

Experience abroad: ERASMUS 23/24

GENERAL INFORMATION

Home university: Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg

Host university: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Field of study: Medicine

PREPARATION

I was expecting to participate in an Erasmus program for a long time, so I was very glad when I found out it was really going to happen! I first started my preparation by researching about the city where I was going to spend the Erasmus' months and also looking for an accommodation, which was quite hard and stressing. After an exhaustive two-month search, I finally secured a spot in a student dormitory operated by SSH. While it was a bit costly for my budget initially, the Erasmus financial support made it manageable. After that, I could only wait anxiously until my move in date would come!

TRAVEL AND ARRIVAL

I arrived in Groningen about two weeks before the begin of my classes so I could get to know the city and adapt to my new home. This was a very good choice so I could enjoy the city a little bit before starting my studies. I could immerse myself in the vibrant atmosphere of the city and was easily captivated by the charming architecture and energy of the locals. I could also get to know other Erasmus students through the ESN (Erasmus Student Network) welcome events and parties while having much fun. In general, I was very well welcomed by everyone and had the feeling that the next few months were going to be really good.

ACCOMMODATION

As I mentioned before, I booked an accommodation in a student dormitory, which I think is a really good choice for Erasmus students. I lived there with another 49 Erasmus students and since everyone was far from home, we really became a big family. We shared a big kitchen and living room, which brought us all close and gave the feeling that we were never alone, something that naturally you may feel when you are far away from your home. A rich cultural exchange happened and big friendships were raised. Despite the occasional inconveniences with the dormitory's facilities, such as Wi-Fi disruptions for days and kitchen power outages, that weren't attended by SSH despite our complaints, the sense of community we fostered made it all worthwhile.

STUDYING AT THE HOST UNIVERSITY

The studies were a surprise for me. I already thought it was going to be interesting to study in another university and to dive into other methods of teaching, but this was a more amazing experience than I expected. It made me reflect more about myself and how I learn better and also about the different possibilities to reach the same goal. The diverse academic environment challenged me to step out of my comfort zone and embrace new perspectives, ultimately enriching my educational journey.

I also received support all the time from my home and host universities, they always cared to ask if I had any questions or if I needed help with something, since I was an Erasmus student there.

I didn't yet transfer my credits but as far as I checked, it should not be a complicated process, and I'm convinced that I'll receive all the support needed if something goes wrong.

EVERYDAY LIFE AND LEISURE TIME

My routine in Groningen was indeed much more flexible compared to Oldenburg due to the distinct approaches to lecture organization and study methods between the two universities. In Groningen, the emphasis on self-directed learning and interactive class discussions allowed for greater autonomy

in managing my schedule. Rather than being confined to rigid timetables, I had the flexibility to adapt my study hours to suit my learning style and interests. Because of this I had more time to travel in my leisure time, discover new things in the city, and, of course, get to know a little bit more the new people that I've met there.

Overall, the flexibility afforded by Groningen's educational framework not only enhanced my academic experience but also enriched my personal growth and cultural immersion. It provided the very good balance between academic pursuit and social engagement. I can really recommend this university for other Erasmus students!

GENERAL EXPERIENCE & CONCLUSION

Reflecting on my overall experience in Groningen, it's clear that the city and its university offered enriching and transformative months, in which I not only grew academically but also personally. Most of all I'm very grateful I could go through this experience and that a financial support was possible because this was crucial in my situation!

If I would give tips to other students, an important "do" would be to try to meet and spend time with other Erasmus students, because when you are around other people in the same situation as you, you can share experiences, offer support, and form lasting friendships that enrich your Erasmus experience. Being part of a community of fellow Erasmus students creates a sense of empathy and solidarity that are especially important when facing the challenges of studying abroad. The ESN help me a lot with that: through their events, students from all around the world were all easily united! An absolute "don't" is to overcommit yourself. To have a balance between academic pursuits, extracurricular activities, and personal time is crucial so you won't get too stressed out and at the same time will enjoy your time abroad.

In conclusion, I think Erasmus is a very enriching experience that can not only add up a lot to your curriculum, but also make you grow a lot personally. You get to know friends, other cities and countries, and also yourself much better. I enjoyed my experience at most and wouldn't think twice in doing it again. Of course you also need to face challenges during this whole journey, but this only shows how strong you can be... I would recommend it to everyone!