

1 Preparation

The application process for the TAMK was relatively quick, and I received confirmation of my nomination with all the necessary information at the end of March. A deadline of April 30 was set for the submission of all required documents. This included my CV, a letter of motivation, proof of language proficiency (as the IB program is conducted entirely in English, a confirmation from Tim Mauger was sufficient), and a preliminary learning agreement. Within two weeks, I received the official confirmation of acceptance so that I could immediately book my flight and look for accommodation.

My tutor got in touch with me early on and answered all my questions. She informed me about the survival kit, which consists of a blanket, pillow, comforter covers, pot, and pan as well as plates, cutlery, and cups, which you can return at the end of the semester to get your money back. She gave it to me when I arrived in Tampere, so I had everything I needed immediately. She also informed me about the Tamko membership (20€ per semester which gives you a lot of discounts for trains, buses, food etc).

2 Accommodation



In Finland, most apartments are distributed through housing organizations. In Tampere, TOAS and POAS are the best for students. TOAS has the most apartments and is slightly cheaper compared to POAS. As an Erasmus student, it is a good idea to apply for the furnished rooms. This includes a bed, desk, chair, wardrobe, and dresser. The apartments are spread all over Tampere, but most of them are located in Hervanta. As the demand for apartments is very high, you should apply in good time. If I remember correctly, the application period for furnished rooms starts in mid-May. As soon as it opens, you should submit your application. I knew some people who applied at the end of May and then

didn't get a furnished room. Unfortunately, you can't choose where you are allocated when you apply for a furnished room.

With the unfurnished rooms, there is a greater choice, and you can decide which one you want directly. You can also decide whether you want a studio or a shared flat and with how many people. However, the nicer apartments usually have long queues, so it makes sense to start early here too.

I was accepted for a furnished room in Mikontalo, Hervanta at the end of June. It cost 280€/month and was in a shared flat for 3 people. There are several saunas, a gym, and laundry rooms on the first floor. You can use them all for free, but there is a booking system for the sauna and laundry room. Hervanta is a student district as it is located directly on the university campus. You can find everything you need. The Duo Mall is the centrepiece with many shopping possibilities and behind my house there is the Suolijärvi, a big lake where you can go swimming (which the Finns like to do, regardless of the season) and a public sauna. I had a tram station right outside my building, which took me directly to the city centre in 20 minutes. To my campus, it took me around 30min by tram. Many of the other Erasmus students lived in Hervanta, as there are lots of apartments here.

Another option for finding an apartment is Tori. This is a Finnish website similar to Ebay where you can buy all kinds of things. Some students put their apartments up for rent, however, the website is only available in Finnish.

3 Transportation



Tampere does have an airport, but the flights there are often expensive, which is why I flew to Helsinki and then took the bus to Tampere. As I flew with Finnair, I could take the bus directly from them, but it is cheaper to travel by train (VR) or bus (Onnibus).

I was then picked up from Tampere bus station by my tutor. She had already collected my apartment key in advance so that we could take the bus directly to my apartment. In general, public transport in Tampere is easy to use and reliable. You can buy a travel card, which costs €40 per month (must be recharged every month at an R kiosk) or a one-off card for the whole year for €290. During the introductory week, we went to the Nysse headquarters together with the tutors to buy the travel cards there. Otherwise, you can also simply tap and go on the bus or tram to pay for a one-way ticket or buy day tickets via the Nysse mobile app.

Trains and long-distance buses in Finland are very cheap if you have Tamko membership. With Onnibus you can travel to Helsinki for 1€ and with the train (VR) most routes are about 10€.

4 TAMK

The university is well equipped with a library, lots of printers (which can be used with an allowance of up to 15€) and a large canteen. With the student card one meal costs 2,85€ (vegetarian) or 2,95€ for a normal diet. In addition, you can use the adjacent fitness studio including various courses for 40€ for the entire semester. At the Tamko office, you can rent games, sports gear, and more for free if you have a membership. Especially in winter, it is nice to borrow ice skates or cross-country skis.



The semester started in the last week of August (my first course was on the 28th) and ended on December 16 at the latest. The semester is divided into 2 trimesters, and we had vacations in between (in my case it was from 13.-22.10.).

But the orientation week already started on August 14 and it's good to be there because you get a lot of general information, do all the administrative things with you and they hold quite some events.

