

ERASMUS experience in Lisbon, Portugal

For adventurous people, who feel passionate about getting to know new cultures, countries, and experiencing international environments, spending a semester or two abroad can be life-changing. Personally, I felt it was time to take the opportunity to be part of the amazing ERASMUS community and find the perfect city to spend a semester abroad.

For some people, spending a few months away from home can feel overwhelming and scary, but the reality is that once you're in a new city on your own, there is no grater feeling. You have the opportunity to grow personally and get to know yourself better. Many challenges will arise along the way, but you know that your family and friends from home will still be there for you, and they might even come to visit you!

Living abroad opens your mind to new cultures and ways of living. Being a tourist in a city is not the same as actually living there and emerging into local life. Time will have to be dedicated for studying, of course, but this is just a small part of the whole picture. Ultimately, you will have plenty of time to explore so many different things and places that you won't really have time to get homesick.

The country I was most interested in was Portugal. I had already learned about Portuguese culture thorough friends and a quick visit to Lisbon. The way of life in Portugal seemed to match my personality and interests, so I had no doubt that I would have a great time there. The preparation is usually the toughest part of mobilization; there are lots of formalities and documents which need to be filled out and shared with both the home and the host university, but there is no need to worry, as they have our back during the whole process. To find accommodation I searched on the internet and found out that there are multiple options, such as shared apartments, renting a single room in someone's home, or renting a studio in a student residence. For me, the last option was the best.

When everything was ready, I couldn't wait any longer. With adrenaline pumping through my body, I took a direct flight to what was to be my new home city, Lisbon. The first week was amazing. I had the chance to meet new people thanks to the welcome days at my host university, ISCTE; thorough my student residence, NIDO; and also through one of the ERASMUS associations, ESN. As soon I arrived, I couldn't resist visiting many attractions and cities near Lisbon and trying local food. The city exceeded my expectations from day one.

Finding friends during ERASMUS is usually easy, as everyone is new there and ready to make new friends. All of these new people entering your life will become a second family to you... you will share many laughs, as well as difficult times, you will travel together and you will grow closer day by day. Talking about traveling, I can recommend you to travel your host country as much as you can and take advantage of every weekend and free time to see new places. You can plan it on your own with friends, or you can join one of the multiple ERASMUS associations that are constantly planning day trips, weekend trips, cultural events and, above all, parties. The best part for me was exploring Portugal while meeting people from so many different countries and continents with whom I could share my culture while getting to know theirs.

Once my ERASMUS was over, I immediately felt the typical “*post Erasmus depression*”. Coming back home is challenging, especially the first few weeks. You get so involved in this amazing community that being in your home city starts to not seem as exciting. But this is normal and won't last forever. The truth is that the person you were when you left is no longer the person who came back. ERASMUS allows us to mold into new and better versions of ourselves. All the memories of those months will last forever and become part of who we are, as well as the new second family we have created. Imagine the feeling of telling your friends and family all those amazing stories of crazy nights out, the adventurous trips you took, and all the times you struggled to understand what local people were trying to tell you...

Being grateful and enjoying every single moment is the key to fully living an ERASMUS. If you have the opportunity to be a student in another country, don't dare to miss it (especially out of fear)! Take a deep breath and go for it!

I am grateful for every second and every person I have met.

It is definitely hard to think about my life *a priori* ERASMUS, because once you experience it, you *are* ERASMUS forever.

ERASMUS lives eternally in my heart.