

# Experience report study abroad stay

At the University of Perpignan, Solar Fournance PROMES-CNRS Center in  
Font-Romeu-Odeillo-Via



Picture 1: this was my every morning window view in Font-Romeu-Odeillo-Via, you can see the Solar Furnace Center on the right side downhill.

## **Preparation**

The University of Perpignan is hosting a specialization semester in Solar thermal and associated heat storage program organized by EUREC, in the biggest solar furnace research center in Europe, this was a chance that I was planning to take advantage of it, with the help of my program coordinator at Oldenbourg university who coordinated already with the host institution, I got in touch with the Mobility office in Oldenbourg university and Mr. Andreas Männle assisted me via email to fill and submit the required documentation for the mobility grant.

## **Travel and arrival**

Traveling at that period wasn't an easy task for a student, it wasn't easy to keep updated with the last Covid 19 restrictions, as students me and my colleague have booked an economy airplane ticket to France, but few days before the departure our ticket was canceled and not refunded, our plan was to travel from Hambourg or Bremen or Hannover airport to Perpignan or Toulouse airport and then to take the train and bus to Font-Romeu-Odeillo-Via where the solar furnace research center was situated, but after our fly-ticket was canceled we decided to take my car and hit the road to France with 17hours of continuous driving.

## **Accommodation**

The solar furnace research center is located in the Pyrenees mountains near the borders with Spain in a small touristic city at 1800m of altitude a nice place and nice view, 2 hours of driving out of Perpignan city, a destination for lovers of mountain and ski sports, the place was touristic and not very cheap, we had found a small apartment there on Airbnb before leaving Germany and we stayed there for the whole semester time.

## **Studying at the host university**

As mentioned before we were studying in a research center far from the central university, actually we were the only student at the center all the others were researchers and this gave us the chance to discover the last updates and to be very close to all running researches dealing with all type of solar thermal technologies, the course is pretty rich and wide coverage but also deep enough with about 60% of labs, practical work, onsite visits, we were near to the Microsol solar parabolic trough plant, Ilo fresnel solar power plant, THEMIS tower solar concentration plant, with a visit to the biggest telescope in Europe at the Pic de Midi, we had our own lounge room just for our class member, and another public lounge room and all the course was held in class in physical presence which was really great in a Corona time.



Picture 2: A closer view to the Solar Furnace Center



Picture 3: THEMIS Solar Concentration Plan near the Solar Furnace Center.

### **Everyday life and leisure time**

The nature in the Pyrenees mountain is unbelievable, hiking, skiing, camping, unfortunately, the bars and pubs were closed for Covid 19 restrictions, but we had enough social events with the others researchers from the solar furnace, it was a very nice experience anyway, it is different from the city, nature, and mountains everywhere, it is very close to Spain, Barcelona, Perpignan from the cost side, and public transport bus costs just one euro to Perpignan.

### **General experience**

The credit transfer was done automatically by our program coordinators.

The general experience was wonderful, we felt close to the nature as we will never have in a city, we felt well hosted in the solar furnace center, we had our cantine where they cook nice and fresh french dishes every day

### **Tips**

If you are planning for a studying mobility semester in the solar furnace in Odeillo, know that you are going to be in the Pyrenees mountains, so take your jacket, gloves and snow boots with you, don't forget to have a camping bag or you ski instruments to enjoy the nature, it is near Spain and the cost side so you may want to plan a visit to Barcelona in the two weeks of holidays, it is a big advantage to have a private transport way, take your car or your bicycle with you there, and don't forget to try the french dishes.

There are no student dorms or Erasmus stay in Font-Romeu so you may need to look earlier for an apartment on Airbnb or Le Bon Coin website and ensure to have a credit card before moving abroad.