

**Student Report Austin Liu Fall Semester '15 Boğaziçi University Istanbul**



(Shot in Cappadocia)

Dear students,

My name is Austin Liu and by the time of writing I am a third year Econometrics student. I have studied from September till January at the Boğaziçi University, the best public university of Turkey in Istanbul. Unfortunately I was not chosen to go to one of my top 3 choices, but at the end I do not regret that I had the opportunity to study in Istanbul. A city with as many people as in the Netherlands. To be sure to be in your top 3 I recommend to select at least one within Europe and now I am going to tell you why you should pick Istanbul!

### **Preparation:**

From the moment that you have been selected for this university there is quite some preparation needed. First of all, to prove your proficiency in English you must have taken a test like TOEFL, IELTS or Cambridge. Secondly, you need a letter of recommendation of a professor or teaching assistant. This should be no problem since they will kindly help you if ask them to write one. Also when you study in Turkey you can also apply for the Erasmus+ grant. ESE will automatically nominate you and they will give you clear instruction how to obtain the grant. Since the grant is 210 euros per month I highly recommend to do the application. Furthermore, an e-visa is required to stay in Istanbul. I suggest to buy an online visa from the Turkish government site. It is roughly 20 euros and with it you can stay for 90 days. I also advise to take your passport with you, otherwise you cannot obtain a residence permit. Upon arrival the university explains how you can obtain one, which is needed to exit and enter the country in case of travelling outside of Turkey. Moreover, since you live abroad you can reimburse you OV for that period. It saves you 90 euros a month.

Last but not least, you have to look for housing. The university offers a dorm, but from the experiences of my friends they do not recommend it since it is expensive (at least 450 euros a month) and have strict rules concerning guests (you have to leave an ID at the entrance and have to leave before 1 AM). I decided to find a house with the other student's from ESE who went to Istanbul and we found a nice apartment in Cihangir, which is an upcoming place near Taksim Square and the nightlife. We used the site: [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) for searching for housing and went early to Istanbul to arrange the house since the semester starts only the end of September. Some people preferred to live near the university and paid only 300 euros a month maximum, but they needed to take the taxi to go out. Luckily, the taxi is not expensive for people from Europe.

### **Arrival**

There are two airports in Istanbul: Ataturk and Sebiha Gökçen. From Ataturk you can easily take the metro, but from Sebiha Gökçen, which lies 20km from the European side of Istanbul, you have to take the Havatas. It is a shuttle bus and costs roughly 15 liras for a one way trip. I recommend to go early August and explore Istanbul a bit before, while staying for example in an Airbnb house.

Upon arrival you still have not received the discount public transport card, which the university gives you for free. In the meantime you should get a regular Istanbulkart. With this card you can travel by ferry, bus, tram and metro. The public transport system is really good on the exception of the bus, since a lot traffic jam occurs in Istanbul. I recommend to use the metro or the ferry over the bus.

I also recommend to buy a Turkish sim card. There are three operators, but Avea is the cheapest one (for example I paid roughly 6,50 euros a month for 2GB, 400 minutes and 2000 SMS). Apparently the Turkish Government can block your Turkish sim card after two months, but luckily my friends and I did not encounter this.

There is also an orientation day organized by the university halfway September, I highly recommend to attend this event. Since this is the first time you meet other exchange students. Afterwards there is roughly 3 weeks of holiday left which you can use to travel.

Now comes the hardest part during your stay in Turkey: obtaining the residence permit. Luckily, the university helps you a lot to obtain one, but still you have to go to all these government institutions to get some papers signed. It is like a scavenger hunt through Istanbul. This will cost you several days, but luckily you have until half October so you can spread it out over the coming weeks.

