Experience report

Probably everyone thinks that they are the happiest people that they could go abroad by Erasmus, I think the same, so the only thing I can write is a full-of-motivation report to encourage everyone to go abroad. I’m telling you, it was my best decision in my life!

I know that Lithuania is not one of the most popular destinations while choosing a university and country. I’m very interested about the countries which were part of the former Soviet Union, that’s why I’ve chosen Lithuania. It was kind of perfect destination for me: it’s situated in the European Union, relatively cheap country (more or less same prices as we have in Hungary), and I could use my Russian as well since they still have some influence with me. Also, since there are lot of small countries there, perfect opportunity to travel around and have a lot of new tick-offs in your travel bucket list!

Kaunas is not the capital in Lithuania, but the 2nd biggest town of the country and also full of foreign students. Lithuanians speak English such as Hungarians – not that much, but teachers and students do. Also, if you speak Russian or speak/learn a bit Lithuanian, they are happy that you’re trying to use some other languages as well.

Kaunas University of Technology was my receiving institution and I was studying international relations on master program. I’m happy that I experienced other educational system because it was such different in a good sense: even though people say that Erasmus is about partying and travelling, I was a bit surprised that we had to prepare a lot for the courses every week (writing paperwork and reports, preparing presentations, etc.), thus we had to study much less during the exam period since we already learnt almost everything while preparing to classes. The teachers were very flexible and helpful, I could ask for help from them about every kind of problem I had during the semester. They were friendly, opened and very happy for us. The classes were very interactive which was very nice and all Erasmus made me much more opened as well. In Lithuania we have 10 grades: 10-9 means 5 in Hungary, 8 means a 4, 7-6 means a 3, 5 means a 2 and between 4-1 that’s a 1, more or less like that. Don’t be surprised if you have one class which has a lecture and a practical class as well. All in all I like my university, my classes and people there. Please note, that this is basically a technological university such as BME in Budapest, with a really small Faculty of Social Sciences, but that’s why it felt so familiar. A very big plus point that the faculty of Social Sciences is located in the city centre so every day when I had class I crossed the beautiful city centre (other faculties are mostly located in a campus, a bit far from the city centre.

I lived in one of the dormitories of the university, just next to that campus I mentioned above. Dormitory n5 and n8 are for exchange students. Those, who chose renovated room (I highly recommend it) were located in Dorm n5. It has rooms with 2 beds. In one side of the dorm every room has its own bathroom but on the other side there’s one bathroom for 2 rooms. Every floor has 2
kitchens, there’s a laundry room downstairs and reception as well. The university has an online system where you can send the monthly rent fee every month. The cost was about 120 euros per month. I loved the dormitory life! It was my first time living in a dorm and it was a totally good experience for me. Already a couple of days after of our arrival we had a group, and we passed a lot of time together in the kitchen, we were cooking together, spending there the evenings and so.

The town has a quite good public transportation system. Even though they ‘only’ have buses and trolleybuses, you can reach everything with them. In addition, you can use your ISIC card as a transport ticket. In the big bus stops there are kiosks where you can buy for a 1/3 month-tickets. During your first drive you have to activate your card on the bus or trolley bus with ‘beeping’ it to the machine + push some buttons and also every time you get on a bus or trolleybus you have to ‘beep’ your card because the controllers are checking the card frequently.

The prices are more or less the same as in Hungary. Great opportunity to get used to use euro, because of the small price differences, you can feel how many euro is how many forint. Food and beverages are like I wrote but alcohols cost more. E.g. when you go to a bar a beer costs at least 3 euros. I know there’s nothing to be shocked about that if you’re living in a country with higher prices but compared to Hungary it might be surprising. And if we’re talking about alcohol: Lithuania has deadline for buying alcohols. Even though the shops are opened till 22.00 on workdays, but you can only buy them till 20.00. On weekend the deadline come even earlier: Saturday about 17:00 and Sunday about 15:00.

We arrived to the most interesting part: trips and parties. Since this part of Europe has a lot of small countries, you have a great opportunity to travel around. Also, the ESN organization will advertise trips you can apply for to Russian, to Finland and so. Of course, you can (and do that!) plan your own trips with your friends to Latvia, Estonia, and Ukraine, maybe Belarus.

If you’re going to a party be aware not to be too drunk before going to a club because every club has security stuff at the entrance and if they see that you’re too drunk they won’t let you in. Same with your behaviour inside the club. But they speak English and respectful. Please also notice, that Lithuanians usually fight with each other on the street, in the clubs so don’t start fight with them. After a party feel free to call a Taxify with your app downloaded before on your smartphone, because Lithuania is one of the countries where you still can use them, so take this advantage of the country (also, because they don’t have night buses, so not that much possibilities, if you don’t want to walk).

All in all: it was the best decision in my life to spend a half year in Lithuania. From the very first day we made life-long friendships. I became much more open-minded, more curious about other cultures. I have much more self-confidence and looking for opportunities to meet up with foreigners. I only regret that I haven’t tried it even before. And even though it’s sad that it ended, my international friends and me had a deal: visiting each other, so this adventure continues...