

Bologna: La Rossa, La Grassa e La Dotta

General information

Buongiorno tutti, let me tell you something about my Erasmus Exchange in Bologna. Last semester I lived in Bologna, a beautiful city in the province of Emilia-Romagna, in the northern of Italy. During my stay I studied at the Alma Mater University of Bologna, enjoyed the city and visited other places around Italy. I arrived in Bologna at the end of August and returned back home at the end of December.

Preparation

After I heard that I was selected to go to Bologna for my Erasmus exchange, I had to arrange several things. First, we had to apply for the university. Our home university leads all this; you only have to follow the instructions.

After Alma Mater University recognized me as a student, the real preparations could start. Because Italy is part of the European Union, I did not need a visa or any other governmental approval to move to Bologna. I only had to find a room to stay. Because Bologna is one of the major student cities of Italy, there are a lot of student houses or rooms. However, there are even more students, so I can recommend you to start searching for a room early (around June). There are multiple sites and offices in Bologna that can help you find a room, but in my opinion these were not very helpful. Several rooms on this site are only to rent for at least a full year, or they do not accept exchange students. Nevertheless, they give you a good picture of the situation in Bologna. I finally found a room via Facebook. I entered multiple groups that were created for students to rent rooms from and to other students. I send proposals to different students and finally got a very nice room. In Italy there are so called "singola's" single rooms (you have a private room) and "doppio's" shared rooms. I stayed in a singola.

Furthermore I had to arrange things at the Erasmus university to be able to receive an Erasmus+ scholarship, by following their instructions. The Dutch government also provides funds for Dutch students: my student-ov was changed to a travel costs reimbursement and my normal college financing (stufi) was changed from living at my parents to living on my own for the period of my exchange. I had to arrange this with DUO.

The last thing I had to arrange were the courses I wanted to follow. This was quite a puzzle, because the Internet site of Alma Mater University is not very clear at first sight. Not all courses at the university are given in English, a lot is only available in Italian. The department of Economics and Management has a few bachelor programs in English. They call bachelor programs Laurea, Laurea Magistrale is the Italian name for master programs. The second thing I had to pay attention to was the date of the exam. The semesters in Bologna differ from those in Rotterdam, because they begin and end a little later. The start of the academic year was around the 20th of September, and the end of the first semester is at the end of January. Therefore, some courses held their exams in January, but I had to be back in January because the third block started again. Therefore I had to switch a course during my stay. There is also a language course available for exchange students in the first weeks of September. I can recommend everyone to subscribe for this course, because it is necessary to speak a little Italian when you live in Bologna. The city is not as international as Milan or Rome might be, so not everyone speaks English. The university of Bologna informed me about the language course, and I could subscribe through their portal.

Arrival

In the beginning of August I went to Bologna to check my room and have a look at the city, but this was only a short visit. On August the 28 I left Rotterdam to move to Bologna. My courses started at the third week of September, so I was a little early. Most students arrive during the first or second week of September. But during these first weeks I was able to check-in at the university, follow the language course and meet other people. The Italian language course was held in the second and third week of September, the devotion between hours of classes and homework differed in level. Because I was a beginner, I did not have many classes (10 to 15 hours each week) but I had to do more on my own. I did my check-in at the University as soon as possible, together with the documents for the Erasmus+ grant. After the check-in, there is a welcome session where you can meet other exchange students and you get some information about the university. Furthermore I subscribed to different student associations that were especially for exchange students. There is not only ESN (Erasmus Student Network) in Bologna, but also ESEG Erasmusland and EIBo. I chose to subscribe for all the associations, because they all organize different activities and party's and I wanted to be able to join everything that seemed nice. Because there are no classes in the first week, I did a lot of trips and joined several parties.

Courses

✓ Corso di lingua Italiana (5 ECTS)

As I already noticed, the first course I followed was an Italian language course. In two weeks I have learned the basics of the Italian tongue. This was very helpful for my, because I was able to express myself in Italian after the course.

✓ Macroeconomics (9 ECTS)

During this semester I followed the Macroeconomics course, this is a second year bachelor course from the program Business and Economics. The course is comparable to a combination of the macroeconomics and international economics courses of the Erasmus University. Because the semesters are quite long, students are given an opportunity to split the exam in two midterms. I preferred to have two smaller tests instead of one big test, and therefore took one exam at the beginning of November and one at the end of December. I had already studied some of the topics from course during my studies at home, and some of them were new to me. The course itself was not very easy, but the exams were less difficult than I expected. What I liked the most about the course were the examples. The course was given from the point of view of Italians. To the examples covered the situation of Italy, which differs from the situation of the Netherlands. Some topics were the same as topics at the macro- or international economics at home, but they were told from a different perspective.

