

Bucerius Law School – Hamburg, Germany – Fall 2013

My semester abroad experience at Bucerius exceeded my expectations—by far. Going into it I knew I would be able to gain new experiences and perspectives while still being able to take courses relevant to my field of interest. Bucerius allowed me to do that AND MORE. This school really knows how to run a successful international program, and made my experience easy and worry-free. The international office is amazing will help you with everything logistically, and give you a handbook with what you need to know to live in Hamburg. They will give you plenty of information regarding academics, immigration, housing, extracurricular activities, etc. You will not feel lost in Hamburg. They also give you the option to join a “buddy family”, which I highly recommend. These buddies will be there for you if you have any questions about school or Hamburg, and most importantly they will be your friends! I still frequently speak with my buddies, and have become very close friends with them. The program also has about 100 international students, and a presents a great opportunity to meet and become friends with people from all over the world. Also, my program had about 30 American students, so now I have contacts from other law schools in the US.

Language Barrier – “Everyone in Europe speaks English.” Mostly true... but you should also try to learn some German! I did not know much German when I moved to Hamburg. I knew the basics, had done some self-study during the summer, but I mainly learned conversational German once I was there. Most people speak English, but as everything around you is in German, I recommend also learning the basics to help orient yourself. It will also make your experience more enjoyable because you can practice what you have learned at public places, stores, restaurants, etc. Also, TIP: anything that has to do with customer service, they are nicer to you if you initially speak German to them. You can also practice with the German

students at Bucerius, they love to hear that people are interested in learning German, and they also want to practice their English with you.

Academics – I loved every single class I took at Bucerius. I took business law classes I would have taken at Hastings, and additional classes Hastings wouldn't usually offer but are still highly relevant to what I want to do. The program also requires you take a survey course on the German legal system, so that class was a nice overview. The class covers a lot of information rather quickly, but just remember that the course is supposed to give you a glimpse at each of the areas of law, not an expert. The exam for that class was pretty tough, but if you show you have at least learned the basics, you will still get a good grade. Also, Hastings only requires that you take the minimum amount of classes Bucerius requires. While this is great, just make sure that you PASS all of these classes, because if you don't pass 1, then there's a chance you won't get your 12 units for the semester. For reading materials, they provide it all for you during orientation. For most classes you have to buy a course reader, but that is usually around 7-20 Euros each. Very cheap compared to the law textbooks we have to buy here. The teaching style is the Socratic method, so you are already familiar with how that goes. Just be prepared and ready to participate in class, because they are big on participation. They are also big on ATTENDANCE. You can only miss 1 or 2 classes (for each class you are enrolled in), before they drop your grade down. They keep good records of attendance, and are strict on this policy. But no worries, you will enjoy the classes anyway! At least I did.

Hamburg – Hamburg is an amazing city to live in. I would probably move there if I had the chance to in the future. It is very new (but still has historical things), clean (compared to SF Tenderloin), organized (amazing public transport system – school will give you a free pass for the time you are there), efficient (small city, walkable). The people are very friendly and polite!

The nightlife is pretty fun too, and there are numerous neighborhoods to explore. Weather: I actually got really lucky with the weather, and autumn was pretty nice. It didn't rain that much either, and when it did, it was mostly just cloudy and misty. I missed the 2 big rainstorms that hit Hamburg because I was out of town on those weekends. It started getting cold in November, so you will definitely need a winter coat. In fact, I brought a few different coats because some days you just need a light rain jacket, others you will want a warm winter coat. It snowed for only about 1 week while there, but I also think I just got lucky this year.

Extracurricular Activities – The school organizes many trips and activities. Go to all of them, not kidding. They are free. They take you to neighboring towns, arrange tours, movie nights, school parties, everything. If you don't go to the activities, you will miss out and regret it later. They also offer a Berlin trip, but I didn't go because I had already spent about 1 month there before the semester started. Berlin is also an amazing city which is quite the opposite of Hamburg in terms of the people and culture—not to mention all of the history! I HIGHLY recommend going to Berlin for at least a weekend (3 hour bus/train ride from Hamburg). I also recommend generally spending a lot of time in Hamburg because it is the city you live in. Many international students travel every single weekend, but that is exhausting and they never felt like they knew Hamburg at all. I went on a total of 4 weekend trips to nearby countries throughout the whole semester, and that was just the right amount. I now feel like I have a close connection to Bucerius and Hamburg because of the amount of time I spent getting to know the school and the city. If you do want to travel, book it early before plane and train prices go up, but wait until you know the official class schedule (remember, strict attendance policy).

Random Advice – (1) Sign up for the German bank account that the school helps arrange. Makes life 150% easier. (2) Get a German cell phone plan. They are very cheap. I paid 8

Euros a month for a German SIM card, got it a local grocery store. Warning: the instructions for setting up your SIM card will likely be in German, so get a friend to help you set it up or ask the International Office. If you don't have a device with a SIM card reader, you can just get a basic phone from electronic stores like Saturn or Media Markt and pay-as-you-go. (3) Try to live in one of the student dormitories that the school has relationships with. Also makes life easier, but make sure the dorm you pick is within 30 minutes from school. If you can't get a dorm (they fill up almost immediately), then try to find a place near school. Finding temporary housing can be tough just like in SF, so be prepared to work a little bit before securing a place. Worst case scenario, you might not be certain where you are living until you actually arrive in Hamburg. Just be persistent and the International Office will try to help you. (4) Take advantage of your time in Germany. The fact that you can study there while in law school is a huge opportunity and Germany has so much to offer. For me, it was the most wonderful experience of MY LIFE. Studying abroad is what you make of it, so make it worth it!

Post-Travel Reports

General Info:

Bucerius program is an excellent program! It is well-organized, and the international students office is there to help you with anything (housing, travel, visa, even restaurant recommendations!). I went to Bucerius in fall in my 3L year, and had a great experience. The program had about 70 other international students. So, it is a big program, and you will make a lot of friends from all over the world. German students at Bucerius (or German people in general) are very friendly, and so it will be easy to make friends with the local as well. You won't be disappointed with this study abroad program.

During the semester, int'l student office will organize many different events. Although they will tell you that you have to sign up by certain date, space hardly ever got filled up. So, if you're not sure whether you want to go, just wait until the day before to sign up. Caution: events on weekdays afternoon might get filled up, so sign up a few days before the day of the event if you want to go.

The biggest events are weekend trip to Malente (countryside of Germany, free) and 4-5 day trip to Berlin (150 or 250 Euros during one week break). During the summer, the int'l student office will tell you that you have to sign up before July or Aug and that space is limited. Some people weren't sure whether to sign up because they prefer to wait and see, but also worried that space will get filled up. Some people signed up right away because they are afraid the space will be filled. But don't worry about it because the space won't be filled up. It's better to wait until you get to Bucerius and see whether you want to sign up. You will meet new friends, etc. My friends and I ended up going to Amsterdam the weekend of Malente trip. If you had signed up for Malente, would you feel like you're missing out on Amsterdam with your new friends? Also, the one week break is the only time to do a long travel, you should consider whether you want to spend that week in Berlin (3 hours away). People who went on the Berlin trip had lots of fun, but some wish they hadn't signed up because other travel options that they preferred came up later. Once you sign up, it's binding (esp. Berlin trip because they will bill you whether you go or not if you already sign up).

Preparation for departure

Language:

Definitely learn some German before you go. It makes things go smoother. Most Germans speak English, but somehow I always run into the ones that don't. Mostly, older generation and people from small towns hardly speak any English.

If anything, you should at least be able to figure out what's on the menu. When I first got to Hamburg, I didn't know how to read the German menu. I ended up ordering Schnitzel and Affelsaft (apple juice) all the time because those were the only items I know. Of course, you can point to an item and ask what it is. Most waiters and waitresses will be able to reply in English. But no one is going to translate the entire menu for you (unless they already have an English menu)

Goethe institute offers different variations of German language courses in downtown San Francisco. See web site at www.goethe.de/uk/saf/enindex.htm. Another option is to enroll in an intensive German course with a local language institute in Hamburg through Bucerius. Bucerius will let you know more details after you have been accepted into the study abroad

program. The intensive course is really really really great. A Greek girl in the program who knew 0 German was able to speak and understand basic German after a month. The intensive course usually starts in early August and ends before school begins in Fall.

Don't take German course offered by Bucerius during the school semester (different from the intensive course). I took one class and ran. I thought it was ineffective. Most people who went through the whole course agreed. But normally they let you try out the first week without having to pay if you decide to drop the class before the end of the first week.

Maps and documents:

Bucerius will mail you a package which includes a Hamburg map. Make sure you bring it! Comes in very handy when you first get there.

Also, bring the admission letter (letter saying that you will be studying at Bucerius) just in case Immigration wants to see it.

Keep the phone number of the international office with you. If you have any emergency or run into any trouble, they will be able to help you.

Note where the American embassy or consulate is, and keep a photocopy of your passport. In case you lose your passport, the American embassy can issue an emergency passport for you within 24 hours.

Health Insurance:

If you don't already have an outside health insurance, buy insurance with Bucerius. It's about 2-3 times cheaper than Hastings insurance. Insurance with Bucerius also covers short weekend travels to other European countries. After you get your Dr's bill, you take the bill to the International Office and they will contact the insurance company for you for either reimbursement or direct payment to the medical institute. You don't even have to deal with the insurance company yourself!

If you decide to get Bucerius insurance, make sure you get a letter from Bucerius saying that you're buying insurance through them. You will need to show this letter to Hastings health services to waive your Hastings insurance. Don't do it the last day because the nurse is always clueless about what to do since the waiver form is geared toward people who will be studying in the US, and not abroad. A few phone calls back forth between you and the Hastings nurse, and you can waive the expensive Hastings insurance.

Clothes:

All I have to say is pack light! At the end of the semester, most people ended up having to ship things home (not cheap), or throw away stuff because of the overweighted baggage. If you plan to do some shopping (Europe has beautiful winter clothes that you won't find in the US!!!), then pack really light. Be sure to check with your airlines what the baggage allowance is. Most airlines allow 2 suitcases + one carry-on. Weight limit varies.

Weather in Hamburg is 10 times more unpredictable than SF. It gets cold, then sunny, then rains. The key is to always bring a small umbrella with you and dress in layers. When it's hot, take off the outer layer. When it's cold, put the layers back on.

In September and October, there are still some warm days, so bring some appropriate clothes. If you're planning to visit southern Greece, Italy, or Spain, be sure you bring some summer clothes and flip-flops because it will still be quite warm there (about 20-25 degree C in October or warmer in Sep).

If you're planning to leave in Dec to come home for xmas, you only have to prepare your clothes for about 0 degree celcius (32 degree F). If you plan to stay till Jan, it will probably get colder then.

Cultural stuff

Restaurants do not serve free water. It's like that in most parts of Europe. Out of all places that I visited, I only get free tap water in London and Athens.

Water with gas (soda water) is usually served if you order water. If you don't like that (it's sorta weird), be sure to tell your waiter you want water without gas.

Tip about 10% at the restaurants if you enjoy the service. But even if you don't tip, they won't give you dirty look as in the US. If you don't like the service, just don't tip. Most restaurants also already include service charge in the food prices. You will see how the waiters and waitresses get so excited and grateful when you give them 2 euro tip because they really don't expect tip most of the time.

Sometimes people look at you funny when you jaywalk. Just ignore them. A lot of locals still do jaywalk. If you visit the southern state (e.g. Munich in Bavaria state), people really do not jaywalk there.

Subway stations (U-Bahn and S-Bahn as they call them) in Hamburg and in most parts of Germany do not have barrier. You just walk right through. But they have random check on the subway sometimes, especially late at night (I never got checked and most people on the program never got checked). The school will provide you with a free transportation card (work with all U-Bahn, S-Bahn, and most buses). Make sure you carry that with you. The transportation card form Bucerius also lets you venture out into small towns nearby via regional trains for free – check with ticket office or Bucerius International Student Office. In addition, if you have a friend visiting you on a weekend, the transportation card allows you to have one guest with you on the subway on weekends for free. If you arrive in Hamburg before orientation date, just go to the international students office to collect your transportation card first.

If you go to Oktoberfest, each tent only serves one kind of beer. It's a special brew they make for Oktoberfest. If you go in there and order Corona or stuff like that, they will get really annoyed before telling you there's no such thing here. Oktoberfest usually lasts for 3 weeks (from end of Sep to beginning of Oct). The first Sunday is gay day. Pschorrbraeu Festhalle tent is where most gay people are on gay day, but any tent will have a good portion of gay people on gay day (Go there for a good fun, but avoid it if you think this is too rowdy for you). The second week is Italian week. This is the time to make some Italian friends. Note: during Italian week, people like to cut to bathroom line.

Cellphone

They call it "Handy" in German. The phone that you have in the US will not work in Germany unless your phone is tri-band. So, find out what kind of phone you have. Certain service providers in the US like Verizon also "lock" their phones – meaning that you have to pay your provider to "unlock" your phone before you can use it in other countries --> really ridiculous but true.

You can also buy a new phone in Germany. 30 - 50 Euros would get you a decent enough phone to use for 4 months. If you buy a new phone, it usually comes with a local phone number. If you bring your own phone, you will have pay to buy a local number (between 5 to 15 Euros depending on which provider you buy the number from). Big providers in Germany

include O2, Vodafone, T-mobile, etc. You can ask the phone shops for the per minute cost + sms costs, etc. But I would recommend O2. It's the cheapest and reception is about the same for all providers (although some claim that vodafone (most expensive) has the best reception).

Since you probably can't sign up for a monthly plan because you're only there for 4 months, you will have to get pre-paid sim card. You can top up your account by buying a top up card – available at phone stores, most supermarkets, and most grocery stores. Expect to spend about 10-15 Euros per week on cell phone usage. SMS is the cheapest way – incoming sms are free. Outgoing calls are expensive. Incoming calls are free.

Arrival

Hamburg airport is not directly connected to subway (U-Bahn and S-Bahn) as of Fall 2007. Take bus #110 to the nearest Bahn station called Ohlsdorf. From there, you can take subway to your apartment. Purchase the subway ticket from the automatic machine labeled "Fahrkarten." Look at the board for your destination and corresponding number (the further your destination, the higher the number). Press the corresponding number on the machine and insert the amount of money requested (not sure if the machine takes bills).

You can also just take a cab. The airport is not too far from the city. Depending on where your apartment is, it will cost you between 5-25 Euros.

If you have a German buddy assigned to you, you can probably ask him/her to pick you up if he/she has a car.

Travel

There are four major ways to get out of Hamburg – flight, train, bus, car.

Flight:

There is a lot of budget airlines in Europe – ryanair, easyjet, germanwings, etc. They offer flights as cheap as 20 Euros to Venice. Just check different websites for good deals:

www.ryanair.com --> fly out from Lubeck airport. Ryanair provides a bus that takes you from Hamburg central bus station (ZOB bus station diagonally across from Hauptbahnhof (the central train station)) to Lubeck airport for 8 Euro one way. Be sure to have 8 Euros with you on the way back from Lubeck airport. One of my friend didn't have 8 Euros and the only ATM at Lubeck airport was out of order (there is nothing around Lubeck airport – imagine woods).

www.easyjet.com --> fly from Hamburg airport now. So, if easyjet offers the same price as ryanair, take easyjet to save some pain.

www.germanwings.com

Condor air web site

Air Berlin

LTU

TUI Fly

www.lastminute.com (pick up many budget airlines)

www.travelsupermarket.com

www.kayak.com

www.edreams.com

You just have to check these web sites often for good deal. When select the airport to fly from, check Hamburg airport, Lubeck airport (Lubeck is a town about one hour away), and Bremen airport (Bremen is a city about one hour away). Flights from Hamburg airport are quite

limited. So, you might to fly from Lubeck or Bremen. Train from Hamburg central station to Bremen central station costs less than 10 euros, and then you have to take bus from Bremen central station to Bremen airport. I don't know how much that costs. That's the pain of budget travel. Berlin airport is another option (but it's 3-4 hours away!)

Be sure also to check at which airport your budget airline will land at the destination. Usually it will be an airport just outside the city (take maybe 1 hour to get to the city). If you are not sure, just ask a German student at Bucerius. I usually book my flight in school computer lab, and there is also some German students around to ask. They're really friendly.

One exception: if you are flying to Paris, don't forget to check AirFrance web site. My friends and i got the cheapest deal there.

Train:

Check train schedule and book train tickets at www.bahn.de

There are three main train stations in Hamburg. You can choose to leave from any of these stations (prices will be the same): Hamburg Hauptbahnhof (central station), Dammtor (station closest to Bucerius), Hamburg-Altona (in Altona area – toward the west of the city). But if you travel in group, usually everyone just meets up at central station.

For destination, once you know what city you want to go to, normally just pick central station if you're not sure.

Important notes:

A train strike in Germany is very common, but also very orderly. Most Germans know about an upcoming strike a few weeks ahead of time because they watch the news or read the newspaper. www.spiegel.de is quite a good news web site – in German only. www.bahn.de itself also give you news and updates on any possible strike, but the detail is only available in German version of the web site, not the English one. If you can't read German, just ask the local about any upcoming strike.

If you already paid for your train tickets and there is a strike, you can either refund at full price or you can just get on any train that will take you to your destination. The conductors will understand that there is a strike and www.bahn.de will usually tell you that you can take any train to get to your destination even though it is more expensive. The difficult part is to figure out what train to take, especially if you don't speak German. Announcement on trains or subway usually only gives details in German.

Automatic Discount. You will usually get discount if you book round trip and travel in group (2 persons are enough to qualify you for discount). The web site or the ticket office won't tell you this. The discount will only show up on your screen after you have selected your return trip. So, click all the way to the return trip to find out what discount you're getting if any.

Discount Card. There is discount card called "Bahn card 50," "Bahn card 25," etc. 50 means 50% discount. 25 means 25% discount. Discount only applies to domestic trains that don't already have "automatic discount." But even if you take the train to another country, you will get discount for the distance you travel within Germany. So, if you plan to use the train a lot, it's worth it to have such a discount card. Bahn card 50 costs 100 euros. Bahn card 25 costs 50 euros. The general rule is that Bahncard 25 is worth purchasing if you're going to spend more than 200 Euros on rail travel. Personally I didn't get one because I wasn't sure what kind of transportation I was going to take. But it turned out Bahncard 25 would have been worth purchasing for me.

I have taken the train to Munich for Oktoberfest (because flights were fully booked), and to Amsterdam. Seems like train is the best way to get to Amsterdam. Otherwise, note that trains are not that cheap.

Bus:

I only took a bus once – to Berlin. Check www.berlinlinienbus.de

Train was only a little more expensive and would have been more comfortable, but the news said that a strike might happen on that weekend. So I opted for bus instead.

Also check www.eurolines.com for buses.

Most people didn't take buses at all because buses take a lot longer to get to places even though it's probably the cheapest way to travel. But we only have 3-day weekend most of the time. Why waste hours on buses? Note: you can try to schedule your classes so that you have longer weekends, but be aware of 2 absence per class policy and the irregular schedule for classes (the same class doesn't take place on the same time and day every week).

Car:

This is a great option if you have 4-5 people to fill up a car so that the rental and gas costs are divided. The driver should also have a navigator (GPS or someone in the passenger seat) because streets in Hamburg are hard to read on the map – not in grids). Some of my friends get lost in Hamburg for an hour before getting to the freeway). Most car rentals allow you to drive cross countries within Europe (check the rental terms).

There is usually student weekend discount. Be sure to tell them you're a student!

Manual cars are a lot cheaper to rent than Automatic. So, learn to use manual gears, or befriend those who know how to drive manual cars!

Accommodation for travel:

I mostly stayed in hostels. They cost anywhere between 15-40 euros per night per person for a shared room depending on which city you're in. If you have 4 people and you book a four person room, then you get your own room at the price of shared room. Check www.hostelworld.com for hostels in different cities. You can also book your room there. But I usually find out what hostels have availability on hostelworld, and then book the room directly through the hostel's own web site to avoid extra charges on hostelworld.com.

Visas

Once you get there, the school will apply for residence permit for you. You will get a visa sticker on your passport showing that you're there to study.

For US passport, you can get in to Germany initially without any visa.

For other passport, check whether you need entry visa initially. If you need a visa to enter Germany initially, be sure to apply about 3 months ahead of time because it does take a while to get student visa. You will still have to apply for residence permit when you're in Germany. The school will take care of it on orientation day.

Finance

Plan to spend about 4000-5000 Euros if you want to travel on weekends. I took about 6 weekend trips and 1 one-week long trip to Greece during fall break (around end of Oct). If you don't plan to travel so much, 3000 Euros should be enough.

Orientation

Try not to miss this because there is a lot of paper to sign. But a few people had other obligations and couldn't make it to Germany on time for orientation and they did just fine.

Bank Account

Bucerius will help you sign up for a bank account that you otherwise won't be able to get because you're only there for 4 months. The bank charges about 3.50 euros per month for the account. You have to close the account before you leave Hamburg.

Bank account is very important if you need to pay for something periodically. For example, the student dorms (private dorms not part of Bucerius) and some landlords will only accept direct transfer for payment of monthly rental, or make it really difficult and complicated to pay with cash. Also, some gyms take monthly payment the same way. I joined the swimclub with Hochschulsport Hamburg that allows me to use their swimming pool with directly transfer of monthly payment to their account. Direct transfer can only be done if you have a local bank account.

My advice is that you should open the bank account first because Bucerius will want to know whether you want one by June or July. Then during your first month there, you can decide whether you want to keep the account or not. If you don't want the account, it's easier to close it later.

With your bank account, you can also get international student ID for free. Bucerius will help you apply. Even if you may already have this Int'l student ID from STA, apply for a new one with Bucerius so that your card says you are a student at Bucerius, Hamburg, and not the US. Many places in Europe only give student discount to European students.

Accommodation

You need to know that most apartments (or flats as they call them) do not come with a living room. Usually just a really small foyer with kitchen right next to it, and then bedrooms. If you find a flat with a living room, you're lucky! Only a few people from my year had a living room.

Bucerius curriculum requires their own students to study abroad for one semester in Fall. So, these students will put their room up for rent. The listing will be on a Bucerius web page (the Int'l student office will let you know). Usually this listing is put up around June. Make sure you get to the web site early because this is probably the best and easiest way to get housing.

Another way is to go through private dorms. Bucerius will tell you where these dorms are. Dorm life, from I saw and heard, is quite fun. You meet a lot of people from Germany and other countries. But the room is quite small. Shared bathroom and shared kitchen.

Also check www.wg-gesucht.de. This is like a Craigslist of Germany for room rental. WG (pronounced way-gay) is a German slang meaning an extra room in an apartment for rent. The website is in German only. But you can cut and paste most stuff onto bubblefish (world.altavista.com) for a rough translation. It's also not easy to find a room here because you're only staying for 4 months. Most people look for 1 year minimum. But it's worth a try when you're desperate.

Last resort: get a housing agent. Bucerius will tell you which one you can use. Usually if you use agent that Bucerius recommends, you can get Bucerius student discount (10-20%). Going through housing agent costs some money in the form of commission. I think they charge

about 60% of your monthly rent (a one time commission) for 4 month rental. The commission percentage is more or less depending on how long you're looking to rent. If their help doesn't result in any rental, then you don't have to pay at all. Usually you can look at the rooms that the agent represents on its web site before you decide to contact them.

The cost of a room is anywhere between 200-500 Euros per month depending on the size of your room and location. Utility may or may not be included. Security deposit is about one month rent if not a bit more. You get it back after you move out.

Make sure you specify what you expect the room to have to avoid any miscommunications. Tell them exactly what you want (furnished room, wireless internet, phone, etc etc). For wireless internet, make sure they give you the password before you get to Germany. It's hard to contact people when you first arrive.

I would recommend staying near the subway (u-bahn or s-bahn) --> walking distance from subway station is best. If not, near a bus stop that is not more than 5 mins from the subway. You will be taking the subway most of the time. It runs from about 4 am to 1 am, and 24/7 on Friday and Sat nights. When subway is not running, take a cab or a night bus.

When you pick a flat, you will want to know what area is where. The area near our school is called Rotherbaum. Bucerius is also close to University of Hamburg. Other areas not too far from Bucerius include: Sankt (St.) Georg ("gay area," but pretty much a good mixture of straight and gay crowd... also near Hamburg central station), Sankt Pauli, Hamburg (meaning the city center), Eppendorf, Hoheluft, Harvestehude, Sternschanze. A little further out are Altona-Nord, Altona-Altstadt, Ottensen, Winterhude. Even further out are Uhlenhorst, Barmbek, and who knows what.

Just check google map first. You will see a big lake in the middle. Try not to stay on the east side of the lake because it makes it hard to get to school (on the southwest side of the lake) or anywhere else. So, Uhlenhorst would not be a good area.

Also consider where you will be when you go out late. Hamburg is very safe. And people don't steal your stuff if you forget them somewhere. If you go out to bars and clubs, you will most likely end up in Sankt Pauli (red light district area, also where many clubs are) and Sternschanze (similar to mission and soma areas of SF) very often. So you might want to stay close to that area if you like to go out all the time. Sankt Pauli could be a little loud, so check with your landlord for more info.

I stayed in Altona-Altstadt. Altona used to be its own city, but is now part of Hamburg. My neighborhood is really pretty. Lots of brick buildings. One local mall with H&M, Zara, other shopping, supermarket, etc. And lots of small neighborhood shops and restaurants.

Academics

You will have to take about 6 classes (12 units as required by ABA). Not too bad. The semester is divided into 2 sessions with a fall break (1 week long) in the middle. Most classes only run through one session, but some run through both sessions. There are final exams at the end of each session. If the class runs through both sessions, then final exam is not until the end of the second session. Plan your classes appropriately because you don't want to end up with too many classes in one session. I planned it so that I had 3 finals per session.

Take Biomedical Ethics with Shapira if you want an easy class. Easy take home final. But the class is boring and more like a sociology class. You won't learn much.

Another easy class was Comparative Intellectual Property with Beldiman (who is teaching at Hastings now in Spring 2008). I think her class at Hastings is more difficult.

Classes I would avoid: Comparative Law, Law of the EU, German Law Survey (we were forced to take German Law Survey though)

Difficult classes but you will learn a lot from: Int'l Commercial Transactions, Int'l Commercial Arbitration, Int'l Conflict of Laws, Int'l Merger and Acquisition, EU Consumer Law

Different and cool: Alternative Dispute Resolution: professor teaches mediation and arbitration, and other ADR from int'l perspective. Very hands-on. No final.. Just write two short papers. All my friends who were in it love it (except for the schedule – 6 hour class for example). --> has to apply to get into the class because only about 12 spots are available. Professor tends to pick people from different countries (imagine the UN) --> so it would be hard for an American student to get in because there are so many american students on the program (only 1 “American” got into this class last semester and he turns out to be an international student from Jamaica studying in America.)

When I was there we had about 12 classes to choose from.

Places to visit in Hamburg

- Hamburg Rathaus (townhall – in downtown)
- Old River Tunnel (get off at Landungsbrücken station)
- the Dom (like a huge fun fair... check www.hamburger-dom.de)
- St. Michaels church
- St. Nikolai church (old church partially destroyed during WWII, now a tower with nice view of Hamburg)
- Alster lake --> the big lake on google map. take a boat tour (small boat) that goes into canals. very pretty. Hamburg has more canals than Venice and Amsterdam combined, but you can only see them by boat. You can also find a place to rent a canoe and canoe along many canals. Ask the local or Int'l student office where to rent one.
- Sternschanze for some cool bars. Shop for funky stuff here during the day.
- Landungsbrücken station. right opposite the station is a pier. You can take public boat all the way down the Elb river and back for free with your public transportation card. Which boat number? Look at the map that Bucerius will mail to you to see which boat number goes where. River Elb is the big one just south of the city. On the boat at some point, you will see a bar that looks like a man-made beach with sand. It's a cool bar. Get off the boat and try going there. Do this early before it gets cold in Nov.
- Sankt Pauli – clubs and redlight district. There is a street that is like amsterdam red light district in st. pauli and on which women and children are not allowed. Other than that, other streets are for all. The tradition is to party all night at Sankt Pauli and then walk to the nearby fish market (Fischmarkt) around 5-6 am for breakfast. You have to do it once!
- Stadtpark near Winterhude area – a big park on the map northeast of big lake alster. Beautiful park.
- Shopping: in Jungfernstieg area (Jungfernstieg station and Hauptbahnhof station)
- Gay clubs: Kir in Altona (Altona station) on Wed night, and other gay clubs in Sankt Pauli (just google them). Gay clubs in St Georg (the gay area) are a bit too laid-back if there are any clubs there. Find out what's going on from a gay magazine found in gay coffee shops and bars. Don't forget to try Cafe Urlaub in St. Georg for some good food. You can get free monthly gay magazine that tells you what's going on in the city and also some free maps of other european cities that show you where gay establishments are.

- Restaurant: Must eat at Oma Apotheke (means grandma's pharmacy) in Sternschanze for authentic german food, and Va Piano (www.vapiano.de) for Italian. Asian food is very expensive in Europe.
- Thai and Indian supermarket on Lange Reihe street (get out at Hauptbahnhof station toward the exit where all the cabs are)