Ignaat van der Meulen was studying abroad at the Università Ca’ Foscari in Italy as part of his MA International Business and Economy degree at Corvinus University.

It is difficult to believe that my Erasmus period is over! Time goes so quickly and there is still so much that I wanted to do! But, I have been to 7 different cities in Italy, including Rome, Verona and Bologna. I have met so many people from all around the world such as England, Japan, France, Portugal, Estonia but most of all; wonderful Italians.

First things first, I want to mention that the things I do here in Italy, I don’t get to do them in the Netherlands or in Hungary. The architecture, theatres and all the amazing galleries are mind-blowing, you want to do everything! Since Venice is one of the biggest cultural spots in Europe, with lots of events such as Venice Film Festival or the world famous carnival, the chances that you will get bored are at an absolute minimum. Art wasn’t always on my priority list but with unique opportunities such La Biennale di Venezia and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, I couldn’t refuse.

I was also excited to see few of the best Italian movies! The events were organised by ESN Venezia and it was an amazing opportunity to get to know the Italian culture and humour. Needless to say that Venice has one of the biggest ESN (Erasmus Student Network) communities in Europe. Therefore, events such as Treasure Hunt, International Dinner, many Karaoke Nights and even Kayak Days were listed on my calendar! Moreover, parties, fun quizzes and tours were all part of my first weeks here in Venice. The biggest event organised, was the trip to Rome, where we stayed for 2 nights and got the chance to visit Vatican. Apart from Rome, trips were also organised to Padua, Trieste and Milan.

When you think of Venice, studying is not the first thing that comes to mind. However, the Ca’ Foscari University is one of the best universities in Italy and known for its language, management and economics departments. With 17 campuses scattered all over Venice it definitely stands apart! In 2018 Ca’ Foscari celebrates its 150-year anniversary. So now would be a good time to come since a lot of fun things will be organized! As long as academic issues are concerned, I have to say that the system here is much different from what I was used to in NL or HU. For example, the academic calendar. The economic department of Ca’ Foscari has 2 terms in 1 semester, so the courses are rather intense but over very quickly. And another peculiarity is the grading system; it goes from 1 to 30. Furthermore, I have been taking Italian language classes as well in order to improve my Italian, a free course by the way for Erasmus students!
Life is Venice is beautiful and unique but comes with its challenges. Acqua Alta, the high tide that covers many streets in ankle-deep water is just one of the meteorological inevitabilities Venice has always had to deal with. Another issue that can cause problems is the blindness created by fog, every form of transport can be disrupted and people have to navigate the streets of Venice solely on memory. Still in Venice life somehow seems to keep going. People go on romantic misty walks, tourists get lost even more than on usual days and for some inexplicable reason Venetians still keep “drying” their clothes outside.

But precisely because of the eccentricities I wanted to live in the world’s wettest city. Where else are there gondolas a genuine transportation device? Where else could I drink as much Spritz Campari as I like any time of day? Where else does such a small city play such an interesting part in history? I wanted to know what it is like to live in a city created out of 117 island, 180 canals and 126 churches. And oh boy, I was in for a treat.

Granted, life as you know it needs some adjustments to live comfortably in Venice. You need to walk a bit more then you are used to. Night life is different, no clubs for example on the island but that is compensated by the ample presence of pubs and the considerate amount of Bacaro tours you can sign up for. I also would recommend to live on the main island and not on the mainland, (Mestre or Marghera) or the other islands (Lido or Guidecca) to experience the full-on Venetian life-style. Before you know it you speak with your hands, is Spritz your main drink, is pizza your main food and are you a master in avoiding the selfie sticks from tourists.

If you need any practical information about where to live, administrative issues, or just more questions about life in Venice, please let me know! I am happy to help.

Ignaat van der Meulen
5 Month Erasmus period 2016/2017