✓ Principles of Management (9 ECTS)

My favourite course at Alma Mater University was Principles of Management. This is a first year bachelor course, also from the Business and Economics program. During the course management activities were explained, different techniques were discussed and the four essential core areas of operations management and supply chain management were analysed. There was also a guest lecture from a manager at BVLGARI. Also in this course we had the option to split the exam into two midterms, held in the same week as the others. This course was not very difficult to understand and study, but the exam was a little harder. But compared to courses I already finished in Rotterdam it is not very hard to follow this one. At this moment, however, I can refer a lot to the topics I studied in this course because they form the core of business management.

✓ Introduction to Italian Culture (6 ECTS)

The last course I followed in Bologna was not related to Economics, in fact it was a course developed for exchange students. I chose this course so I was able to meet other internationals, and to learn some more about the culture of my host country. But following this course was not necessary for meeting people, because there are so many other ways to meet exchange students (mostly during activities, trips and party's of associations!!). This course consisted of nine guest-lecture, and the professors who taught us came from different universities around Italy. The lectures were all about different topics, and instead of giving you a broad overview of the Italian culture, every topic was very specific. That was a disappointment for me, but for students that were more interested in special topics it was an advantage. There was no exam for this course, instead of making an exam we had to write a paper. The subject of the paper was free of choice, I wrote mine about "Italian Luxury Fashion Brands".

Finances

These were some of my main monthly expenses:

- Rent: I paid €400,- rent, including internet, electricity and gas. I rented a single room in the city centre, and shared the apartment with one other student and my hostess. There are cheaper rooms for students in Bologna, but I had quite a big apartment and a good location. Shared rooms are also less pricy.
- Transport: Around €60,- per month. This included: retour flight, use of the city busses and the cost of my bike. I excluded day or weekend trips for which I travelled by train. A bike is a very common way of transportation in Bologna (among students), I can recommend it to everyone.
- Mobile phone: €20,- . There are different mobile phone providers that sell monthly rechargeable sim-cards.
- Leisure: to be honest, I did not really count the euro's while living in Bologna, I knew my budget and tried to stick to it. Going out for dinner does not have to be expensive in Bologna, the city is famous for its Italian kitchen so a lot of dishes are from the region. Pizza's and pasta's in restaurants were around €8,- , main courses with meat etc. €12,-, a bottle of wine €10,- and a bottle of water €2,-. There was a variety among restaurants. When going out, entrance to clubs was free before midnight. But for every club you needed a "member-card", those cards were around €10,- or €15,. After midnight most clubs charged a €5,- entrance fee. Trips I made differed highly in prices, for example: I went to Napoli with ESN for 4 days and 3 nights by bus for €160,-, a daytrip to Parma for €5,- and one to Cinque Terre for €15,- and I travelled around Tuscany for 3 days with friends by train for €120,-.
- Groceries: Supermarkets in Bologna were a little bit more expensive then in Holland. In the weekends I went out for dinner and sometimes during the week too.

Daily life

Bologna is a perfect city for Erasmus Exchange students. The city is not very big, so you are able to get to know it well during these months. But this does not mean the city is boring. There is so much to do, see and enjoy in and around Bologna that I could easily stay there for another semester without a dull moment. The Alma Mater University is Europe's oldest university. Also because of that, Bologna is one of Italy's famous student cities. There are a lot of international students and a lot of activities organised for international students. If you

want, you can go to a party every night. Furthermore, Bologna is located centrally in the northern of Italy, which makes it very attractive to go on daytrips to different cities around Italy. I went on a trip, or two, every week (end). There is a train station in Bologna, and by train it takes half an hour to go to Florence, an hour to go to Verona and Milan (fastest train), less than two hours to the rest of Tuscany, but also to Venice and in four hours you are in Rome. I did not have any mandatory classes, only lectures. Because my lectures started at the end of September, I had almost a full month to explore the city and meet people. During these days I did not have a daily rhythm and to be honest, this daily rhythm did not appear during the rest of the stay. After my classes had started I attended lectures on Monday morning, Tuesday during the whole day, Thursday night and Friday afternoon. But when friends and family visited me in Bologna, I was not able to go to all the lectures, because I was showing them the city. Bologna has three nicknames: La Dotta (the learned one), because the Alma Mater University is the oldest university of Europe and there are so many students in Bologna. La Grassa (the fat one) because “Spaghetti Bolognese” of course, but also multiple other famous Italian dishes find their origins in Bologna. La Rossa (the red one) because all the rooftops are red, when climbing the famous tower, or visiting a church on a hill, you can enjoy the beautiful view. I enjoyed these three names to the fullest, and I can recommend everyone to do the same!

For more specific questions about an Exchange semester in Bologna, feel free to send me an e-mail. My EUR student mail-address is: 413636db@student.eur.nl

Photo of the Faculty of Economics and Management (one of the ugliest faculties of the university):



and one picture of a dinner with friends, those dinners are one of the things I will remember:



