

Erfahrungsbericht Université Grenoble Alpes 2016/17

Application and travel abroad

The application for an Erasmus stay abroad is really not too difficult to handle. You will find all the information you need online or you can write to your coordinators anytime, my faculty organized informative meetings and presentations of the program as well. My application went through easily and I received a positive answer for my stay at the Université Grenoble Alpes in France after a short while. After the nomination, I had to officially apply to the University in France as well, which was possible through filling out an online form with all my information after sending in a few things by mail. I got the email address of the coordinator in France quickly, so there was somebody who answered all the important questions right from the start. I took a French test before my stay abroad, but the University did not require this, they only recommended a basic knowledge of the French language.

Grenoble: The City

If you arrive for the winter semester in Grenoble, you should keep in mind, that it already starts in September. This also means that you might as well live with 30°C everyday for a while, until fall sets in. Winter is coming, but until the mountains will be covered in snow and the ski season starts, some time goes by. The late summer is the perfect season to go sightseeing, hiking or climbing and to get to know the city and its surroundings. Grenoble is a metropolis, and even if the city is officially only made of 160,000 inhabitants, the region harbors around half a million. The major part of the university is officially already out of Grenoble's city borders, it's really only a few kilometers away and easy to reach by the city's tram lines. The bus and Tram tickets (www.tag.fr) cost a monthly 15€ when you get an abonnement, but you can also rent a yellow bike for a longer period of time, you can find those bikes all around town.

Housing in Grenoble

For international students, the CROUS almost always offers a spot in one of their residences. Make sure you apply in time, but then you will have a good chance to get a room. This might be a relief, but you should know that the residences in Grenoble do not offer the highest standards. You won't be equipped with anything (no kitchenware, nothing except for some pieces of furniture) and as in my case, in the Résidence Le Rabot there are only Turkish toilets (basically a hole in the ground that you can flush). Also, there is no difference in Men's or Women's bathrooms, but thankfully there were always separate cabins. Make sure to bring your own toilet paper. In my residence, we had each a small fridge and a sink in our rooms, but I have heard of other residences without access to a fridge. There were a washing machine and two dryers in my building for which you could sign up once a week. The Rabot is a bit special since it is located on the hillside and you must walk 10-15 minutes

up, when there's no shuttle bus going and it is quite steep. The bus from the residence goes every 15 minutes in the early morning and in the late afternoon, so you should plan your arrival carefully and maybe take a taxi. The accommodation might be very basic, but there is always a lot going on with all the international students in the university residences. Every Wednesday and Friday we've had an open bar which was sometimes accompanied by live music. You will need an insurance certificate for housing in France, which you can get for little money at local agencies right after your arrival. The reception of your residence or your coordinator at the university can give you all the details. Also make sure to bring a lot of passport photos, since they will be needed for many things.

University

I have basically spent the first day after my arrival at university trying to figure out my timetable for the upcoming semester, that started only three days later. It wasn't easy to handle all this in French, but everybody's English is often just rudimentary. I cannot recommend studying in France without a basic understanding of the French language, or it will be very difficult. The first week of every semester is filled up with welcome events of which you should be notified by following groups on Facebook or by informing yourself on the university website. The association Integre is organizing tours around the city and into the areas outside of Grenoble, as well as pub evenings and many other things, it is really not hard to get in contact with other international students. During the semester, I was allowed to take any classes that I wanted to, but it was a big challenge to put everything into one schedule, especially since there were changes on short notice nearly every week. The coordinators were always there if I had any questions, which were quite a few in the beginning. My classes were mostly in English and partially in French, but if I ever missed out on any information, my classmates were super helpful and also the professors tried their best to help. I took mostly classes of the first year in the Master, which were not too hard to follow for me. I had lectures, practical courses and mandatory seminar which gave especially important information for the exams (midterms in November, final exams in December or January). Additionally, I was able to spend the second half of the semester doing an internship in a local institute, which was a great experience and supported by the coordinators at university. Beside my studies, I took a French language course which is possible for all the international students after an initial assessment of the French language level. Besides, the university offers a variety of sports, some of which you can perform as a graded class (for free) or others for a small fee.

Conclusion

When you think about going abroad with Erasmus, you should be aware that it will include paperwork and require some organizational skills, but your university provides you with all the necessary information and the effort will pay off. Choose carefully where you want to go and make sure you're informed about the cost that will come up during your stay abroad, so you're not up for surprises. But whatever the investment of work, time and costs, I can very much recommend going abroad. It is a fantastic experience and you will learn a lot about a different country and culture, but even more about yourself.