

Here's my Study Abroad Story

Adele Eslinger

**IES Vienna: European Society and Culture
Vienna, Austria**

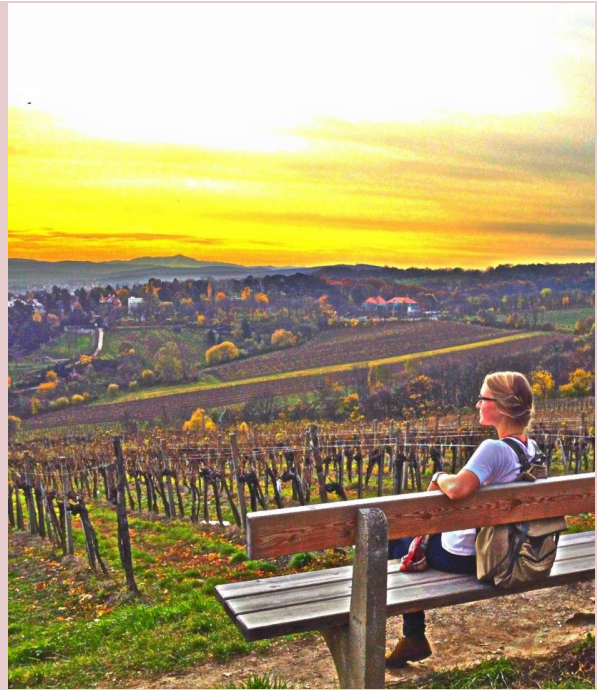
Major: Linguistics and Spanish (dual)

Program: The IES center is located in the heart of Vienna, the stunning, historical capital of the Hapsburg Empire. Classes take place in an old palace (yep...pretty idyllic) and are taught in English by local professors. Advanced German speakers also have the opportunity to take classes at a local university. Students live in homestays when available, but are also sometimes placed in dormitories or apartments. This is great for getting to know local cafes, fresh markets, the public transportation system (which is amazing!), and hidden parks and gardens. IES also offers a number of organized trips in Austria and nearby Eastern European countries throughout the semester.

Typical Day: I would wake up around 6:30 for a run through the Prater (the old hunting-grounds of the Hapsburgs). Then, I'd head to class by 8:30, travelling by bike, streetcar, or subway. Lunch was typically a *laugensemmel* (pretzel roll) with garlic-cruste salami, arugula, and mustard. After class, I often wandered with friends, stopping at an old café for a *Melange* (coffee), visiting a museum or palace, or venturing out to explore a new district, before returning home to cook dinner and enjoy the glow of sunset on the baroque-style apartment next-door.



Highlights: Everything. Vienna is inexplicably beautiful. The city has an amazing mixture of green spaces, markets, museums, and architecture. It is easy to navigate, but you always feel like you're discovering something new. I particularly enjoyed the *Naschmarkt*, a kilometer-long open air produce market, and the Saturday flea market that took up another half kilometer. Wandering the numerous palaces and museums, steeping myself in history, and eating my way through the city were all lovely ways to experience Vienna. I also had the opportunity to visit other Eastern European countries and fell in love with the gothic spires of Prague, dark woods of Transylvania, and willow-draped streets of Ljubljana. It was gorgeous.



Challenges: Although I felt fairly comfortable in the Viennese culture, my one semester of German made for a steep language learning curve. I saw rapid improvement, however, as I began to shop and navigate on my own. There were also little cultural differences that caught me off guard: for example, Austrians stare in public, but yawning is seen as rude (who knew?). Also, while the Viennese are extremely efficient, there is no such thing as a line at a bakery or deli...you just have to be assertive. These challenges, however, only added to the overall richness of my experience among the warm Austrian people.

Advice: If you're thinking of studying abroad in Europe, consider a non-traditional location such as Austria! You will have a truly unique experience while immersed in a complex history and culture. In Vienna itself: visit Café Hawelka and soak-in its nostalgic interior and tuxedoed waiters, wander the grounds of Schönbrunn Palace in every season, take advantage of cheap student tickets for the *Stattsoper*; venture out to the Vienna Woods, and make Viennese friends by getting a language buddy. And yes, be prepared to apply for permanent residency, because it's that beautiful.

