

Mobility Report

Preparation:

The most important thing to start with after receiving the letter of acceptance by Erasmus Mundus (I can only speak for the German citizens now) is to collect all the necessary documents for the Visa and afterwards logically also apply for it. Since the official decision of acceptance is sent out quite late – in my case in May, I left in mid of July – it is highly recommended to hand in your Visa application as soon as possible. They will tell you at the embassy, that it might take up to 2 months to process the applications. Thus, that might become a problem. Besides you can try to receive more detailed information about the classes you want to visit. For me this effort was in vain though, since information that were sent were redundant and not detailed at all. The detailed information (syllabus, literature list, etc.) were received after quite a while already being in South Africa.

Weather:

First of all the bad news: I am sorry to say, but yes there is also winter in South Africa. It might not be as harsh as it is in Europe, but if you are not prepared it might even be worse. Especially the start (July, August and parts of September) was probably not as nice as I had expected it. You should bring warm clothes for winter. Experiencing that South African houses are mainly built for the summer season, neglecting the cold temperatures, is not too much fun without solid clothes. Winter days are short, the weather windy and often rainy as well. BUT- and here is the great news - once this time is over the weather really pays off. Enjoying the sun at the beach, a pool or just drink a cold drink in one of Cape Town's endless nice restaurants are options I miss by now already.

The country – South Africa:

South Africa is a very diverse country concerning pretty much everything. Culture, cuisine, landscapes and many more things. Cape Town, which can be seen as the “lifestyle city” in South Africa combines it all. An incredible cultural mix, tons of awesome restaurants (and really affordable!), bars and clubs as well as mountains directly next to unique beaches plus winelands close by. But not only Cape Town is worth seeing. My advice: Take your chance and explore the country (or even the continent) as much as you can!



With all its advantages I think it is also necessary to mention the biggest downturn. To me, the most shocking element of South Africa was its discrepancy between rich and poor. Hearing from it is one thing, living in such an environment is another story. On the one hand the super rich people owning huge mansions with sea view close to the beach, not far away the so called „Townships“ where people struggle with elementary problems in life. Living in South Africa for one semester made me aware of the existing gap between rich and poor, which was simply unimaginable to me before...Hopefully South Africa will be able to reduce this gap in the future. Sadly, this is doubtful, since corruption and nepotism can even be found all the way to political top.

University:

At first glance the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) seemed like a friendly and especially for Erasmus Mundus students welcoming institution. Sadly, this first impression vanished just after a few weeks. The first warm and welcoming Emails were soon to be replaced by more and more realistic insights into the day-to-day CPUT organizational structures. Well, to see it positive, now I can probably say I saw parts of the “real” South Africa. One other scholarship grantee and me were the first Master exchange students at CPUT why we probably had to tear down many walls. Still, the chaos we faced was big. Not receiving the information you need, talking to people and not being able to rely on their promises to do things, vast numbers of Emails, etc.. It took us almost three months to rearrange and organize everything in such a way that all parties were ok with it. Some South Africans might simply say TIA – “This is Africa” – but that is something I never got used to. But we never gave up and it all turned out well in the end, which is the most important thing. Still, saying that no one really helped or could help us at CPUT would not be fair. Besides some staff members who really did their best, our classmates were great as well. They supported us and gave us good advice throughout the time. Here is a picture - cheers to them!



General organisation:

From the side of Erasmus Mundus there is only positive words to say. We always got quick and very friendly responses from Sweden. Of course the means to help us with the problems we were facing from Europe are limited, but I felt that the Inspire team did everything they could to help us in any way possible. This is why I would like to send a big thanks to the whole Inspire Team!

Conclusion:

All in all I am more than happy to have spend my semester abroad in South Africa. Even though the semester abroad was very challenging, especially in the beginning I gained insights of a completely different culture and had the chance to travel an unique continent. Not to get philiosophical, but from retrospect I do think that not only the positive experiences in a semester abroad help you grow, but it is especially for not so bright sides. This is why, besides the terrible structures at CPUT, I can really recommend to spend your semester abroad in Cape Town, especially when embedded in the Eramsus Mundus Inspire program.