

# Exchange at the University of Pisa

## General information

In the fall semester of 2016, I studied at the economic department of the University of Pisa in Pisa, Italy. My semester started at the 26th of September and officially it lasted until the end of February. It is possible to arrange that you make your exams before the Christmas break, as I did, because the months January and February is exam period. Most students stay until February.

## Preparation

Before going on exchange, you need to prepare your learning agreement. The University of Pisa sent all the documents I needed during the summer, so I could finalize my paperwork in time. You choose your courses once you arrived in Pisa. One week before the semester starts, there is an introduction week, where people will help you with choosing your courses and subscribing. The university advises student to look for a room once they are in Pisa. I did as well. There is one cheap hostel in Pisa where in the introduction week many exchange students sleep. Finding a room was quite easy. Once you are in Pisa you will meet a lot of new people that can help you.

## Arrival

One week before the semester starts, the university organizes an introduction week. In this week the university helps you with subscribing for everything and they will give you tours around campus. Furthermore, the university offers free Italian language courses worth 4 ECTS. During the introduction week you can take an entrée test and subscribe to one of the courses. The best is to search for a room on arrival. That way you know better what nice areas are to live in and in the first days you will meet a lot of people that can help you. For renting a room you need a fiscal code, but the university will provide you this during the introduction week.

## Courses

Mathematical methods for economics. 12 ECTS

The course aims to give a solid background in mathematics for economic studies. Particular attention will be given to economic applications. Topology, Fixed point theorem and separation, Linear Algebra, Topics on Multivariable Calculus, Static optimization, Dynamical systems and Dynamic optimization where the topics. Lectures where 4 times a week for 90 min and the exam was two times a mid term of 90 min.

Advanced statistics. 9 ECTS

The course was an introduction to statistics. At the end of the course there were some advanced topics as Markov Processes and Hazard rates. Lectures were 3 times a week for 90 min and the exam was a written exam of 2 hours.

Business planning. 3 ECTS

The course was an introduction to business planning. It was one full day from 9 till 6 working on a project. After that you had to finalize the project at home and give a 5 min presentation as exam. It was a small form of making a business plan for your firm.

For all my courses, I was able to take the exam before Christmas break. But, there are also retakes in January and February, so if you need you can take the exam three times.

## Finances

Renting a room in Pisa is quite cheap, even in the city center. Pisa is also quite small, so you can walk everywhere and don't need to buy a bike or take the bus. I only took the train a lot to visit other cities in Italy. The price of food is the same as in the Netherlands.

Monthly costs

Rent (incl. G/W/E)	300
Cost of living	200
Sport	55
Mobile phone	10
Transport (Visiting places)	100
Social life	150

## Daily life

The life in Pisa is really good. Pisa has a well-connected train station; from where you can take a lot of trains to so many cities in Tuscany. Also, the high-speed train to Rome stops in Pisa. The weather in Pisa stays good for a long time. The beach is really close (only 20 min) and you can still go there in November. In Pisa, life is all about food and coffee. There are so many good restaurants where you can eat typical Tuscan food and the coffee is so good and cheap everywhere. Also, the Pisa people love sweets, and you can buy them everywhere. Pisa is really centered on its student life. There are many students living in Pisa. Pisa does not have one big campus, but the departments are all around the city, so everywhere you go are students. The nightlife in Pisa is a bit different than what we are used to. People don't really go to bars, but rather stay on the streets, walking from square to square. There is only one nightclub in Pisa, but luckily Florence is only 45 minutes away and the parties there are really good.