

Erasmus Experience Report
University of Perpignan Via Domitia
February-June 2016

The Erasmus Experience was special and I advise it to every student. It helps you learn and adapt to new learning methodologies and also different approaches towards academic teaching. Also from the social point of view it helps you become more open, flexible since you will encounter people from different cultures and ways of thinking. Even only this aspect is worth to take into consideration since the impact it will have on your attitude towards others' culture and respect, and also to knowing new parts of the world, will be of great influence in the future.

Having that said, in my specific case I did the Erasmus in France, at the University of Perpignan. It was great and something which I will keep with me. Perpignan is a small beautiful city in the South-West of France. Its coast is wonderful as it is part of the French Riviera. The weather is mostly sunny even in winter and you will enjoy the warmth of the people.

Since I had a specialization in Solar Energy, I did most of the lectures and staying in Odeillo, which is a village in the mountains, part of Perpignan. It is a beautiful place in the Pyrenees, with the possibility for many Winter Sport activities and the perfect place for people who enjoy spending time in nature. Skiing, Snowboarding, Canoeing, Canyoning, Hiking, and many others, are the main things there, and it gives a different feeling being part of that environment since for the locals these activities are nearly on a daily basis.

The Perpignan's University staff was very kind and helpful. They will help you in every step of the application and do not hesitate to ask questions for any inquiry you might have. The process will not take that long, and you will have to fill the forms the international student office sends and basically wait for the day of confirmation. Be careful with the deadlines and try to be very correct. They will appreciate it a lot.

Going there is not that difficult since you will have to make some stops, depending from where you arrive. First, Perpignan has its own airport, and you can find low cost flights there. In this case you need to go to the Bus Station and wait for the 1 euro bus to come, and take you to Odeillo. It may be a bit tricky, because there are only 2-3 buses every day, with a fixed timetable, so you will have to be careful with the schedule. Another option is from Girona, Spain and from the Girona Airport you can take a bus to Puigcerda (a Spanish city in the Spanish-French border), and from there it is possible to take a taxi since the distance is only 22 Km. This is a very good option, since you do not have to walk long distances with luggage.

Accommodation will be difficult since both Perpignan, and Odeillo are student cities and also very touristic areas. It may be expensive but sometimes there is no other solution. Still I would suggest to start searching as soon as possible because it may become a problem. Also the sooner you start the more luck you might have to find a cheap and nice place. If you do not speak French, it is better to find an apartment or dorm with international students, to avoid difficulties in communication and to make it easier and faster the adapting to the new environment process.

The teaching in Odeillo was of very high level. There are some world class professors that have been working for years in the highest levels of science. It will be impressive to meet these people and to learn from them. They are very comprehensive persons and very kind, so try to get as much as you can from them. Don't hesitate to ask, and then listen carefully. You will have to study on a daily basis since it will be intense with many laboratories and individual case studies, but at the same time the depth of the analysis will be the most important part. To achieve this successfully you need to work really hard. The most important thing is: Try to be logical always, and never give answers without arguments, just for the sake of saying something. Concrete and Smart argumentation is the key there. The exams were in the last week, so we had to organize the studying because the time is nearly insufficient. They are difficult exams so the pressure may have built up, but for the rest it was ok.

In general, as I mentioned in every paragraph it was a wonderful experience, with new thing that I didn't expect so I am sure it will happen with the other students who will go through the Erasmus Experience. Think Positive and One will enjoy.