Laura Seefeldt

**Location:** Vienna, Austria  
**Term:** Semester long program  
**ESPM Track:** Conservation and Resource Management  
9 credits toward contract

**Exchange Program, BOKU, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences**

BOKU has a strong international student base which allowed me to meet people of all nationalities. This was a perk I did not expect before the experience but fully appreciate in hindsight. Not only was I exposed to the daily culture of an Austrian lifestyle but I was able to interact with other international students.

The most memorable class I took was a mountain forestry field camp course. As a group of 15 students and a few instructors we stayed at a research center located in the Eastern Alps for one week. The week was filled with an assortment of guest lectures and day trips. We went for a day hike in the Alps, and also visited Vienna’s Waterworks Museum, the flood plain of the Danube-Auen National Park, a cable crane harvesting operation, experiment plots researching the effect of the European spruce bark beetle, and the Forchtenstein Castle in the rolling hills of Burgenland. Every day was packed with learning new information not only from the course but from the group of peers. As a group of 15 students we came from 10 different countries which stimulated some very interesting discussions about methods to properly manage forest lands.

I attended the winter semester at BOKU which runs from October–February. This allowed me to do some traveling over the 2-week holiday break. For Christmas, my friend invited me to her family’s house in a small Romanian town tucked into the Carpathian Mountains. I had found myself immersed in a Romanian Christmas where I had the chance to enjoy skiing, snowboarding, winter hiking, delicious home-cooked meals and a culture that I had previously never been exposed to.

In December Vienna is littered with traditional Christmas Markets, while January is known for the ‘Ball Season.’ The university holds the BOKU Ball at the famous Hofburg Palace where students, faculty and alumni gather to waltz and dance. Vienna, Austria is not only a very safe city but it is centrally located in Europe which opens lots of opportunities for travelling.