Amsterdam UvA 2018-19

I’ve been on a master level exchange program at University of Amsterdam (UvA) from September 2018 to February 2019. As a summary of my time there I would like to share a list of useful information with you.

**HOUSING** If you are planning to go to Amsterdam, you must decide on time. Finding a place to live is the hardest part nowadays. You should apply for housing at least 4-6 month prior your arrival. The University provides dorm rooms (500-1000€/month). If you have a dorm room with kitchen and bathroom inside, you can register at the city hall and get some refund (around 30% of what you are paying). Hostels where you share the room with 5-7 others are around 700€/month (more expensive on Friday and Saturday). If you temporary have to go to a hostel I recommend Via Amsterdam or WOW hostel. They are a bit far away, but the quality is much better than hostels in the city center. If renting a place for yourself be careful, many people are advertising and try to scam you. For example they rent the house via Airbnb and try to subrent it for you. If you rent on the private market make sure to see proof of ownership (a bill for example), always visit the place first and only pay when you get the keys.

**TRANSPORTATION** Amsterdam is amazing, not just the city itself, but the people and the University as well. It is very important to have a bike, you can easily ride 8-10km in half an hour. The best is probably to rent one, you can find good bikes relatively cheap. I didn’t use public transportation in the first 4 months of my stay, but if you are not so sporty the public transportation is very advanced. You will want to have a chip card as soon as possible. You need to put money on it, and activate it every time you enter or exit something. This way you pay as much as you go. Otherwise you pay and additional euro every time you buy a ticket, and it is much more expensive for several other reasons. Ferries are usually free to use. Trains are relatively expensive in the Neatherlands, but they are fast and comfortable. There is a cheap alternative called Flix Bus. Sometimes flights were expensive from Amsterdam, and I went to Brussels with Flix bus and flew from Charleroi to Budapest. You can also use it to travel around, and visit the surrounding cities/countries. You can also bike to other cities if the weather lets you. I recommend to organize weekend trips, there are really nice roads.

**SHOPS** Most places don’t accept master card, and making a Dutch bank account is important anyway (I had a Maestro at ING).The University will help you to make an appointment.

Best shops for food are Dirk Markt(red), Lidl and Aldi. Albert Hein(blue) is a bit more expensive but it is Dutch and sometimes they have nice discounts. You can get their card for free which is important, because you only get the discounted prices if you use their card. I usually went there to buy beer, I liked their 0,5liter Brouwers for 60 cents. There is a shop called Action, where you can buy everything you need for your place: sheets, mattresses, cleaning tools, mugs, plates, pump ect. for a very cheap price. Bazar is similar.
SCHOOL

The semester is divided into three blocks: 2+2+1 month. Normally you have 2-3 subjects in the first two block and 1 in the last block. You can also try to finish enough credits in the first two blocks and save the last for traveling. The classes are pretty hard, the whole master is 1 year, so it is more intense and the level of education is higher than what we are used to in Hungary. Trying to finish in the first two blocks is a good idea because in case you fail something you can still make it up in the last block. I like what I have studied, it was very up to date and interesting. It might seem like you don’t have many classes at school, but don’t worry, you will have to study at home instead. If you don’t want to study much I highly recommend you to take on bachelor classes instead.

SUBJECTS

I took 5 subjects (5x5 ECTS) mainly from the behavioral economics track.

Applied Econometrics (They really make you understand OLS, Time series and Panel; Block1&2; interesting; logic and math is needed)

Microeconomics and Game Theory (Block1; logic and math is needed, interesting but hard)

International Economic Cooperation (Block2; mostly reading is expected, not too hard)

Behavioral Economics (Block2; lot of reading is expected, interactive, interesting, not too hard)

Experimental Economics (Block3; This was the most fun, also it was not too hard, you have to design an experiment with your groupmates, and participate in other’s experiments for real money)

When I applied I had never been to the Netherlands before, and I was a bit worried about my choice, but looking back now I am really happy I chose Amsterdam for my exchange. In Amsterdam everybody can find what s/he is looking for. From classical music to the hardest techno parties, from salsa dancing to rock climbing and from raw fishes to well-done steaks. The old and modern architecture merges without a strange feeling, and you don’t have to go out of the city to find a tree or a duck. The parks are amazing, having a picnic is a must!

To sum up: Amsterdam is not an easy place to be, it is expensive, and the scholarship you get is barely enough for the housing, but it is worth it. If you are interested in behavioral economics UvA offers one of the best education worldwide, many students from USA, Australia or China are coming to Amsterdam for this education. The city is very international, everyone speaks English. I partly chose Amsterdam because I wanted to improve my English.

I hope this brief summary helps you to make your decision! If you have further questions please send me an e-mail to bdobrossy@gmail.com with the subject „Amsterdam“.