

## Erfahrungsbericht

(TUMexchange, Departmental Program, Free Mover, non-European Double Degree)

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### Preparation

Surfing Pacific waves and skiing on volcanoes all within 24 hours? If this is your dream, Santiago de Chile might just be the perfect destination for your semester abroad. I applied through TUMSomEx, and since I was certain about visiting Chile, choosing the UAI was straightforward as it was the program's only option in the country—a decision I don't regret. The application process at TUM was seamless, and the one at UAI was mostly a formality, proceeding without major issues. Although Chile is quite digitally advanced, applying for a student visa can be somewhat chaotic and take up to 5 months (also costing USD 100). If you're okay with not having a student metro card (USD 50) and paying per ride (50 cents), I'd suggest skipping the headache and entering with a tourist visa. You'll need to leave the country after 90 days, which you'll likely do anyway while traveling. Upon arriving at Santiago airport, book a Transvip for a safe and economical ride. I consistently used their service for airport trips. Without a local SIM card, Uber, more expensive anyways, wasn't an option for me. For telecommunications, I highly recommend getting a SIM card from Entel, offering excellent coverage at a reasonable monthly rate (around USD 5 for a recharge).

### Studying at the Host University

Preparing for studies at UAI, I was grateful to be contacted by our buddies via WhatsApp, who assisted us in selecting our courses in advance. I enrolled in Liderazgo (Leadership), Introduccion a las Inversiones (Introduction to Investments), Taller Entorno (Non-market Environment Seminar), and Taller de Diseno y Evaluacion de Negocios (Business Design and Evaluation Seminar). I highly recommend these courses, thanks to the supportive teachers and classmates. While I enjoyed all my classes, only one could be credited, as I had completed most of my elective credits already, and only grades higher than my current ones would count at TUM. Although failing a class is nearly impossible, achieving an A can be challenging. Therefore, in retrospect, I wish I had taken a class on Chilean culture or history, which wouldn't have counted towards my credits at TUM anyway. Classes are smaller than what I was used to, accommodating around 20-30 students, which fosters interactivity. Expect regular quizzes every week or two, manageable if you pay attention during lectures. However, the language barrier, given the

Chilean dialect, can be challenging. Starting with an advanced B1 level in Spanish, it took me about 2-3 weeks to fully comprehend the lectures. The Santiago campus only offers classes in Spanish while the Viña del Mar campus also offers classes in English, a factor in my decision to study in Santiago and advance my Spanish.

### **Accommodation in the Host Country**

Santiago is relatively safe by Latin American standards, yet some areas should be avoided and others areas are preferable for accommodation. Providencia is a student-friendly district. I lived near Ines de Suarez metro station, ideally situated close to the city and more or less to the university. Generally, areas east of Baquedano metro station and north of Nuble metro station are safe, with more upscale neighborhoods further east. The metro and bus systems are efficient, with modern buses trackable via Google Maps. I secured my apartment through Airbnb's long-term rentals, initially renting for 1.5 months, which afforded me a discount. Although I considered finding a permanent place through international WhatsApp groups (which I highly recommend), I stayed in my Airbnb at a local rate (USD 300) as I became close friends with my roommates. Avoid "Livinx" apartments recommended by UAI at all costs, as they are far from the university, located in a pretty dangerous area, and quite expensive on top (USD 600-800).

### **Daily Life and Leisure**

The university offers an extensive range of sports and leisure activities, from volleyball and soccer to trail running, tennis, yoga, and a gym. I also joined the DAV (Deutscher Anden Verein – German Andes Club) in Santiago, which enabled me to explore local peaks. They provide high-elevation mountaineering classes and workshops. If you enjoy hiking and mountaineering, Santiago is an ideal location, with peaks ranging from 1500 to 6000 meters.

### **Additional Costs/ Financing the Stay Abroad (Optional)**

Chile is not as affordable as some might think. Supermarket prices, especially for dairy, meat, and fresh vegetables, can be high. A piece of mozzarella, for example, costs USD 5\$. Locals prefer shopping at "Ferias," or local markets, which are more economical than supermarkets. The largest markets are Mercado Central and La Vega. Nearby local restaurants offer lunches for USD 5\$, while dining out in Santiago typically costs around USD 10\$. Bus rides to Valparaiso are USD 5\$. It's wise to book your return ticket by Saturday if traveling back to Santiago on Sunday to avoid being stranded. Bus travel within the country is affordable and comfortable, with prices ranging from USD 20 to 40 for cross-country trips. For reference, a ticket to Mendoza from Santiago costs USD 35\$, and to Pucon, about USD 30\$. Most travel is by bus or plane, as the rail system has diminished over the past 50 years. However, flights

are convenient for covering the country's vast length, with prices varying from USD 40 to 150\$ for round trips if booked in advance.

### **Competency and Horizon**

My semester abroad in Santiago was a highlight of my Bachelor's degree. Beyond learning Spanish and attending engaging lectures, I learned to surf, visited 13 out of 16 regions in Chile, explored Atacama and Patagonia, climbed a 5000m volcano, and made lifelong friends and a host family. This experience significantly broadened my understanding of the Latin American (start-up-) market, compelling me to return to Chile in the future.

### **Intercultural Experiences**

Chileans differ significantly from their northern neighbors. Initially, I felt UAI students were indifferent towards exchange students, but many were simply shy or little self-conscious about their English. The level of English in Chile is quite low, even among students and peers, so be prepared to significantly improve your Spanish. I am forever grateful for the experiences, friendships, and the warmth of my "host family" (my roommates' parents), treating me as one of their own. Thank you for making this journey possible. If you have any doubts about going to Chile, feel free to reach out to me.