

Saint-Petersburg State University
International Relations Office

EXCHANGE STUDENTS' REPORT

Please complete this form and send it to Scientific and Academic Cooperation/Students Exchange Dept.
nechaeva@ir.pu.ru, fax +7 /812/ 3240788. Thank you.

TO BE FILLED OUT ELECTRONICALLY

The international experience you have gained while the exchange period at St.Petersburg University is the unique practice you will remember all your life. It can also help other students when they are planning for their exchange. To make sure that prospective students have a chance to learn from your experience you are required to submit the **Exchange Students` Report**.

Please complete the form and **return by email to incoming@ir.pu.ru**.

When filling in the returned student report try to remember the sort of things that you wanted to know before you went on exchange, be honest in your responses and try to avoid simply giving yes/no answers.

Please do not hesitate to contact Scientific and Academic Cooperation/Students Exchange Dept. staff if there are any issues you would like to discuss regarding your exchange experience.

Name:	Szofer
Host faculty at SPSU	Faculty of Economics
Exchange Study Period	1.09.2009-31.01.2010
Home Institution	Warsaw University, Faculty of Applied Linguistics

Do you give permission for prospective exchange students to contact you if they have questions? **Yes**

If yes, please give your preferred email address: ola.szofer@onet.eu

The Host University

What factors influenced your decision to select St.Petersburg State University?

I started learning Russian four years before my exchange semester in Saint Petersburg. I've decided to come to Saint Petersburg develop my Russian skills and expand on my knowledge of Russian culture.

How would you describe St.Petersburg State University?

Saints Petersburg State University is the world-class university, which allows students to access and make use of wide array of sources of knowledge and encourages them to use modern equipment. Russian students are very helpful and open-minded.

Please describe the location of St.Petersburg State University (both Faculty and Administration building)

The Exchange Office is located in the city centre in the beautiful historical building. Faculty of Economics occupies the modern building next to Chernyshevskaya metro station. City transport in Saint Petersburg is quick and comfortable.

Please describe the courses that you took while on exchange? What were their pros and cons?

I took part in many interesting courses (stock exchange, logistics, game theory, econometrics) at the Faculty of Economics during my stay in Saint Petersburg. The lecturers are very helpful to the international students, share their experience and teaching materials. During the courses in mathematical subjects students are taught not only the theoretical knowledge, but also the application of computer software. The only disadvantage is that there is so little courses in English at the Faculty of Economics, so that the knowledge of Russian language is essential to study there.

Did you take Russian language course? If so please describe its pros and cons?

I'm proficient in Russian so I've decided not to take the Russian language course. I had a chance to participate in more courses at my host faculty instead.

Did you find the academic staff helpful?

The academic staff in both student Exchange Office and at the faculty was always very nice, cheerful and helpful in solving our difficulties with Russian bureaucracy. ☺

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Please describe the resources available to exchange students (ie computers, the library)?

At the faculty of economics students are encouraged to use computers and computer programmes during the lectures and seminars. The teachers use simulations and visual aids which add to the diversity of the lectures. The library at the main university building is well-equipped, the reading room is quiet and comfortable. At the university students have access to wi-fi internet, electronic journals etc.

Did you experience any language or cultural difficulties at St.Petersburg State University?

Since I'm proficient in Russian I didn't have any language difficulties. As far as I'm concerned the administration staff is proficient in English so there are no communication barriers for international students at the University.

Do you think that going on exchange contributed to your academic development? If so, how?

My international experience contributed not only to my Russian skills but also the general knowledge. Spending time with Russian and International students allowed me to get a deeper understanding of different cultures and definitely broadened my horizons.

Practical

Accommodation

Please describe the accommodation options available to exchange students. What were their pros and cons?

Most of the students' dormitories are situated at Vasilievskiy ostrov, 20 minutes from Nevskiy Prospekt and the city centre. Most international students live at Kapitanskaya or Shevchenko street, in a beautiful district next to the Gulf of Finland. The dormitories are very comfortable (2+2 apartments with shared kitchen and bathroom). All the facilities (laundry, ironing room) are located in the same building. It sometimes gets a bit cold in the winter.

How expensive were the accommodation options?

Shared room on the dormitory costs around 3 400 rubles (approximately 80 euros) per month. Room in the city centre costs approximately 10 000 rubles.

What type of accommodation would you recommend?

