Erasmus Student Experience Report

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Preparation (Planning, organisation, application to the host institution)
The preparation before the trip included getting all the forms for ERASMUS grant signed and sent and finding accommodation. We were put in contact with our coordinator in Lisbon which took a month to reply to us with the signed documents after several emails. Thankfully Oldenburg University relaxed its deadlines for that reason. The first lesson we received from Portugal is to insist and be patient.

Travel and Arrival
Flying is the easiest way to go to Lisbon from Germany, there is a direct flight from Hamburg but not from Bremen, one change is required. The arrival in Portugal was very easy thanks to the airport proximity to the city centre, the beautiful weather and the fact that I was going to live with my fellow students from Germany. Eventhough the weather did not hold, and the promised Portuguese Sun did not show until the end of May, I still saw the beauty of the city of Lisbon. The Aerobus takes you straight to the centre on arrival but it is quite expensive (4€) compared to the other local buses (1.85€). Although on your first day, the local bus will be hard to find so just pay for the aerobus. The taxis will give you a bad impression cause they are lazy and rude, they will try to rip you off so don’t be afraid to argue the price. Ask your landlord what is a normal taxi fare to your flat. We mostly used Uber once we were in Lisbon cause it was very cheap, clean, quick and friendly. Depending where you live, metro can be an option too but there aren’t many lines.

Accommodation
Accommodation for students can be more expensive than you think because the landlords take advantage of European students. They take them as more well-off and up the rents. We paid 400€+bills for the smaller rooms which is already more than it should be. If you are alone, you can find cheaper. Our challenge was to find a flat for the four of us travelling together. We arrived in February and did not expect to be cold. However, there is no heating in the houses so it gets very cold in the evening, don’t forget to bring your biggest jumpers, gloves (typing on computer could become a challenge) and slippers. The warmth only arrived in May for us. The websites we found the most useful for finding accommodation were bquarto and uniplaces. Don’t count on IST to help you, they sent me some Facebook pages that were not useful at all.
Studying at the host university (course, academic performance, support, credit transfer)

The university is located on top of a hill so we get some beautiful views while learning. Certain teachers were very good and passionate. We did however get a lot of communication problems since the main website, called FENIX, was not functioning properly. It took 3 months for the message to go through to the teachers. A sense of laziness was felt on their part as they never double checked we got the information from lectures or for assignments. They were also not in a rush to update changes in the calendar so we found ourselves waiting for teachers that never showed sometimes. On the university side, I was quite disappointed with the treatment to the students. We did learn a lot though, and the promised wave lab that had been cancelled was finally rescheduled last minute at the end of the semester. It was not very well organised but we were pleased to get the chance to use the wave flume they have in the institute. Overall, about half the lecturers did a good job and the other half were lazy and never answering questions. Do not be afraid to go their office because they won’t reply to emails. There is a frustrating but necessity from the student to insist and triple check they have received everything from the lecturers or you find yourself wasting a lot of time.

![Image](image.jpg)

*Figure 1: First day walking commute with IST in background.*

Everyday life and leisure time

Lisbon is full of History, Viewpoints with live music, street kiosks serving any drink you need and the best chocolate cakes I have ever had, especially the Casa Independente one. The city is very hilly which made us exercise loads but the public transport is relatively easy to use. We could be at the beach in just under an hour, unfortunately we did not do that as often as hoped due to the weather. We were lucky to be there for the Eurovision where they had put a large screen on the main square, Praca do Comercio and people from all over Europe...and Australia were present. I enjoyed some Fado music more than once, the best is to go after dinner, when all the tourists leave, and the locals stay there quietly to listen in the dark but you have to be awake past 11h-midnight to see this.
The student life was very good when the sun came back towards the end of May, the bbqs between students started. The June Sardine festival brought a whole new character to the city life, so we ended the semester very happy and very sad to leave. The Portuguese people were so welcoming, and I occasionally got advice from random older ladies on the street. They were so lovely to take the time to do so. Travelling to other cities was not the easiest but blablacar worked well so I visited Porto and Sintra during my time there which were also beautiful places. Overall a great life experience I would recommend.

General experience, conclusion

Overall, the life in Lisbon is very pleasant, slow and even better when it is sunny. Some frustration came from the unusual bad weather we had and the lack of professionalism at the university but we did learn a lot and built friendships. There is a great opportunity for going out and meeting other people in Lisbon but it is not organised by the university, it has to come from you. There are “associations” which are a bit hipster and can be restaurants, bars, or live music jam sessions. Don’t let the university hold you back, the life there is really fun and will help you overcome any frustration you may get with work. Enjoy every moment, and learn some Portuguese, it will make locals happy.