Most of the courses only last one semester, so you can decide for yourself how many you want to take each semester. I had 2 in the first semester, 2 in the second, and 2 that spanned the whole semester as they were research courses where you have to work independently most of the time. The courses usually take place once a week for 3 hours, similar to Trier. There's a list to choose from at the beginning, which can be found here: <https://opinto-opas-ops.tamk.fi/167/en/37/38/3659?lang=en> .

I personally took *Service Design Thinking* (it's more of a workshop where you go through all the phases of design with your group to develop a service around a topic you can choose at the beginning. You work with a technical team to create a website for your service so you have something tangible to show at the final presentation), *Customer Intelligence* (you have to find a company to work on their problem for, conduct surveys and interviews, and write a research report and presentation with your group), *Conflict Management* (basically you learn what kind of conflict styles to use and you have to create a video where you play the role of a crisis manager who has to save their company from the critics in the public eye), *Go-to-market plan* (a workshop where you work for a start-up and help them figure out through research which market niche is best for them to start), *Professional selling* (the goal is to work with the group to develop a compelling sales pitch for a business), *Innovation and business management* (learning about entrepreneurship).

We didn't have exams, it varies from course to course how you are graded, but in most, you get some points for attendance, presentation, and learning diaries. Most professors don't care so much about how you did, but more about whether you put in effort and learned something. The criteria for the learning diaries were for example that you have to cover each class on at least one page, that you have to use diagrams etc., nothing in terms of content. So it's rather easy to get good grades (most I've heard of have always gotten a 4 or 5, with 5 being the best grade here), it's just a bit of work you have to put in every week.

5 Student life



Tampere is the third biggest and most popular student city in Finland. In addition to the many bars, restaurants, and clubs with student parties, you can also enjoy nature. There are many lakes, forests, and national parks.

In general, student life is more comparable to that in the USA. You can find all kinds of activities in the Kide app pretty much every day, from parties to board games, amusement park events, ice hockey games, trips to Lapland, etc. There is also a culture of student overalls in Finland, for which you collect patches from activities, restaurants, and others, which you then sew onto your overalls. The colour of the overall tells you what the student studies.



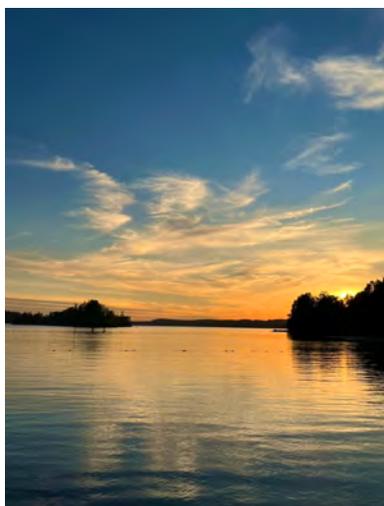
It is worth taking a trip to the Baltics from Finland. There are ferries from Helsinki directly to Tallinn for 30€ and you can easily travel to Riga and Vilnius by long-distance

bus. There are planned trips in the Kide app, but we decided to plan our own trip. Normally there are also cheap trips to St. Petersburg, but due to the current situation, most of these have been cancelled. Traveling around Finland is also fun. Tampere is relatively centrally located so that the larger cities such as Helsinki and Turku can be reached within 2 hours by bus. It takes 8 hours by train to get to Rovaniemi and from there you can travel even further into the north of Lapland by bus or car.



6 Climate

In summer we usually had sunny days around 20 degrees. We had our first snow in mid/late October and the temperatures dropped in early/mid-November, averaging -8 degrees during the day in December. Our maximum so far has been -17 and towards the end, we had about 6 hours of sunlight a day. However, I've been told that winter started early this year so it was a bit unusual to have that much snow so early.



In January and February, it usually gets even colder with temperatures as low as -30 degrees. You get used to the cold surprisingly quickly, normally jeans and a shirt with a winter jacket were enough for me at -10 degrees. Thermal underwear is recommended if you are out and about for longer. Due to the constant minus degrees, the snow never melted, and instead new snow kept falling.

The northern lights have been visible regularly since September, but of course, they are stronger if you are a little outside the city or further north.



7 Expenses

The expenses varied quite a bit for me, but in a month where I didn't travel, I spent about 350€ for everything + 280€ for my apartment. I think the prices are similar to Germany, maybe a bit more expensive, apart from alcohol which is really expensive. That's why most Finns take a cruise to Tallinn and buy alcohol there. As for clothes: there are lots of nice second-hand stores with everything you need where you can get cheap stuff.