I took part in the Erasmus exchange program in the fall semester of 2018. I got the chance to go to France, I got accepted to Kedge Business School, Bordeaux campus. The semester started on 3rd of September and ended on the 15th of December.

I knew it will be exciting and full of challenges just looking at the system of their education (which turned out, was firstly implemented this semester). They have 8 cycles in a year (4 in each semester). One cycle lasts for 1 month (except 3 and 5, which has weekly classes) and at the end of the month we have to take the exam from the current courses. Every cycle the maximum amount of classes which a student can take is two.

I liked this system, at least when my classes lasted for 1 month, when we only had to focus on maximum two classes. I had cycle 3 as well, which I did not really like, it was like high school all over again... or worse. One class for 1 week, which means school from 8 to 5.

But let’s start from the very beginning.

We got the informations from the recieving institution around May / June. The school has a platform where they collect all the accomodations willing to rent to students. So the apartment hunting started. We could see from the prices that France wont be the cheapest country we will live in.

In August, when we (started to look for rents with two other Hungarian students coming to Kedge) still could not find any available accomodation, we started to worry. But then at the end of August one of the 100... lenders who we connected, replyed that she is sorry, but someone has just taken the house a half hour ago... *it was the perfect flat for the three of us, not that expensive (not saying it was cheap at all, just compared to others), fairly spacious, had enough beds... sad...* she also added that she has an other rent, but they are renovating it, so at the beginning of September it wont be available. If we want it, we can take it from the 3rd week of September... *We are saved!*

We took it. In the first two weeks we rented an Airbnb... not cheap! But at least we did not have a problem with housing. There were students on the second and THIRD! week of September, who did NOT have permanent accomodation for the period.
In Bordeaux, the prices rose to a really high level as a consequence of the establishment of the 2 hour TGV ride from Paris, from where a lot of people relocate here, resulting in an over-demand on the housing market.

So yes, we got really lucky!

Our education started at the middle of September, with my two very first classes I have ever taken in English. I had to get used to the accents, but I can say I got through my classes without a problem. And I did not have a problem with the second cycle. But the third one, when we had 1 class for one week, that was really tiring. I think, when the subject is not varied and you have to focus on that the whole day it is not very efficient in the sense of learning.

France has a pretty high cost of living. Every week the groceries were around 20 euros (buying the cheapest brands. If you wanted to go the a restaurant you never paid under 20 euros as well, just one meal started at that price. The public transportation - which was vital for getting to school, since it was located outside of Bordeaux – had a monthly fee of 33,30 euros... after student discount. A glass of wine, not cheap at all given the fact that Bordeaux is the home of wine making, starts from 4 euros.

So if you want to travel around, socialize, have fun you can not count on only the Erasmus money, it is hardly enough for the living part.

The weather in Bordeaux... Well they said it will be quite rainy, warm for a long time, but when winter comes it will be very windy.

We got the warm and windy part all right. But we got lucky... again... it hardly rained and also it was around 16 degrees all through November as well. So you dont necessarily need a winter coat, but if you plan on visiting north France in winter, - eg: Mont-Saint-Michel, which I advise because of the fewer visitors at this time (and still a fair amount) – then you should definitely consider a thicker coat... and a bigger suitcase to take it with you. :D

WLB. It is a key expression in France, which as we all know means work-life balance. They take it very seriously. They do not rush to work, they arrive just in time to start, they dont work themselves to death, they dont do overtime, if it is not ready, there is the next day to finish it, they like to make a conversation (eg.: at the cashier), and when they have a state related problem, they STRIKE. So do not be suprised, if your bus suddenly... without informing the
passengers... take an other route, 99% sure they have a manifestation about something. So yeah, when it comes to administrative matters you have to borrow all the patience your roomates have and be prepared that it will take weeks and it can also happen that you are waiting weeks for IT to correct your course schedule, because the very two classes you are allowed to take are overlapping and then after 3 weeks they finally reply to your mail: „Did you manage to solve your problem?”... Well yes, usually we check into systems :D

Oh yes, reflecting on the manifestations, I do not recommend living alongside the tram line, 5 times out of 10 the tram was not operating. Despite every one of the participant reports or former Erasmus student, who studied there saying never live near the train station, we lived one station from it. It is not true that it is dangerous, we walked home plenty of times at night, the city was always empty and peaceful, nothing ever happened.

The language. The other thing they are very proud of so much so they do not like to speak in English, and I can definitely say that in average they are not that good at it. You know what they say: „Practice makes perfect!”

All in all, everything went well, I enjoyed my time in France, I got to know people from all over the world. It was a valuable experience, which I recommend to everyone to experience it at least once.