

Exchange Coimbra 2016



General information

From the end of August (28th) until the middle of January (15th), I have been studying at the *Universidade de Coimbra*, Portugal. While searching on the internet for a university where I wanted to spend my time abroad, I was captured by the beauty of Coimbra and its university. The *Universidade de Coimbra* is one of the oldest universities in Europe (founded in 1290), which makes it have plenty of interesting academic traditions. The Portuguese lifestyle is very laid-back, so studying there is very different (more relaxed) than studying in Rotterdam.

Preparation

Before leaving on exchange, there are several things that have to be arranged. I rented my room at Uniplaces.com. I could go in the room after the 1st of September, while I arrived on the 28th of August. Therefore, I spent four nights in the Serenata Hostel, which is very close to the university. I can strongly recommend booking a hostel for the first nights, since it is a very good way to meet new people, who are mostly exchange students as well. Renting a room is very easy in Coimbra, and a lot of exchange students book a hostel to stay in the first week and start looking for rooms when they are there. If you are really into going out, the best place for housing is close to Praça da República.

Make sure that the paperwork for the Erasmus+ Grant is done, so that you don't have to worry about that when you are on exchange and book your flight in time, since this can save you a lot of money. You can either fly to Lisbon (LIS) or to Porto (OPO). I have been to both (I came back to the Netherlands for Christmas) and I would recommend flying to Porto, because you can get to Coimbra faster. On the website of the university, it is explained how you can get to Coimbra from both airports.

Another thing that you have to do, is to book a 'Confirmation of Arrival' in Inforestudante (this will be your 'myeur' for these 4,5 months). Eventually, you can choose to follow Intensive Language Course. This takes three weeks, and you learn a lot during this weeks. Not only about the language, but also about the culture. The course will cost you €275, but in the end you will get a certificate without having to take an exam for it. The only thing you have to do for it, is to participate and to have an attendance of 75%.

Arrival

When you arrive, it is time to explore the place: just get a city map (or Google Maps) and walk around. For some administrative purposes, you have to go to *Casa da Lusofonia* (the International Student Lounge, which is on campus Polo I) on the date you scheduled in Inforstudante to confirm that you arrived. Here you will get some documents, and they will tell you what steps you have to take after. *Casa da Lusofonia* is also the place where you can get a Portuguese sim card and your ESN card to get some discounts. I studied at the *Faculdade de Economia* (FEUC), which is not on the main campus (Polo I) but around 2 kilometers further away. The faculty organized a welcoming day, with information and a walking tour for new students to explore the city. You will also have to go to the faculty's office to pay for the school's insurance and to make sure you are accepted to all your courses. Be prepared that you are not the only exchange student during this time, so it is possible that you have to wait for an hour or so.



Courses

All the courses I took, will be used to incorporate into my elective space. The semester started on the 12th of September, but some professors don't give lectures in the first week. Some exams will take place in January, so be aware that you will probably miss the first week (or two) at the EUR. For me that was not a problem, since my major did not have obligatory lectures these weeks.

Every course is lectured once a week, for three hours and worth 6 ECTS. For some courses, you may choose whether you do the 'final evaluation' or the 'continuous evaluation'. Final means that you have only one exam in January, and continuous means that you also do an assignment that counts for your final grade.

- Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Ethics (CSR&BE)

This course is about ethical behaviour of organizations and how a business can mean something to the society. The teacher gave lectures in a very interactive way, with lots of exercises and practical examples, which were recognizable and interesting. This exam was on the 15th of December, so after that you don't have to do anything for this course.

- International Political Economy I (IPE)

In this course, you will learn a lot of theories, linked to history. The course is not very interactive, but it is intensive since the professor is talking for almost three hours straight. There is a lot of information, but also a lot of study material and reading material. For this course you could not choose a continuous evaluation and the final exam is in January.

- Marketing Management (MM)

This course is comparable with Marketing (Bachelor 1) in Rotterdam. Some different concepts, but you will be familiar with most of the concepts. You will also have to write a marketing plan (which counts for 35% for your final grade) as group assignment and a final test (65%) in January.

- Relationship Marketing (RM)

Where MM focusses on attracting customers, RM focusses on retaining them. For this course you will do two group presentations: one case study and one topic. The presentations count for 50% for the final grade and the test is in January.

- Língua Portuguesa II (erasmus)

This is a language course for Erasmus+ students. Two times two hours a week in the *Faculdade de Letras* (all the other courses that I followed found place in the *Faculdade de Economia*). If you've followed the Intensive Language Course, you should participate in *Língua Portuguesa II*, otherwise there is also a *Língua Portuguesa I*. In this course, you will learn some basic grammar and vocabulary, but you will as well practise some oral and listening skills. You will have two written test and one oral test.

Finances

In general, living Portugal is cheaper than the Netherlands, especially housing and going out. I paid €265/month, but there are also rooms for €150/month. For the bus transport (there are no metros and trams), as a student, you could pay €22 a month to take the bus whenever you want. However, for me that was not worth it, so I bought a card with rechargeable trips (approximately 60 cents per trip). By train, you can easily do some city trips, but the ESN and other travel organizations also organize some trips for students every now and then.

I had to keep on paying my regular Dutch phone subscription anyway, so I bought one Tele2 internet bundle a month. You could also get a Portuguese sim card, which might be cheaper.

(all numbers are estimated averages)	Monthly		Monthly
DUO StuFi	€ 290	Housing	€ 265
OV compensation	€ 100	Food	€ 120
Erasmus+ Grant	€ 210	Going out	€ 30
		Traveling	€ 75
		Transport	€ 15
		Phone	€ 25
		Other	€ 25

The airplane ticket is approximately 60 euros one way if you book in time. The Intensive Language Course is 275 euros. If you only bring one suitcase, like I did, you might need to buy some things for living (depending on what your landlord provides you). Think of things as bedsheets, pillows, pans, plates, bowls, cutlery etc.



Daily life

Living in Coimbra differs a lot from living in Rotterdam, in the sense that everything is super relaxed (being late and having to wait is a thing you will get used to). The streets are very hilly and steep and there are stairs everywhere. You will have good weather almost every day. In general, Portuguese people are very friendly and helpful, but their English is not as good as most Dutch people's English. This can make it hard to communicate sometimes, so it is good to have some basic Portuguese knowledge, which you will learn very fast.

Although being late is normal, buses mostly come on time. However, the bus system is quite difficult to understand at first. In the bus stop, you can find a timetable, which shows the time that the bus departs from the first stop. You don't exactly know when it will arrive at your stop. Besides, the way from A-B differs from the way from B-A, so that can lead to confusion as well. The app Moovit (similar to 9292) is very helpful when you use the bus.

After these 4,5 months, I can strongly recommend going to Coimbra. With all the other exchange students, you will have a great time! If you have further questions regarding studying in Portugal, feel free to contact me through Facebook Messenger or by email.

Bien Pham
email: BienPham14@gmail.com