

Experience Report

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Program: Thai German Double Degree Program
Universities: Chiang Mai University (CMU), Thailand
Otto-von-Guericke-University (OvGU), Germany
Duration: 7 month (August 2014 – February 2015)

Preparation

In preparation of the exchange program we (4 students from OvGU) got in touch with the responsible professor from the CMU. On her recommendation I applied for an Education Multiple-Entry Visa, which is suitable for traveling around Asia. After the postal application at the Royal Thai Embassy in Berlin, I received a quick answer within two weeks and had no paperwork in Thailand for re-entries after journeys abroad.

Arrival

After we arrived in Chiang Mai, some students picked us up and drove us to the dormitory at the university, where we stayed for the first nights. On the first evening we were warmly welcomed by some students and professors with a dinner.

Because we arrived in the beginning of August, 2 weeks before the lectures started, we had time to search for an apartment. With the help of some students we drove to many accommodations. Since not every Thai understands and speaks English, the communication might be difficult. Therefore it is advisable to ask some local friends for help.

University

The relationship to the lectures and the classmates was very close. The courses are different from the German ones. One lecture takes 3 hours and is often combined with practical work and exercises. During the semester we had to write reports and assignments, prepare and give presentations and do group work. Furthermore in the middle of the semester we wrote midterm exams of three hours each and final exams in December. In general the effort for the study is comparable to Germany.

Everyday life

Everyday life in Chiang Mai is really relaxed. We rented a scooter for 2500 Baht/month (approx. 60€) from the owner of our apartment. I think there were only some days we did not use the scooter. It is the easiest way to get somewhere in Chiang Mai. Except for taxi and red cabs, which we only used for the way to and from the airport, public transport does not exist. Hence, renting a scooter is the best opportunity.

During the lecture period we had lunch at the university. Due to the size of the university you can choose between various canteens. For dinner we almost went out every evening. In Chiang Mai, especially around the university, are a lot of stands and food courts, where you can find plenty of Thai, Vietnamese, Japanese

food for not more than 100 Baht (2-3€). It is much cheaper to go out for lunch and dinner than to cook at home. That is why we did not cook more than two or three times during the whole semester. Contrary to local products the prices for imported food e.g. muesli, milk or cheese is comparable to Germany or even higher.

Travelling around Asia

After the final exams, which took place in the beginning of December, I travelled with a friend from Germany through the South of Thailand (Phuket, Koh Samui, Koh Phangan, Bangkok). In comparison to Chiang Mai the south is more expensive. Generally Thai people try to charge you more, why we bargained almost every time e.g. on markets or when we drove by taxi. But due to the high amount of tourists in the south the prices are higher than in Chiang Mai and without bargain you would pay a multiple of the price. Especially in Bangkok it is wise to drive with taximeter. I made the experience that you always find a taxi driver who is willing to charge you by taximeter. I just took one or two times a Tuk Tuk or a red cab because it is part of the Thai experience.

Since there were no lectures during January and February I used the time to travel to different Asian countries (Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Singapore). In general travelling is cheap: You can find a lot of low price flights and cheap accommodations or special/luxury ones for less money than in Germany. But also during the lecture period it was no problem to find a cheap flight and travel for a weekend.

Conclusion

Summarizing the semester in Thailand was a great experience, I do not want to miss. I made so many experiences not only by travelling but more by living in the country, get to know the culture and the lifestyle of the Thai people and their relaxed manner.