

Experience Report: Chiang Mai 2013/2014

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The international cooperation between the Otto-von-Guericke-University (OvGU) in Magdeburg, Germany, and the Chiang Mai University (CMU) in Chiang Mai, Thailand, enables students of both countries to study abroad at the respective partner university. The dual-degree program is built upon a three semester study for German participants and a four semester study for students from Thailand. The goal of the program is to improve English language skills and learn basics of the German and Thai language, gain international experiences in a foreign country and the acquisition of a double-degree. After completing the study, students will be awarded with the German Master of Science in Industrial Engineering (Wirtschaftsingenieurwesen) and the Master of Engineering in Logistics and Supply Chain Management from Thailand. In order to qualify for a degree from Thailand, fifty percent of the total study time has to be fulfilled at the CMU. As a result, German students have to spend about 7 months in Chiang Mai.



First of all, one regular semester has to be attended at the CMU, which takes about five months. Classes are held in English and each student has to pass five courses. In the end, all grades are converted and transferred to the OvGU and count as credits for both degrees. The style of studying in Thailand differs from practices known in Germany. Courses at the CMU are divided into two parts of eight weeks. The ninth week is used to conclude the class with mid-terms or final examinations. Exams are designed to

require three hours of time and results represent between 50 and 70 percent of the final grade. Presentations, class participation and attendance make up for the rest of the grade

After passing all courses, another prerequisite has to be fulfilled within the sixth and seventh month in Thailand. Students can choose to write and publish a review paper that focuses on logistics relevant topics, or to present an idea at a logistics related conference. The attended conference or the chosen journals both have to be international to be suitable. After fulfilling the prerequisite, students will head back to Germany and end their study at the OvGU.



Chiang Mai is one of the biggest cities in Northern Thailand and is famous for its beautiful environment. Living in Chiang Mai is different but definitely not less preferable than in Germany; thousands of people from European countries visit and also move to Thailand every year. Chiang Mai is especially popular for its hills and natural environment that provides perfect conditions for hiking and tracking. Temperatures vary mostly between 25 and 30 C with a short drop around the end of the year and the sun is constantly shining. Raining season, also called monsoon season, is usually between April and October and characterized by frequent but short heavy rains. The easiest way to travel around in and around Chiang Mai is to either rent a scooter, which is easy, convenient and cheap, or to use so-called red cabs. These cabs are customized pick-up trucks that fit up to ten people in the back and drive around the city numerous. Public transportation, i.e. busses or trains, do not exist in Chiang Mai.

The main problem of foreigners going to Thailand is the communication with the native population. Thai language differs largely from English and letters, pronunciation and even the sentence structure cannot be compared with western languages. Henceforth, not only visitors do have problems with learning Thai, also the native Thai people have difficulties learning English. As a result, communicating with natives is often not possible. Although the Thai people living in tourist areas have learned to write and speak English well, in rural areas and other places where tourists are not common, the majority of people cannot speak English at all. The fact that Thai writing has different letters and does not use the latin alphabet is another problem that complicates communication.



Personally, the exchange program between the OVGU and the CMU was one of the best experiences I have ever made and I enjoyed it to the fullest. Studying in Thailand was fun and interesting at the same time; it broadened my mind on topics that does not directly effect the Western world. The experiences I have made will help me to understand how different and similar people can be at the same time, although they do not live or come from the same region. Living in Thailand requires patience, endurance and tolerance. Language and communication difficulties occur every day, but overcoming these obstacles, the country, people and culture will eventually become enjoyable and beautiful to the point of thinking to start a life there.