

Experience Report



Embarking on my specialized semester in concentrated solar power at the CNRS Institute in Font-Romeu was a thrilling experience. Font-Romeu is well-known for its magnificent ski resorts in addition to its cutting-edge solar energy research. Three months in advance, careful house hunting and collaboration with other students who were attending the same university marked the beginning of the planning process. In order to assist one another and exchange information, we organized a small group. Our committed coordinator was of great assistance, offering advice on travel and meeting necessary insurance needs, such as health and civil liability insurance.

The European Masters application procedure included a host institution application. An further application was not required. The Erasmus scholarship requires a good deal of paperwork to get approved. Our academic records, passports, visas, and signed Learning Agreements from the host university, the Erasmus office, and our core universities were to be turned in. The extensive procedure was well worth the work because it made the transfer to our host university easy.

The journey to Font-Romeu wasn't too easy. Oldenburg-Barcelona-Puicerda-Font-Romeu and Oldenburg-Toulouse-Font-Romeu were our two possible routes. With two buddies in tow, we chose the Toulouse route. The Barcelona route required many train changes and uncertainty about reaching Font-Romeu from Puicerda. There was also a rail alternative on the Toulouse route, although it involved numerous connections. In the end, we decided to fly to

Toulouse and spend the next three hours taking a taxi to Font-Romeu. Given our luggage and the language barrier, it was a wiser decision even if it was a long drive.

We had plenty of time to get settled in as we arrived at our host university 12 days prior to orientation day. There isn't much public transportation in Font-Romeu; busses to Perpignan run only sometimes and are weather-dependent. On February 12th, there was an extensive orientation day that included a tour of the remarkable solar furnace and a thorough introduction to the institute. At first we were concerned about groceries, but at the top of the hill we found a Carrefour, many restaurants, and a gym.

In a popular tourist destination like Font-Romeu, accommodation was hard to come by and expensive. Making rental inquiries over the phone was made more challenging by the language barrier. In the end, my two friends and I decided to share an Airbnb with three bedrooms. This setup offered a network of support in addition to making the expense feasible. The apartment came fully furnished and equipped with all the necessities, such as laundry and internet connection.

Our courses at the host university were carefully designed to complement our focus on concentrated solar power. Combination heat and mass transfer, radiative heat transfer, solar conversion, thermo-economics, solar concentrating systems and receivers, solar collector theory and technologies, solar power plants, thermal energy storage, solar fuels, and innovative materials for energy conversion were among the many topics covered in all of the English-taught courses. We had the chance to tour neighboring solar power plants like THEMIS and ELLO as part of the course. In addition, certain labs were held in Perpignan, which required us to stay for two days.



The academic load was tough but manageable. Some modifications to study techniques were necessary in order to accommodate to a new grading scheme. Regular assessments, lab reports, and active engagement were all necessary for success. After the courses were finished, the host university sent an official transcript, and the credits were easily returned to the University of Oldenburg in accordance with the ECTS regulations. The host university offered first-rate assistance; academic advisors were always hand to help with course choices and any other problems that came up. Notably, Dr. Gilles Flamant, a world-renowned scientist, and Professor Dr. Quentin Falcoz provided invaluable industrial contacts, which considerably aid in securing an internship.

Adjusting to life in Font-Romeu was both exciting and challenging. With the research center at the base of the mountain and our residence located on a hill, our daily walks were very refreshing. Font-Romeu's breathtaking scenery never ceased to amaze us, from the breathtaking views of snow-capped mountains at night to the unpredictable weather that always kept us on our toes.



I will never forget the sight of the snow-capped mountains glowing in the moonlight a single night during a full moon. The place's beauty was enhanced by the erratic weather, which frequently changed from bright to rainy or snowy in a matter of hours.

The highlight was going skiing for the first time, which our professors arranged as a great way for us to get to know one another. Fun things to do on weekends and holidays included exploring local castles and traveling to neighboring towns like Barcelona, Llívia, and Puigcerdà. My personal favorite was Barcelona, with its lively atmosphere and lovely weather.

It was unexpectedly delightful to see reindeer up close, and the stunning vistas from the hilltop perspective will never be forgotten. Joy, laughing, and a profound appreciation for the surrounding natural beauty characterized our free time.

My intellectual and personal lives have been greatly enhanced by this exchange program. Along with honing my language abilities and expanding my knowledge of various cultures, I also felt more independent and flexible. My recommendations for the students would be if you have a car or know someone who does, that will be extremely beneficial. Plan ahead and maintain organization as you go through the process. Never undervalue the significance of showing up to orientation sessions. Make the most of your stay and don't forget to explore the local way of life. You will adore it if you are a passionate skier. You will adore the pet-friendly environment in the area if you love dogs or cats.

In conclusion, I will always treasure the once-in-a-lifetime experience I had through this exchange program. It was genuinely unforgettable due to the combination of academic intensity and Font-Romeu's lovely surroundings.