

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:	Sophia Roepke
Host faculty at SPSU	Sociological faculty
Exchange Study Period	5 months
Home Institution	University of Erfurt

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

If yes, please give your preferred email address: Sophia-Roepke@gmx.de

The Host University

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

I study slavistics.

How would you describe St.Petersburg State University?

The university is very big and most of the time it is more than difficult to find directly the right way, room, person,...

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

The location is ok. For me it doesn't look all the time like a university but more like a school, when it comes to rooms, equipement,...

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

I was part of a master program called European Studies. The courses were very interesting, the teachers/ profs are more or less all from Germany. Cant see any cons – perhaps for me that it was in English.

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

First I took 8h in philfac, that was not that efficient, as I also studied in that Master program and I somehow had to concentrate on one thing. Then I went to spezfac, had 20h Russian per week and my Russian improved a lot during that time.

Did you find the academic staff helpful?

Sometimes.

Did you find the international office staff helpful?

Most of the time they were more than helpful.

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

Never used it.

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

Not really. I look Russian. But I experienced a lot of Racism in general towards foreigners. Especially black people and Asians. That is definitely a huge problem and should be changed. When the university wants to be international they have to be more open-minded, tolerant and liberal or they will fail. Racism in university is like a punch in the face of every academic. And you are, aren't you?

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

Somehow yes. I learned some Russian. But to say the truth as I wanted to get to know Russia as a country, I didn't study too hard. But I would say that's the best you can do. You can't find Russia just in a university.

Practical

Accommodation

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

Dormitories can be good to get to know a lot of people. But When you stay longer than one semester, perhaps to improve your Russian it would be better to find a flat with some Russians.

How expensive were the accommodation options?

Not too expensive. About 5000-7000 Rub.

What type of accommodation would you recommend?

As I said it depends: 1 semester: dormitory, more than one: flat.

Food

Was food expensive?

No.

Where is the best place to shop?

Depends again. You ll find your best place by looking around. I went to Victoria, Fermer and for clothes to MEGA.

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

I d say about 300-400 Rub.

Transport

How did you find the local transport network?

Ok. Not too expensive. But you should never trust timeframes.

Was it expensive to use local transport?

No.

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

Yes. Best idea.

Personal Safety

Did you find St.Petersburg safe?

Of course not. Too much stealing around and racism. People like to fight. But I am female, so it was ok for me.

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

No.

Do you have any safety advice for other exchange students?

Be careful all the time but dont be afraid. Saint Petersburg is in general a great place for anything. Enjoy your stay.

Social

Life on Exchange

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

Sitting together drinking, playing the guitar or going out.

Did you experience 'culture shock'?

No. But I hate Russian Bureaucracy.

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

Don't be afraid. Try it over and over.

What is the best way to meet people?

Go out and be open minded.

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

Close to Gostinij Dvor: Dacha, Fidel, chet pobedy, mesto, aquarel,...

Travel

Did you travel before, after or during your exchange?

Yes.

What would you advise to travellers?

Don't be afraid and do it, its great, either by bus or by train.

Highlights

Briefly describe the highlights of your exchange experience

Cant say that briefly. I liked many things. I liked the self made belorussian food I ate when we met our belorussian friends.
It was great to see the town from upon (go to Isaaks cathedral or Smolnij). I loved Philharmony, even better than Marinskij Theatre.
There is so much to see, just enjoy your time I make the best out of it.

Problems

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

You cant avoid problems. It is Russia. Just don't give up and try to calm down when you re angry. Doesn't make it better. Accept angry secretaries and university staff.

Other Comments

Do you have any further comments?

Enjoy your stay!

The information given in this Report CAN BE PUBLISHED on the Internet _____ if you want to, 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: 09.04.2010

Name: Sophia Röpke