



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

EXCHANGE EXPRESS

digital magazine for exchange students



Study
Abroad

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Credits

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This magazine is published by Student Services to inform readers about experiences and achievements of students who are studying abroad

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Design: Student Services - University of Amsterdam, Ambassadors.



Picture by Julia Munroe

Dare to lose sight of the shore

Going on exchange is an amazing experience. I could give you a list of cliché statements that are usually made about going abroad and I would probably argue that most of them are in fact true. Yes, you do get to know and understand yourself in a new and meaningful way. You do develop yourself, not only in terms of academic skills and learning to handle situations on your own, but also in terms of social skills and adapting to different cultures and ideas. You meet people from all over the world, learn to recognize and identify the different cultural traits that other people might have and how they might affect their behaviour; subsequently this allows you to communicate with people without having biases and judgments, which ultimately gives you the chance to make a multitude of new connections, and hopefully, friends across the globe!

“...studying at a different university exposes you to a different way of teaching.”

Your exchange destination will feel like your second home and you will most definitely have a great time exploring all that this second home has to offer. Furthermore, studying at a different university exposes you to a different way of teaching. This is one aspect that I find especially nice, because in my case it challenged me to think critically about education, while keeping an open mind to new subjects, ideas and so much more!

So? Do you feel ready for your new adventure? Maybe the idea of studying abroad is already there, that feeling in your stomach, that slight tingling behind your ears, those emotions created by how putting your adventure into travelling might soon become true... We have all been there and as current or former Global and Erasmus exchange students brought together by the same wild dreams, we can guarantee that this experience will be one in a life time. Some names will disappear from your memory too soon, while some faces you will remember fondly forever. For me, my exchange in Amsterdam meant a whole new perspective on how travelling made my life, family, country and everything so small in comparison to this incredibly big and mysterious world. Everything seems closer than ever before. I now realise that though you are always surrounded by people, Erasmus is mostly about us, not about others. Taking long walks in the park, searching for homemade ice cream, traveling alone, joining spontaneous pub crawls, going on the highest swing in Europe, jumping in the canals of Amsterdam, booking a spontaneous train journey to Paris or skipping nights of sleep partying or studying, do not let your expectations remain better than your reality!

Soak it up, drink it in. Don't ever forget that you're on borrowed time! But at the same time, don't let that weigh you down. Be free as a bird. Travel, make friends, visit them, go out at night. Be young! At the end of your time abroad, you'll look back fondly and hopefully say "Damn, that was one hell of a year!"

Already getting your luggage ready for the semester of your life? We hope this edition of the Exchange Express will excite and inform you about all the vital things that

an exchange offers! For those who've already returned, we hope the stories in the Exchange Express could somehow give you that nostalgic feeling, triggering memories of your own time abroad, thus allowing you to relive your exchange! Good travels!

On behalf of your leaders,

Julian Sie



Global Ambassador Team, former Global Exchange student in Taipei, Taiwan from Amsterdam.

Lavinia Burtumac



Erasmus Ambassador Team, current Erasmus Exchange student in Amsterdam from Bucharest, Romania



The Amsterdam Experience

Hopelessly devoted to... eat, sleep, travel, repeat

by Lavinia Burtumac

Laura Braune, 21, France

Home university: Institut d'Études Politiques d'Aix en Provence

1. How would you describe yourself when you decided that you want to go on exchange?

I've wanted to go on exchange since I was in high-school, so when I chose my studies, it counted a lot that my home university offered me a whole year to travel abroad, which was actually my goal. I really wanted that, since in France the third year of university is meant to be an exchange experience.

2. What were the reasons behind your choice of going on exchange?

Well, firstly I wanted to improve my English and then travel, and you could actually ask me why I haven't chosen England or Scotland for that, but Amsterdam is just beautiful! Judging from the photos of the Netherlands as well, it seemed like a really nice and somehow small capital-city that you can very easily bike through. Speaking of which, it's also less polluted.



3. How did you think of it before applying for UvA?

University of Amsterdam is one of the best universities in the world, especially the Social Sciences Program and so, because I see myself working in international relations I just looked at all their courses and decided that what they have is one of the best decision regarding my exchange, on the academic side.

4. What do you enjoy the most at UvA? Teaching, organization of classes, Dutch colleagues? How are the courses different from your home university?

