city, to get new friends and to become more open. I didn't believe that this will impact me as much as it did. Double Degree not only open more opportunity for future in terms of employment, but also wider your worldview and cultural background.