### **Courses:**

In your time abroad you are obliged to follow courses which are in total at least 24 ECTS. Since you are subscribed to the Department of Economics of Boğaziçi you need to take at least 12 ECTS in this department. All the teachers I had were sufficient in their command of English. At the end I chose the following courses:

#### *Growth and Development 6 ECTS*

This was by far the most time consuming course that I have taken. I do not recommend to take this course as an Erasmus student unless you really like the topic itself. The courses consisted of weekly readings of 50 pages on a variety of topics. I needed to hand in 5 response papers which counted for 35%, there was one midterm (30%) and a final exam or term paper (35%).

#### *Urban Economics 6 ECTS*

This was an elective course for the Turkish students and therefore had 75% attendance requirements. The teacher was not very good in explaining and sometimes gave some random quizzes. This was one of the easier courses I took, because it has a take home exam. The grade was calculated as follows: 2% attendance, 23% presentation, 35% quizzes and assignments and 40% final exam.

#### *International Economics 6 ECTS*

Economic students probably already have taken this course at the ESE, but I can recommend it to the Econometrics students as one of your two economic courses. The course only consisted of a midterm and a final (both 50%). The professor was good and taught the theory quite well. Occasionally some Turkish people asked question in Turkish so I could not follow everything that clear. Luckily the teacher repeated the question if it was important.

#### *Turkish Languages for Foreigners I 6 ECTS*

As I was staying in Turkey I wanted to also learn the basics of their languages. This was the reason I chose to follow this course. As there are only exchange students in this course you meet a variety of people from different nationalities. The speed in this course was quite fast and there was also weekly homework assignments which you needed to hand in. Since it was only the basics it was not hard to catch up with the pace. The course was structured as follows: 10% attendance, 20% homework, 2 x 20% midterms, and 30% final.

## Finances:

Roughly this were my monthly expenses. In total I stayed well over 4.5 months in Turkey:

Income	Euros	Expenses	Euros
Parental support	400	Housing	420
OV-reimbursement	80	Travelling	400
Student grant	290	Food	180
Student loan	200	Gym	50
Grant	190	Social Activities	200
Rent and Insurance subsidy	190	Souvenirs	50
		Cloths etc.	50
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1350</b>		<b>1350</b>

Eating at the canteen for lunch and dinner is only 1,5 liras (50 eurocent), this way you can save up some money for other things, although in general food is cheaper in Turkey.

## Daily Life:

I have chosen my courses such that I only had to go from Tuesday to Thursday for lecture. This way I had a long weekend with lots of free time. The university in Turkey is more assignment based so you will have regular assignment you have to hand in, but on the plus side the final exam will be no more than 50% of your final grade. In my spare time I travelled a lot. There are several Erasmus student organizations, but I only recommend the ESN one. In the beginning they organize trips to Cappadocia and Ephesus, which is also a nice way to meet some fellow exchange students. I also went to Iran with some friends during the republic holiday. If you want to know more about visiting Iran you can contact me ([austin\\_liu01@hotmail.com](mailto:austin_liu01@hotmail.com)) since it can be a lot of preparatory work to visit this beautiful country.

In the weekends that I stayed in Istanbul I tried to visit the many places which the city has to offer. There are a lot of sightseeing to do in Istanbul and I recommend you to visit all of the main attractions. Furthermore, the nightlife in Turkey is really good. There is literally a party everyday around Istanbul, although you have to take notice that beer is not cheap here. It is at least as expensive as in the Netherlands in the clubs and in the supermarket prices are even higher if you compare it.

Last but not least I have visited several football matches. The famous clubs Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş are all from Istanbul. To obtain tickets you first have to apply for a passolig card and afterward you need to charge it to order tickets online. For more information on this go to:

[www.passolig.com](http://www.passolig.com)

I really enjoyed my exchange in Istanbul. It was a period where I made so many new friends and learnt a lot about the Turkish culture (they have a huge cultural history), but also other cultures, because all my friends I made came from all over the world. Plus there are many cool places to visit within Turkey, but also neighboring countries. Most of the things are really cheap so you live quite luxury as a student and for the Dutch people the weather is also really nice throughout the semester. If you have any questions related to my exchange and experience in Istanbul or about the application procedure feel free to contact me!