Regarding teaching, they are always open to discussion in a lot of classes. In the first block I was taking Children & International Development and Global Healthcare and though in both of them we had a great deal of readings to do, therefore a lot of independent work, but that is really different from France since here you have classes, discussions, readings, essays to write which is quite challenging your own reflections. I also appreciate that here teachers are almost bilingual, speaking in an English that is just amazing in comparison to France haha. Not to mention my colleagues!

5. What do you enjoy doing the most in Amsterdam?

Partying and spending time with friends, for sure! Biking and walking through the canals, mostly in the city center, Spuistraat and the Jordaan are extremely nice as well. Plus, here at CREA I'm taking theater classes for international students, so it's all in English. You can also do painting, sculpture, dancing and basically everything in terms of art. It is even more funny that we are going to make a show in December in the street, in Spuistraat!

6. Do you have a group of friends already?

Yes, I do have many different groups of friends because as an exchange you have plenty of places to meet new people. My 'go-to' ones are still the people I've met in the ISN Intro Week though, group 26! We kept in touch and we see each other constantly. For example, last weekend we went to a football game where France played against the Netherlands! I also have friends from the building I live in, which is an entirely international one - a great choice regarding accommodation since you can easily bond with flatmates that feel just as lost as you sometimes haha!

7. How would you describe the feeling of riding a bike in Amsterdam?

First impression: really scary! Everyone is biking so fast, you have busses, trams, you need to watch for the cars coming from all directions and besides all that, pedal breaks make everything even worse haha. Still, on a happier note, you can get used to all of that mess in 2-3 days. Then it's really a sense of freedom! Public transport is really expensive too and since it closes at 00:30, it's drawback if you like to party and don't have a bike.

8. As a conclusion, what does this exchange mean to you? How would you wrap it up?

A great improvement for my English for sure, for my ability to live on my own, being able to handle the every day life issues, laundry, kitchen, room.. Doing it in your home country is one thing, but abroad it's of course something else. It brings a lot of confidence in yourself. It would be a lie to say that it was that easy from the very first day being far away from my family, but after one week I've already felt like home. Amsterdam is a city where you feel welcome. People are kind and they would do a lot to help if you need something. I feel more responsible and accomplished since it truly makes me want to live!

9. What would you recommend to an incoming student who is ready to live his/her home country?

Actually, in my home university I knew a girl who was doing her exchange in Amsterdam, so she told me everything I needed to know about this city. Therefore, I recommend not to hesitate to contact people who are studying now here because they can offer you a valuable insight into the life of a student on exchange who had the same fears as you might have now. The website of UvA is really well structured too, but is never the same as asking someone who is likely dealing with some challenges that will be probably facing as well. Besides that, don't say no to things! Don't stay indoors for too long and just go and make friends because this way you will for sure never get the chance to feel homesick!



INBOUND: US, Canada and Australia

by Kristina Mau Hansen



Name: **Kiana Carrington**

Home university: **Hunter College of the City University of New York, US**

Host university: **Amsterdam University College**

What do you spontaneously connect with Amsterdam?

Lately it's been biking. Whenever I have to wait a while for a bus or I don't feel like walking I think to myself "if only I had a bike". Then I remember I'm in New York City and it's not a very bike friendly place.

What were some unique moments of happiness on your exchange?

Often it involves a bar but the happiness was more about the atmosphere than anything else. Two nights that stand out was one where I went to a bar with my friend on Kings Night. The place had tables upstairs and a dance floor downstairs. My friends and I ended up dancing to hip hop music that entire night until the bar closed. Sometimes riding home from a night out I would take the scenic route along the Amstel and it was so beautiful, unlike anything I had ever seen before.

Tell me something surprising that happened on your exchange

For spring break I went to Cyprus with two girls I met on exchange. One was from Cyprus. One night we went to a Cypriot rap battle and this short, bald, drunk guy hears I'm from Brooklyn and begins to rap an entire Nas song to me. Then later in the night a few others hear I'm from Brooklyn and all of a sudden I'm being greeted by a bunch of guys around my age introducing themselves and being excited that I'm from Brooklyn.

Sincere opinion on the Dutch

Everyone is so friendly. For a bigger city that was strange to me (in a good way) that people always said hello, made small talk and were polite. In New York it's the complete opposite. Often people don't even acknowledge your existence and you can say good morning and not get a response.