Living in the dormitory is unforgettable experience so I would recommend this type of accommodation to everyone!

Food

Was food expensive?

Prices of food are comparable to Polish prices, the food is much cheaper than in Western Europe. In the city centre there is plenty of small chain restaurants where one can taste traditional inexpensive Russian cuisine (e.g. bliny or pelmeni). Students may also use cheap and tasty canteens at the University.

Where is the best place to shop?

There is a lot of places u can shop in Saint Petersburg. Most shops are open till 22.00 but there is a lot of 24h shops. One can buy traditional Russian food everywhere but there are also big shopping malls with a wide array of European products.

How much does it cost to eat out at a local restaurant/caff?

Apart from more expensive restaurants there is a lot of cafes and small restaurants where one can eat lunch for 150-200 rubles. Happy hours and special offers are very popular here so it's easy to find a cheap and tasty meal.

Transport

How did you find the local transport network?

The transport network in SPb is comfortable and well-planned. One can easily buy a map of city transport with the metro, bus-, tram- and trolleybus lines as well as the marshrutkas.

Was it expensive to use local transport?

The travel card for a student (70 metro fares and unlimited fares to other means of public transport) costs 555 roubles (from January 1st 2010).

Did you have the Students Travel Card (discounts for public transport)?

Exchange students can get a travel card in about a month after the arrival. It's less expensive than paying for each fare and less time-consuming (you avoid queues in the metro cashier's window)

Personal Safety

Did you find St.Petersburg safe?

As far as I'm concerned Saint Petersburg is in general safe. However, some of my foreign friends experienced aversion from the Russians.

Did you use medical services at St.Petersburg? If yes please describe their pros and cons.

I personally didn't use any medical service but some of my friends did. Foreigners are usually directed to American clinic at Naberezhnaya reki Moiki. The clinic is neat and clean, the medical service quick and decent, which, unfortunately, influenced the prices of medical services.

Do you have any safety advice for other exchange students?

I assume basic security measures (try not to walk alone at night, keep an eye on your bags, wallets, documents, etc.) are enough to spend the exchange semester safely and in nice atmosphere.

Social

Life on Exchange

How would you describe the way of life in Russia and in St.Petersburg in particular?

Life in Saint Petersburg is quite hectic and busy. People usually don't smile on the streets. Museums and theaters are one of the favourite leisure activities of Russians, but there is also plenty of nice bars and cafes where they spend their free time.

Did you experience 'culture shock'?

I've been to Russia for a couple of times before so I was well prepared to my stay. Moreover, Russian culture is not much different from Polish lifestyle, so I didn't experience any particular 'culture shock' (except of the shocking temperatures in winter ;))

Do you have any suggestions on how to cope with 'culture shock'?

I guess the best advice I can give to students coming to Russia is to calm down and be patient. When you overcome all the bureaucratic obstacles the stay in Russia will definitely be unforgettable!

What is the best way to meet people?

Exchange students have a chance to meet Russian students at the university, in the dormitory, in cafes... Russians are usually very open people, keen to talk to the foreigners so it's not a problem to find someone to practice Russian with.

Do you have any suggestions on what to do on the weekend?

There is a lot of extremely beautiful summer residences and palaces not far from Saint Petersburg. The city itself is worth visiting and sightseeing as well!!

Travel

Did you travel before, after or during your exchange?

During our exchange semester in Russia we visited Tallinn (5 hours drive by bus) - a beautiful and tiny (in comparison to Saint Petersburg) town! A lot of my friends traveled around Russia as well.

What would you advise to travellers?

Russian trains are usually neat and comfortable (but of course everything depends on nice neighbors), train and bus tickets relatively cheap. I assume the adventurous travelers should observe basic security measures.

Highlights

Briefly describe the highlights of your exchange experience

My exchange semester in Russia allowed me to meet new wonderful people, expand on my cultural knowledge and improve my Russian and English skills. I would advice such experience to everyone!!

Problems

Briefly describe any problems you experienced on exchange and any suggestions you may have to help others avoid them.

The only problem I've experienced here is that the semester was too short ;)

Other Comments

Do you have any further comments?

The information given in this Report CAN BE PUBLISHED on the Internet __ Yes __

Thank you for taking the time to share your exchange experiences in this report.

Please save your report as a **Word document** and email a copy to nechaeva@ir.pu.ru

Date: 29.01.2010

Name: Aleksandra Szofer