

Exchange to Nantes

Fall 2016, time for me to go on exchange to Nantes! Nantes is a city situated in the west part of France and I studied there from September till December at Audencia Business School. In this report I will tell you about my time there and hopefully help you in your preparation for your exchange!

Preparation

To be honest, I completely underestimated the things you have to do before you go on exchange. All together it involves a lot of paperwork and you have to hand in a lot of forms at both universities. I really suggest to start filling in papers as quickly as possible and keep a to do list for yourself. There are a lot of little things you easily forget and in this way you make sure you arranged as much as possible! Furthermore, I suggest to start finding accommodation as quickly as possible. My idea was to start looking for places after my submission to Audencia was completely finished, but this resulted in a lot of problems to find an accommodation. Nantes is a fast growing city with a lot of students who all need a place to live. This year, Audencia had the most international students ever and I expect this number to grow even further the next years.

Housing

Nantes has a great offer of student residences, which are buildings in which everybody has its own room, bathroom and small kitchen. However, people in France are really careful with renting to international people. Although they will not directly admit it, a lot of student residences will rather have a French student than an international one and will therefore not always reply on your request. However, if they are not fully booked at the start of the semester, they will try to fill up their rooms with international students.

A lot of my international friends had a room in La Brunellière, a student residence which in Spring already accepts international students. I would try to apply for this residence as soon as possible, since it is the best option for students. They require a lot of paperwork and information in order for you to rent, but this is something that French landlords generally do and especially with people from other countries. That's why it also harder to rent an private apartment at a landlord.

Arrival

By the time I was actually leaving to Nantes, I had not found an accommodation yet. I decided to book a room at Appartcity in the city centre of Nantes, which is an aparthotel at which you can rent a room relatively cheaply and you get discounted the longer you stay. For me this was the best option, since I wanted to be sure I had a place to stay and I wanted to be in the city centre to meet as much as people possible. I had friends from America who stayed here the whole period, but for me this was too expensive. I decided to stay there for almost 2 weeks, so I had some time to find another place without rushing into things. In this two weeks, I already met a lot of people! It was surprising to me how quickly international students find each other. Don't be scared to go somewhere on your own and just meet new people there!

At my introduction day at Nantes, we got a lot of information about the university, its students and its student associations. Furthermore, they introduced a whole international team to us, all specialized into certain countries. This team was really helpful through my whole exchange and I could always knock on their door for help. If you had any problems with your visa, accommodation or study they were always ready to help. Although the tips of finding an accommodation were very helpful, I eventually found my accommodation in a different way. I literally contacted all people offering rooms at Airbnb if it was possible to rent for four months. I had all the luck in the world and found a great family who lived in the city centre and had a room for me upstairs with my own bathroom and toilet.

Courses

The way of teaching courses at Audencia was very different from what I am used to at the Erasmus School of Economics. All courses were in groups of maximum 30 students, so it was like we were in high school again. Most of the courses also included a participation grade, which was also completely new to me. Although I did not always feel like putting lots of effort in, it was nice to have a stimulation to start discussions in class. I followed the following courses during my semester at Audencia:

- **Managing and leading a team (5 ECTS):** focusses on the frameworks of people management strategies, and covers the basic operational areas and practices of human resource management. During this course, we had to do a group project and analyse in a report how we did our people management in this small organisation. During classes, all kinds of topics of human resource management were touched and we had an exam about these theories.
- **European business environment (5 ECTS):** designed to examine the background and current position of Europe and the European Union to help students understand the factors and influences at work in the European business environment. This course was quite disappointing to me, as it was not really about what happens in the EU now but more in general. We had to do a presentation about an country within the EU and do an exam.
- **Financial analysis (5 ECTS):** learns to evaluate the risks of a company, measure its profitability and evaluate it. I found this course really helpful, since you go through the concepts of financial analysis much slower and more detailed than we do at the Erasmus University. We also applied the theory on real annual reports and had to write an actual recommendation about a company. In addition to this, we also had an exam.
- **Initiation to entrepreneurship (5 ECTS):** designed to help students understand the concept of entrepreneurship, the present context and projected tendencies in company creation, together with the socio-economic profile of the company creator and to identify the psychological characteristics of the entrepreneur and understand the process of setting up a business. In this class we had to come up with a whole new idea for a product or service and make a complete business plan to launch this. I found this really interesting since I had not done that before and the teacher was really enthusiastic. We concluded this course with a pitch.
- **Digital marketing & social network (3 ECTS):** designed to get an understanding of prospering online marketing strategies, user generated content, search, social media and networks, mobile, and web analytics. In this course we had to make a whole social media campaign ourselves, which was quite interesting since I had not followed any courses about this in Rotterdam. We also had an exam in which we had to answer some theoretic questions and come up with a social media campaign for a certain company.
- **Organizational change management (3 ECTS):** provide students with a conceptual framework focusing on the strategic importance of managing change and development in various organizations. In this class we had a case study each week to put theory into practice. However, I expected more difficult cases so I found this course a bit boring.
- **French language class (3 ECTS):** designed to help students develop oral and written skills in French, and includes listening and reading in French. I really liked this class as the teacher was really enthusiastic and we were only with 15 people, so we could really practice our French. Before you start with this course, you get a form you have to fill in and then the university decides on which level you should start your course. However, switching to a higher or lower level is also possible in the beginning.

Finances

It is not a secret that going on exchange can be quite expensive. I really enjoyed my life and did not pay any attention to the costs of the way I lived in France. I went out a lot for lunch and dinner and always ate with other people. I would recommend every student going on exchange to make sure

you save some money before, so you will not miss out on things because you do not have enough money! I experienced the following costs:

- Rent: 550
- Cost of living: 400
- Social life: 200
- Transport: 38

I got around 100 euros from the government as a reimbursement for public transport and 270 euros of the Erasmus + scholarship per month. This is quite high since France is an expensive country to live. Especially grocery shopping was much higher than I expected. I did not have any additional mobile phone costs since I kept my own number at my Dutch provider.

Daily life

Nantes is a great city which has a lot to offer! It is not as big as Paris and the daily life is also somewhat more 'laidback' than bigger cities. However, this does not mean that there is nothing to do. The city has its own castle, Japanese garden and even a walking machine-driven elephant. Furthermore, there is one high building in Nantes, which has a rooftop bar and gives the best view of the city. There are lots of bars in the city centre, but the best bars are at the island. Each Monday there is a drink which is organised by students from Audencia and where everybody meets each other. On Wednesday there is a great party from Audencia in LC Club, which always results in the most crazy nights! You will meet a lot of people on these parties who are also going to the same school as you. People eat a lot outside in the parks and on Sunday everybody is chilling outside on the island. Especially in September there are a lot of outdoor festivals, which are really nice to go to! The people in Nantes are typical French and like to speak as much as possible in their own language, although they try to learn English. I was not used to this at all, since I never go on a holiday to France, so ordering at a restaurant was a bit hard at the beginning. But I really recommend to at least try to speak the language in daily life, since you will receive much better help in return!

It did not take a long time till Nantes felt like home to me. I really liked the city, the university and of course the students from all over the world. I did not know the city at all when I came there and did not know at all what to expect from a semester in Nantes. But it was one of the most amazing things I have ever done! I hope this report will help you with your exchange and if you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me!