

# Erasmus ! One life in a year or one year of my life ?

## Erasmus life in Porto

In 2015 I started my bachelor degree at the West University of Timisoara. I studied hard during the semester, but I still had that feeling that just going to the Faculty and just passing the exams every semester with high grades isn't enough, I decided that I want something new, something more entertaining, a different way of learning and living, something called Erasmus. I didn't had so much information about the Erasmus program, I only knew a former colleague of my sister who went in Erasmus in Spain, and that's when I started to manifest interest for the program. I started to ask him some questions about his mobility, if the courses were recognized at the home Faculty, if the money were enough. And from that moment, I really started to check all the blogs, websites and all the resources available on the internet in order to learn more about Erasmus. The only thing that I can say, is that all the blogs and all the stories I read were positive and everyone was thankful and really happy to be an Erasmus. After that, I saw some events on Facebook about Erasmus presentation In my University, and I had more information and my desire to apply for it became stronger and stronger.

So, after all, in the second semester of the first year I decided to apply for it, and that was one of the best decisions of my life. I applied for a mobility in ISMAI, Maia, Portugal.

Before the start of the mobility we had training from ESN Timisoara (and they even gave us a backpack with some useful tools inside), also I met some students that choose to have the mobility In the same University. We met for a drink at La Capite, a bar from Timisoara, and with us, we had 2 guys who already went in Erasmus there and they told us really useful information about the University and the city of Maia and Porto. They even told us about the Erasmus Incoming coordinator from ISMAI, who later turned out to be a great person. We had a workshop with a Portuguese guy before the mobility, and the presentation was quite good, that's when I first heard about Francesinha and Pastel de Nata, two popular types of food from Porto.



Erasmus Welcome Day-ISMAI

As about the other Erasmus students from Romania, it was nice to see that I won't be the only student from West University of Timisoara going to ISMAI. Someone made a group for us, I don't remember who made the group, but we started to chat, about the documents for Erasmus and what should we do, Learning Agreement, the Financial contract, which was very important :). And let's not forget about the flight tickets, we started to look for the cheapest ticket, when can it be, from where and so on. And after all we booked a ticket from Budapest, and that means that we will have to get to Budapest somehow, and we rented a minibus for it. So, that's how we started, we took the bus to Budapest, we were traveling at night. Then, we arrived at the airport, where we had to wait for 6 hours, during the night, which is probably one of the worst period to wait for your flight.

But what I already learned, without even noticing it, it was how to look for the best flight tickets, and I also told myself that I will never book a flight at night, which unfortunately I repeated a couple of times after that. And I will tell you why is it better to book a flight during the day, and with a short period between the flights, if you have to change it. It is better to pay more, and have the next flight in less than 3 hours after you arrive in one airport instead of staying in the airport for 6-7 hours, because you will spend money anyway, you will want to buy something to eat or to drink, and that's going to be more expensive than your ticket probably. And to give you one example, I paid 15 euro for a ticket from Porto to Milano, and in the airport, in Milano I spent another 10 euro, for a sandwich and something to drink. So, it is better to pay more for the ticket and not to wait too long for your connection flight than to pay less and wait in the airport.

Well, and after the plane took off, we left the airport in order to begin a new experience for our life.

So, in the magical day, 7 of September 2016 we arrived in Porto. Some of us had someone waiting for them in the airport, and some were on their own, like me. In the airport, we split and everyone was going to accommodate in some way to the new life. I took a shuttle who left me somewhere in Porto, because I had no idea where am I, I must say many thanks to Google maps, which was a very useful tool during my Erasmus. I was walking up on a street in Porto, because you have to know, the streets in Porto are going up and down all the time. So, I was walking on that street because I was looking for my accommodation, which I have found on the internet. I arrived there after a while and I had to wait until someone came and opened the door for the office. I met the manager of the building and also his amazing intern from Slovakia, a girl full of life. She welcomed me and gave me some forms to fill in, I was looking on the contract to see the other tenants and their origin. I think there was just one girl at that point who actually left in the first day, so I didn't even get her name. While I was completing the forms, a guy from Hungary came in and we started to chat a little bit, he was the first Erasmus student to meet in Porto, and I didn't even get his name. After that a funny guy and his friend entered the office, an American guy with a lot of charisma.

There were also some other people going in and out of the building, but that's not important. After that, the manager took us and our luggages to our accommodation. We arrived, the location was very good, but the place wasn't really in the best conditions, even if my room was quite good, very spacious and almost clean.

Well, I settled in, I started to walk in the house, which was a flat with 6 rooms, but there were 2 flats belonging to the same company, so we were in total 12 Erasmus students from different countries. First guy who I met in the flat was Roberto, an Italian guy, then there was the guy from America who actually lives in Denmark, Bee, which I already met in the office. And after that, some people came later. We had people from France, Poland, Spain, Germany, Czech Republic, Northern Ireland. Hope I didn't forget anybody.



Captain Nemo-Vigo

I wasn't really the chattiest guy in the house, it was too quiet at the beginning, because everyone was too shy, apart from Bee, which was already settled and he wanted to go party from the first day. But, with time, we got to know each other. From the basic Erasmus questions, What's your name? Where are you from? Where do you study? What do you study? to more personal questions. I remember that Bee always asked me to go party with him, which I only did twice or maybe three times, unfortunately, even if he was asking every day. There was also Roberto, who hated the Bolognese with beans that Bee was making, but it was really nice to make fun of it. As about the people from Spain and Northern Ireland, I didn't really managed to have a closer relationship with them. For a while I didn't even had a close relation with the guys from upstairs, from the other flat, with Coco and Anne from France I only started to talk quite late, as well with Lucie from Czech Republic, with whom I become a good friend later. Also, Slawec, the busy guy, always working on videos and Marina, from Germany, which I didn't really get to know very well.

