I have spent my exchange semester in Lisbon, Portugal and returned with amazing experiences. Portugal is a country in many ways similar to Hungary, but of course there are some major differences too. In my view, both Hungary and Portugal are historic and culturally rich countries, with similar life standards and not belonging to Western Europe. While Portugal has continental Europe’s westernmost point, it is rather considered south. It is also called the Balkan of Western Europe. This implies, that things not always work well or in the most efficient way but these imperfections make the countries lively and human. Portugal has been a very popular destination for tourists, exchange students and expats because of the country’s beauty and Lisbon’s internationality. The city is now one of the startup hubs in Europe hosting for example the Websumit.

**Living in Lisbon and Portugal**

Living in Lisbon is fun, as the city offers many great venues and events. One of my favorite memories bring me back to the Outjazz festival, that was an open-air jazz festival on Sundays for a month and was held in a park, perfect for a picnic with friends or pets. It also has many great restaurants and bars, especially in Bairro Alto. The city is small enough to be able to walk to many places, Lisbon city has about 500,000 inhabitants. Lisbon is centrally located within Portugal, so you will also have the chance to visit more places in the country. Try to explore more beaches while the weather is nice and visit cities or go for hikes when it’s chillier. The recommendations found online are pretty good, so I am not going to talk about where to go. Except for the Azori Islands: they belong to Portugal and are located a 2-hour plane ride away in the Atlantic Ocean. They’re of volcanic origin and thus offer many unique sites and landscapes for the tourists. You’ll never be this close to the Islands, don’t miss you chance to visit!

**Food prices**

It is relatively inexpensive to live in Lisbon, since prices are below the Western European standard. Prices in supermarkets are quite similar to Hungary, it is cheap to cook your own meal. However, when it comes down to services like restaurants, hair dresser etc., the prices are closer to the Western prices. It is difficult to find a nice meal below 8 Euros, going to a
restaurant with drinks and food is about 15-20 Euros/person. Touristic places also try to rip you off a bit too and don’t offer high quality.

Areas of the city

Lisbon is mostly a safe city, but of course, you have to be careful like anywhere. If you are looking for accommodation, I can very much recommend places along the green metro line except for the area of Martim Moniz. (That is the “worst part of the inner city”, many immigrants live there, however, it is not as bad as the 8th district in Budapest. During the day it is very normal, during the night it is advices to just walk through it.) I lived between Arroios and Anjos stations and the neighborhood had many supermarkets, gyms and places for everyday needs. The blue metro line is also a very nice area with bars closeby, but it is rather like the Andrássy ave. in Budapest (many fancy premium stores, offices etc.). The areas of Baixa Chiado and Alfama and those inbetween are very touristic, often time annoyingly much. It is impossible to walk with a constant good pace in the streets because of tourists. And even though the peak time is in the summer, it doesn’t decrease much in “off-season” either. As I said, Lisbon is safe, however you really have to watch out for your belongings!!! Pickpockets target tourists mostly but it can happen to anyone. My phone was stolen from my coat’s pocket while I was entering the gates of the metro station. Please, do watch out, I heard many similar stories.

Renting a room

Renting a room in a shared flat of 4-8 people starts around 300 Euros. However, houses are often in not really good shape in the center, since constant overdemand doesn’t drive landlords to renovate. Landlords do not share a client-oriented mindset, which often leads to disputes and misunderstandings. Since the weather doesn’t really get below 5 degrees (even in December we had days of 15 degrees), houses are not equipped with central heating, you can basically heat your room with small ventilating heaters. And in the hot summer period you should buy an air conditioner because not even the nights get chilly then.

Public transportation

Public transportation is not as well developed as that in Budapest. There are 4 metro lines that are quite reliable, however, busses and other means are not reliable. (But it happened to me that I missed a long-distance bus because the metro was not coming for 10+ minutes – so it happens everywhere.) I pretty much only took the metro in the city but that was enough. You are only
eligible for a student discount for public transportation if you are U23, otherwise, your student card is not taken into consideration. If you are above 23, you pay about 40 Euros for metro transportation a month. Single tickets are 1.5 Euros for every trip.

All in all, I would count with living costs of 350/400 Euros for a room + 170 Euros for food + 40 for public transportation, which totals an amount of 550-600 Euros.

**Weather**

As for weather, there was summer weather until early October, we had a nice swim in one of the bays until the 6th of October, got a sunburn etc. The ocean is quite cold though, around 20 degrees or a little less. Then in October it got quite cold, around 10-15 degrees, but it was not much colder in December either. I would advice to bring a lighter winter coat or several layers of sweaters with a rain jacket. It rains periodically: there were weeks when it rained almost every day, then again nothing for 1.5 weeks. The ocean is nice for surfing until November, what’s more, the waves get bigger in the fall/winter than in the summer. So the professionals go surfing quite long.

**Culture**

The Portuguese culture is different from ours. Days start and end later: while in Hungary many jobs start at 8am, it shifts to rather 9 or 10am in Portugal. But at least you are able to do your grocery shopping even at 9:30-10:00pm or until midnight in shopping malls. And not only the cinemas are open until midnight but every store of the malls. Their cuisine is based on seafood (surprise, surprise) and vegetables and bread, so if you like a lot of fish, it is your place to go! Meat is prepared in less diverse ways compared to the meat-heavy Hungarian cuisine. My favorite places were tapas bars, where you could mix a few plates with some friends and eat warm or cold bites of everything. Portugal also has a coffee and wine culture. My philosophy was to drink more wine because the variety and the quality of wines offered even in supermarkets are really good, and I avoided the local beers. You will also love the national pastry called Pastel de Nata, which is the favorite of everyone. Perfect with a strong espresso, it boosts your day. There are many bakeries too and they offer good quality bread products, sweet pastries, as well as lunch menus with sandwiches. They’re also good for a quick lunch.

**NOVA SBE campus**

My host university was NOVA School of Business and Economics, that had just moved to a new campus outside of Lisbon, between two towns, Carcavelos and Oeiras. If you will do your
exchange there too, you are lucky to study in a completely new campus building, that is constantly improving, located right next to the beach (with a direct tunnel connecting the campus with the beach) in a calm area, but you also have to be prepared for commuting. I chose to live in Lisbon and commute to Carcavelos, because you would spend your evenings with friends in Lisbon anyways. These two towns are only residential, there is nothing much there. The trip from Cais do Sodré takes 20-30 minutes by train to Oeiras station, but you will also walk further 15 minutes to the campus from there. And of course you will have to get to Cais do Sodré station within Lisbon too. It took me about 1:10 minutes to go one way, which was a lot of commuting but I could spend a lot of time talking with friends on the train.

**Studying at NOVA**

NOVA is a great school with a progressive mindset, well-prepared professors and administration. I felt that I learnt more during this semester than I usually do. Teachers really inspired me: they had an impressive professional background in both the business world and in the academic too. Class interaction was strong. I barely attended frontal lectures. Their teaching methodology was more practical than that of Corvinus, every theory learnt had to be put into practice in the form of a written analysis, a group presentation or something else. We had many group works like at Corvinus, therefore exams only accounted for a smaller portion of our final grade (30-60%). There is also a variety of different courses to choose from, so you will definitely find something for your taste and interest.

All in all, I can very much recommend Lisbon, Portugal and NOVA to anyone who is hesitating. I have no doubts that you will enjoy your few months there a lot and wish you had more in the end. :)}