Erasmus study experience report

I am a Hungarian female student enrolled in second year Sociology, at the faculty of Social Sciences and International relations. Last year I decided to try out the Erasmus program, and I applied to three different places. The first on my list was the University of Bologna in Italy where I finally got accepted in. This report will focus on my experiences throughout my Erasmus study period and my advices for future candidates.

Housing in Bologna

Last spring I found out that I got enrolled to the University of Bologna but as it turned out, my faculty of political sciences was located in Forli, a small town close to the city. (This is something I would do differently now, to pay real attention on the exact place and faculty where I apply because I was not careful enough). My sister got accepted in a faculty situated in Bologna itself, so we rented an apartment there and I also rented a room in Forli, in case I have classes in the morning or in the evening, or I simply do not want to travel each day from and back to Bologna. The prices are quite high in the city, they start around 900 Euro for a one bedroom apartment per month. It is not easy to find an accommodation for an ideal price at a good location because as it is a university city, there are a lot of local and international students. The easiest way is to get in contact with someone who did an exchange there, and try to get their location. I also got an apartment through a Hungarian friend that lives in Bologna and who was able to find one for a relatively good price.

Life in Bologna

Regarding the life in Bologna, it is a very livable and friendly city, with a quite small city center. There are discounts for students on city passes for public transportations, but in my experience you can also manage on foot because there aren’t such a big distances. I used the trains frequently, which are not a cheap transportation, but there are also monthly passes for a better deal. There is huge number of bars and restaurants located in the center, with very nice places for dinner but also just for an “Aperol spritz” which is a very commonly consumed beverage in Italy. It is very impressive that people stay out on the streets even after the sun goes down, it’s common to see people have a drink with their friends even after 10 pm on weekdays. When it is not raining the streets and squares are full of tourists and locals. Usually the weather is nice, I was there from September until January and it only started to get colder from December. The locals are super friendly and welcoming. For the most part they speak English, but when it’s not the case, they try to help and cooperate, at least in my experience. There are minimarkets where the quality of food and other products for cooking available is really good. Where I usually went to is called: “Carrefour” and there also exists discounts for students. I would suggest to cook at home on a daily basis and just occasionally go for the restaurants because you can spend a lot of money by eating out. The program options was something that I had an issue with after a time. There are some museums, but not in a big number. Regarding cinema, only one projects films in English and only on specific days, so the options are limited in this regards. On the other hand the variety of shops is very nice, you can find a lot of brands which are for example not available in Hungary.
Sport is also present in the city, the football and the basketball teams are both in the first class, so watching a match can be a good program opportunity on weekends. Clubs and party places are really nice but they are situated outside the city center which is something you have to keep in mind when going for a night out.

Life in Forli

Concerning Forli, it is a little city which is also pretty friendly and nice. There aren’t really distances there, and there are a quite number of good restaurants and coffee shops. It is full of green areas and it is convenient for study purposes but for program opportunities it really is not the ideal place to be. There is a fish market where you can find tasty meals for lunch and by the end of November a Christmas market installed with an ice skating track on the main square.

University

I went to the Political Sciences faculty in Forli which is located in a newly constructed modern building, surrounded by a green area. It is a nice and relaxing environment. I took courses in English language and my feelings are pretty mixed towards them. There were teachers who were truly good, interested in their subject and trying to convey usable knowledge. On the other hand, there were teachers of whom I couldn’t say such nice things, but I think there is from both in nearly all universities and the perspective might vary from student to student. In general, I found the level of studies good, but it also depends on which subjects someone chooses. I would recommend the one called “comparative legal systems” if someone is interested in the field, even though the requirements throughout the semester were challenging. The teachers were flexible related to issues coming up with my exchange, for example by placing an oral exam to a date that was the best convenient for me. The administrators were also helpful and available for any request, so I had a good experience with that.

Bad and good experiences

Summing up I mostly had a great time during my Erasmus study period. If I would have to recall some bad experiences firstly it would be that at the beginning I didn’t really know what I was getting into. I was unsure about the whole process regarding the administrative side, how I will get my exams done both in Bologna and at home, and what requirements I should fulfill. I also didn’t get a lot of support with that. Looking back I over stressed a bit, I found it relatively easy to accomplish this semester even with more exams and assignments. The feeling of loneliness wasn’t an issue for me because my sister was also with me half of the time, but other exchange students were dealing with that as I saw it. I also found disturbing the limitedness of potential programs but it might be only compared to the city of Budapest where I found there are boundless activities. The final disturbing issue was the price of living which is quite high. For the most part I really enjoyed this period. I would highlight as the most positive experience, being able to travel around Italy. Bologna is located in a central position and with train you can easily get to any city in Italy (you can find tickets for good prices if you buy them in advance), such as Florence, Milan, Padua, Verona and so on. Even one day is enough to get a taste of
these cities. Secondly, I also found it a great opportunity to meet foreign people, to practice speaking in English on a daily basis. It was such a nice experience to live in a country with a different cultural background from mine and to observe the customs and practices of a different nation. I also loved meeting with new people and make friendships with students who were in the same situation as I was. Finally, I enjoyed getting a glimpse at a different university and learning from Italian teachers who had another perspective than the one I was used to.

Useful links and my favorite places

La Prosciutteria - http://www.laprosciutteria.com/bologna/ (a kind of bar for just for ham, personal favorite)

https://www.moretimetotravel.com/insiders-guide-to-the-10-best-restaurants-in-bologna/?fbclid=IwAR3tMltT6bq_LskbcooCxt7l01cNOBB6DNw3whlobhtRFsIY4JkP6gQyrs – This is a list of the best restaurants in the town!


If you have any questions you can get in contact with me:

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