Erasmus+ in Milan, Italy

at Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi

(Fall 2018)

The city

Milan is not the typical Italian city, it is more of a “European” city. It has several modern buildings and lacks the narrow streets and ancient buildings that usually come to mind when Italy is mentioned. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of the houses are in excellent condition and you can still find medieval and 19th century palaces.

The city has a clear round shape, which makes it easy to navigate after a few days of learning. The heart of the city geographically and in every other sense, and the point of reference when talking about locations is, of course, the iconic Duomo. I had the opportunity to pass it every day on my commute to the university and back, and seeing it so often more than made up for the 45 minute journey. Most of the famous sights are within walking distance from Duomo, including the Castle and the huge park behind (which is a lovely place when the weather is fine), Brera with its beautiful streets, restaurants and arts galleries, the fashion and shopping streets, museums, the famous Teatro alla Scala opera house, and even the Navigli quarter with its canals and buzzing nightlife is only a 20-minute walk. Apart from these, it is worth visiting the Porta Nuova area, where “skyscrapers” like the Bosco Verticale (vertical forest) and Unicredit headquarters are located.

There is a noticeable big circular road in Milan if you look at a map, within which nearly everything of interest is located, and within which it is safe to walk even at night, I have never had any bad experience regarding safety. Outside the circle that might change, as I was told by locals, depending on the area.

Accommodation

Bocconi has several dormitories, but they can’t fit all of the students. There is a date in May when online registration is done, and you can apply for a place in the dorms. I applied to all dorms, didn’t get a place and I met many others who were in the same situation. The university has a list of agencies renting rooms and apartments, which is helpful, but it is important to be careful, because some agencies only rent for at least one year. Prices are
high, even the dorms are well over 600 euros for a month. A cheaper option can be a shared room. It is advisable to start looking for accommodation in time, I met a girl who had to stay in a hostel for more than 3 weeks because she didn't manage to find a place before arrival...As far as I heard, the dorms are not bad, they have single rooms with the bathroom shared with another person, the biggest problem is the number of kitchens.

**Getting around**

Public transport (the company is called ATM) is decent in Milan, there are four metro lines operating, and one more being built, countless tram lines and buses. Metro service is usually punctual and predictable, but trams are exposed to traffic many times, so the frequency can vary drastically. I did not need to use buses apart from the night service, which replaces the metros from around midnight. Monthly passes cost 22 euros for students, and a plastic card has to be purchased for 10 euros, with the additional hassle of spending at least one and a half hours waiting in one of the so-called ATM points. Those who live walking distance to Bocconi may consider not buying a monthly pass, and using single tickets (€1.50), which is understandable, since while doing sightseeing in the central areas it is possible to walk to many places as well.

**The university**

For a student of finance, Bocconi is an amazing place to go. It was one of the main reasons why I decided to go to Milan. There is a long list of courses available for exchange students, so you have a relatively large freedom of choice. According to my experience, the courses always have a clearly defined structure that is kept during the semester, so you get what you expect and what is in the syllabus or course description. The professors are always experts of their subject and are always prepared. In addition, course contents are assembled to teach new information. Going to Bocconi means it is necessary to study for exams and work on multiple group projects during the semester, but I have definitely learned a lot. Bocconi students are hard-working and competitive, their work ethic and how they take their studies seriously is exemplary.

Bocconi puts significant emphasis on creating an international environment. Not only are there many regular students from outside Italy, there are also over a thousand exchange students every semester. The International Student Desk usually handles the task of providing all sorts of useful information and managing administrative problems quickly
and effectively, while the local ESN organises events frequently, especially in the first couple of weeks, where many friendships are born. For this purpose, the language Crash Course in late August is also very useful, and the beginner course that I took gives a basic knowledge of Italian, and that may prove helpful, too.

**What to see**

It is definitely worth going on trips to different cities and parts of Italy, there are things to be seen near and far. The ESN organises visits to popular destinations like Lake Como, Turin, Cinque Terre, Florence, etc., but it might be even better to find some friends to go with and organise the trip for yourself. Trains are not that expensive, especially for closer destinations, are fast and usually punctual, while buses (like Flixbus, but also other, Italian companies) can be as cheap as 5 euros for a journey to Bologna, or 10 euros to Venice. I really enjoyed going on trips, whether just one day or more, they provided me with great cultural and social experiences, memories that I am happy to recall.

In Milan, it is always nice to go for walks around the centre and discover as much as possible. Bars and restaurants are not cheap, but pizza is always affordable and good. I recommend entering the Duomo, and going up to its terraces on the roof, visiting Leonardo’s Last Supper (although tickets can be hard to get), and going to San Siro for football games and La Scala for concerts and operas. Tickets might seem expensive, but there are opportunities to get cheaper ones to both venues, like university student promotions or balcony tickets.

**Overall,** it is a truly exciting semester I spent there. I have made more friends from all over the world than I had expected, visited wonderful cities and places, experienced the atmosphere of one of the most famous cities in the world, in events including music, football and fashion, while also learning a lot at university to become a better professional. I would definitely recommend!