A bad story but also funny in the same time, was when we got bedbugs in the house, it was quite bad, everyone was scared that they might get it, so we had to clean all the house with some strong poison, and also we had to carry our clothes to a laundry shop where we had to clean everything in 60 degrees, I remember that one blouse was two times smaller after that, and I wasn't the only one with this problem. But it was a good experience, we had to organize

together, and clean everything, plus we had a dinner together, Bee was cooking again .



Bedbug break

One of the best things that happened In our flat, was when the girl from Northern Ireland left, I know that I'm an asshole now, but that's the reality, and a guy from Ecuador came. I found out later that his name was Isaac and his parents were from South Korea, complicated story .

I don't know how to say, but some people are just special, and he was one of them. Somehow, he managed to bring all the flat in the kitchen when he was there, me Roberto, the polish guy )

Well, we became good friends, we started to cook and eat together, which was unusual for our flat, even if before we did some cooking together, I mean mostly Bee was cooking burgers for me.

After that we started to go walking every night after dinner, and as well I remember a long walk that we have done to Foz do Duoro and we were exhausted after that, we were walking for 3-4 hours.

Well, and to go back to our flat, I started to chat more and more with Krzysztof, the guy from Poland, and we became good friends after that, we keep In touch all the time, it was the best friendship I made during Erasmus.

As about the University, It was a private one, with very good facilities, and a lot of Erasmus students, as an idea, we were 25 Erasmus students only from Romania, not to count the Spanish ones.

I met a lot of Erasmus and International students at my University, from Lithuania, Greece, Turkey, Slovenia, Cape Verde, Brazil.

I managed to see lots of people from all over the world, they have different mentalities, but what I noticed, they are not so different, in Erasmus doesn't matter where do you come from or who you were before, it matters who you are during Erasmus. For me Erasmus it's like a big country, full of young and nice people inside of Europe.



Costa Nova- Aveiro

The exams at the Receiving University were not so hard for me and my colleague Irina, who was also from Romania, even if we were very close to fail one course, Descriptive Data Analytics, we failed the first test, we took 6, so we were forced to get a grade bigger than 13 in the second test, which we managed, and the surprise was even bigger, because we took the test in Portuguese, but the truth is that I haven't slept the whole night before the test, I was studying all night.

But the classes are not so hard, if you try to understand a little bit, you are good to go. The classes were in Portuguese, but some teachers were translating for the Erasmus students. The best class I had it was a Marketing class with a great teacher, good way of teaching and getting the students involved, and more than this, I was the only Erasmus student who attended all of his classes with an evening class, all of the students were working during the day and coming to classes during evening. But the best thing about this class, it was that he translated everything in English for me, so I was able to participate in the class and be more active compared to other courses.

Portugal, and Porto, it is a great place to do your Erasmus mobility, there are thousands of Erasmus students, and what makes it better are the Brazilians who know how to live their life. The people from Porto are amazing, very open minded and very easy to talk with them.

I also have to mention that every Friday evening I was playing football with a Portuguese group of friends, I really loved it, and all started from one post on ESN Facebook group, that they need a man to play with them, and from that moment, every Friday night we played football. In the group was a guy from Azerbaijan and one from Romania, both of them are amazing friends.



Dom Ponte Luis I Bridge

I also had an Erasmus body from ESN Porto, great guy, I didn't spend too much time with him, but we went for a drink in the first week and I also played futsal with him and his friends, the thing that surprised me was that he invited me to sleep in his house when I once lost the train, even if he barely knew me. It was an amazing experience for me, to see it. Unfortunately, we didn't spend much time together after that, he got a job and I was very busy with school, but we still had a last dinner with francesinha, before I left.

And of course, as any good thing has to end, but not for me yet, because I had two semesters of Erasmus, we had to split and to say goodbye to the friends from the first semester, that's one of the worst moments of Erasmus, when everyone is leaving, and it is even worst when you are still there and the other ones left.

But, there is always hope, and Krzysztof stayed for the second semester as well, so I still had someone to hang out with, plus a couple of friends from Romania and other parts of Europe.



Portugal dos Pequenitos-Coimbra

The second semester was more about having fun and enjoying the time left there, because in the first one I had 11 courses, and in the second one, only 6. Of course, I had to go again through the same process, to find my courses here and to match them to the ones at the home university. But it was easier now, considering the fact that I had the experience from the first semester. I made new friends in the second semester, most of them from Slovakia and Brazil, amazing guys with whom I spent a lot of time, going out together and having fun, socializing. It was a very good second semester, the classes were harder in the second semester, but I had only six, and I passed all of them.

I also got to travel around Portugal, and they have a great country, with amazing places where you can live or visit. The best city to travel to was Sintra, it's like a fairy tale city. And it is also very close to Lisboa. If you get the chance to go there, go for it.

And now, the time has also come for me to leave Portugal, and the funny thing is that I was quite happy when I left, Krzysztof, the guy from Poland, even told me that everyone is crying and you're happy. Well, I don't know, that's who I am. I did the same when I left from Timisoara in order to do the mobility, I was happy when I ended the mobility, and I behave like this because I know that it's not goodbye, I will always return there, I will also want to see the people that I met there again, I know that life is short, but why would you be sad, it's the end of a life period, a new one will begin. I also know that new experiences are waiting for me, so it's better to be happy than sad.



Amazing Porto-View from Gaia

Erasmus was an amazing experience, great people, lots of friends and Porto is the best city ever, no matter what. Erasmus is one life in a year not one year in a life.

Once Erasmus, Always Erasmus.