

## Erasmus-Erfahrungsbericht

### Preparation

I started learning Spanish in February 2018. I applied for the semester at the start of 2019. There were no other applicants in my department, so the process from the Oldenburg side was quite simple. My coordinator agreed with all of the classes I chose. On the part of the receiving institution, the Universidad Cádiz, I followed the process to apply which was described on their website, which is available in English as well as Spanish, and I had no problems there. My coordinators at both universities were responsive and helpful.

### Travel and Arrival

I planned to arrive in Cádiz at the start of September and stay in an Airbnb while looking for an apartment. The night before I left, I unfortunately received two pieces of bad news regarding two close relatives of mine. I couldn't stop to digest the news, because that day, I had to run around Oldenburg cleaning up loose ends. Then, in the evening, I had to take two trains through Bremen to Hannover in order to catch a 5 AM flight to Jerez de la Frontera, then another train to San Fernando, where my Airbnb host lived.

It was a stressful time for me because of my family's misfortune, and the flight was rather inconvenient, but in and of itself, getting to Cádiz should not be too difficult for someone who has lived in Germany. My Airbnb host spoke English.

### Accommodation

Until I found my current flat in Oldenburg, I experienced a lot of abuse at the hands of transphobic flatmates here. I never want to go back to a situation like that. I made it a priority to find queer and queer-positive people to live with in Cádiz. In my posts on Idealista, Milanuncios, and Facebook, I wrote that I was transgender and queer, I needed queer-positive people around me, and I liked to cook. I also mentioned that that I didn't want to live with any "ignorant straight people with strange opinions about my identity."

A lot of Gaditanos got very upset when they read my post. They told me that everyone in Cádiz loves trans people, and actually, nobody there has any prejudices at all, and I was the intolerant one with the bad attitude. They said that I shouldn't be so choosy. One also wrote, "Long live Cádiz, cradle of liberty!"

In the end, I found two other nice Erasmus students to look for a flat with. They both spoke Spanish and English, they both enjoyed cooking, and most importantly, they were both engaged with the same issues that occupied me.

I spent most of September looking for a flat, and in the end, we settled for the first place we found, right before the semester began, because we had no other options. It had a great central location close to the beach, but it also had some very serious shortcomings. It was poorly insulated and stood right next to a heavily trafficked plaza, so it was never quiet inside. I had to wear earplugs at night to block out the sounds of motorbikes and partygoers. Also, starting in November, it became very cold, and the old electrical wiring there didn't allow us to run a space heater. I drank a lot of tea, put on warm socks, and kept my winter jacket on all day, and I didn't catch pneumonia or anything, but it was not pleasant.

I wish I'd have known to make these aspects more of a priority in my flat search. The discomfort I was in made it hard to think and function. I missed the first couple of weeks of classes. Perhaps I was also still busy digesting the events in my family that I mentioned earlier.

#### Studying at the host university

- Courses: The selection is similar to that of the University Oldenburg. There is mandatory attendance for most modules. The schedule of classes was published after I arrived, and I had to change one class. Both of my exchange coordinators agreed with my choice.
- Academic performance/Credits and credit transfer: Modules are worth 6 ECTS, just like in Oldenburg. There is a grading system from 0 to 10 which can be converted to the German system according to a formula. I chose to drop one module because of further stressful

events which occurred in my family. The other two will be applied to my degree in Oldenburg.

- Support: I found it difficult to connect with the Spanish students in my modules. They were shy and kept to themselves. The professors were responsive and helpful.

#### Everyday life and leisure time

In Cádiz, I sadly didn't find any queer or FLINT+ meeting places in person, but through Tinder, I managed to make friends with a lot of queer, trans, and activistically minded locals. They taught me Andaluz and helped me feel at home, despite my difficult experiences early on.

#### General experience and conclusion with Do's and Don'ts

I have happy memories of Cádiz and fond associations with the culture and the language. Although I had some difficulties when I arrived, I felt myself at home there by the time I left.

#### Do's:

- Use dating apps to meet other trans people
- Attend demonstrations, such as 25N
- Swim every day
- Eat olives at the weekend market
- Speak Andaluz

#### Don'ts:

- Look for a flat at the last minute
- Arrive in Spain with a level of Spanish lower than B1
- Limit your social circle to other Erasmus students
- Accept transphobia, racism, ableism or any other forms of prejudice from those close to you