Süveges-Szabó Anna

Erasmus exchange semester 2018 fall- Paris, Sciences Po Master

The university

I had the great opportunity to spend a semester abroad in France, Paris at the stunning university of Institut Sciences Politique de Paris which university is one of the bests in the field of Social Sciences. Exchange students at Sciences Po study together with the students of the university-an exchange student have the possibility to choose the subjects and courses himself/herself from any field he/she prefers from the course catalogue that the university publishes on its website (search on Google: sciences po paris PSIA master course catalogue). There are not any restrictions since Sciences Po urges its students to discover themselves their interests and abilities, as they write it on their website. Most of the courses are the same every year, but little changes can occur of course. A very professional administration team runs the administration system, so any specific question about the courses might occur, feel free to ask them. At Masters level each course takes 4 ECTS, so during your exchange you must prepare a lot for your classes. The Sciences Po is the best in its field not in vain- the workload is really exhausting for most of the courses.

The signature of the documents, as the Learning Agreement should be done before the beginning of August, because then they have holidays until the beginning of the semester (late August). Otherwise everything is signed very properly and sent in time by email. The Confirmation Form of Arrival and Departure can be signed in person at the Centre Europe, 2nd floor at 13 rue de l’Université. The student card can be collected at 9 rue de la Chaise on the first week of the semester. You should keep it with you when you go to classes, because it must be presented at the entrance of the buildings. At the end of the semester the university will send the Transcript of Records at the end of January to the Corvinus University.

Housing

The housing is the hardest issue that you must face in Paris during the exchange semester. It is a nightmare, seriously. The following 3 places cost 400-600euros, which is considered to be cheap in Paris. As a Master student you can be enrolled to Cité Universitaire (www.ciup.fr) BUT you must apply online as soon as your Erasmus grant is gained. Here at Corvinus the results are public in early spring, and as soon as you see that you are enrolled, apply to the Cité Universitaire. There the administration can last for months, so it might happen that you will
receive a room/apartment only during summer. Otherwise, there are several student residents around Paris (and one or two within Paris, but very expensive) run by a private company which name is Lochabitat or Fachabitat. There whole apartments can be rented for students, but as well, the first comes first served system works here as well. At this company as a foreigner you have to possibilities: either you pay for 3 months (+deposit) in advance or you have a French guarantor. Besides, I must tell you that the banlieue of Paris might not be lovely place, and even dangerous in the North (for girls and young ladies the North is absolutely not recommended, French people say). For girls there is a foyer at the 13th arrondissement, where you can rent a room at a considerably cheap price, but guest are not allowed (Foyer Tolbiac). All these three places are eligible to apply for CAF, which is a housing subsidy by the French state. For CAF you must have a French bank account and a French phone number, and 100-200 euros are expected to receive monthly, depending on your conditions. (www.caf.fr) Furthermore, most of places demand assurance, which can be made at French banks (ex. Sécurité Sociale, or Assurance Habitation), so I would highly recommend opening an account. On the housing site of Sciences Po you can find rooms/apartments as well, but be careful, there are some scammers.

Services

Banking: If you have the possibility to apply for CAF you must possess a French bank account. Sciences Po is connected to several banks, ex. Société Général, LCL. I had a bank account at LCL, because there the opening of the account is free, for students the bank card costs 1 Euro at all, and the online system works very well beside the professional personal service. They treat every costumer seriously and helpful, and they have never tried to betray me with stupid useless contracts, etc. So, the banking in France is safe and useful.

Transport: The transport in Paris is quite expensive. If you spend there only one semester, then it worth to buy the monthly ticket for 75 euros. If you stay a whole academic year you can apply for student Navigo for 300 euros (30 x 10 months), but it might take months to receive it. With monthly ticket all the 5 zones of Paris are available, including all kind of transports.

Cost of living: A weekly shopping of food costs 30-40 euros, so it doesn’t differ a lot from Hungarian shopping. Even though one can discover a difference between the quality of food and the choice of products. Restaurants and bars are very expensive comparing to Hungarian prices. A beer can cost 5-8 euros, a café latte 4-5 euros, a main dish 10-28 euros. At Cité Universitaire and Mabillon (near Sciences Po) 3 course menu are available for students for 3-5 euros, these are very popular among students.
Entertainment

Paris is a wonderful place for those who enjoy history and arts. The nationally subsided museums and monuments are free for EU citizens under age 26 (ex. Louvre, Chateau Versailles, Arc de Triomphe), and other museums (as Musée Marmottan) recommend a reduced fee for young people/students and the famous churches can be visited for free. After discovering the most touristic places, within a semester or two you can find your favourite boulangeries, jardins and favourite spots of Paris.

Briefly, these are the most important issues for an exchange semester in Paris. This city is a great place, especially for a young student. I hope you will enjoy your exchange as I did so (or do is even more!)