How was it to be back in New York City?

Going back home felt very different. Certain foods like chocolate and bread just didn't taste as good as it did in Amsterdam. I also kept referring to Amsterdam as home even though technically I was back home in the US. I missed it and the happy memories associated with Amsterdam.

The advice you would have wanted to receive before going on exchange?

I'd say be open to all the experiences available to you. Don't just sit in your dorm room because it's raining.



Picture of me
in an illegal
situation



On a boat tour
with my best friend,
Diane visiting and a very
good dutch friend

Name: **Jeanne Inchauspe**

Home university: **McGill University, Montreal, Canada**

Host university: **Amsterdam University College**

What were some unique moments of happiness on your exchange?

Cooking with my friend Kristina, going to Lindy Hop classes with her. Also having the visit of my friend Diane and going to Roest, a beach bar in Amsterdam Oost, with her and my friend Mary.

Did anything surprising happen on your exchange?

I started understanding that I could cure myself without drugs. For example, I trained a lot to heal my knee, and I would not take medication for a flue. Dutch people have a more natural way to approach health and I loved it.

If you should import a Dutch product to your home country or the place you live right now, what should that be?

Bitterballen for sure!!

Can you think about some special Dutch habits that you have never seen before?

They really know how to rest in parks, how to enjoy a very bit of sun, or how to bike in a hundred ways.

Any advice for students going on exchange? Any recommendations in Amsterdam?

Roest, Botanical Garden when it's spring, visit a lot of the Netherlands before it gets too busy, it is so easy to do with the train. Buy a raincoat and a good backpack. Having a bike is mandatory and with a basket it's even better (it will save you from uneasy grocery shopping). Do a lot of exercise! Connect with Dutch people too, even if it is hard at first, but just keep trying because it's their country that you want to discover!



Name: **Kiki Havos**

Home university: **The University of Melbourne, Australia**

Host university: **Amsterdam University College**

What do you spontaneously connect with Amsterdam?

Great people, weed, bikes, amazing bars, amazing bike paths, our dorm rooms and, of course, stroopwaffles

Unique moments of happiness on exchange

Every single time I went somewhere with people, or even just ventured out alone on my bike, I had an incredible time, and consider them my happiest moments. Actually going out and exploring the city I was studying in was really beneficial and important to keep reminding myself of why I chose to visit this place in the first place.

Did anything surprising happen on your exchange?

Yes! I honestly think the people I met surprised me! They were all very very very unique and different, and at first I wasn't sure whether they would like me but I ended up making some really incredible life long friends. Also, of course, the workload at Amsterdam University College surprised me! I was not expecting that amount of work :(

Can you think about some very special habits Dutch people have that you never saw before?

They are extremely blunt/say things to the point, which is very not like Australians. At first, sometimes they came

across as mean, but they were just being very honest and it was actually really nice to meet some honest / straightforward people :)

How was it to be back?

"I found it really hard adjusting back to life in Melbourne because I missed my new friends and Amsterdam so much. I think it's difficult to only study abroad for six months because by the end of the six months, you've made amazing friends and you really want to stay and see more of the city you feel more comfortable calling a second home."

What happened on the first day you arrived and on the day you left?

The first day I arrived was extremely busy and chaotic. I got the bus straight to the campus and spent the day signing up for stuff, getting my documents organised, meeting some people and organising my subjects for the term. I didn't even have a chance to unpack or have dinner!

The day I left was so sad, my sister was visiting me at this stage so I spent the morning getting coffee at my favourite cafe in Oost (Bedford Stuyvesant), and then we packed my room up and left my bike somewhere for someone to take before heading to the airport around afternoon.



Kiki and Isabel (LTR) at Zaanse Schans



Name: Dany Portillo

Home University:

National Autonomous University of Mexico

Host University:

University of Amsterdam

Program:

Global Exchange

Interview by:

Shirley Cayetano, Exchange Student in Amsterdam from Peru

What's the biggest misconception you've had about Amsterdam?

That it would be similar to my home city - full of cars, noise and people running around. Amsterdam is calm and quiet, and its way of living is more relaxed than my city. So having to adapt to a more relaxed way of living was a big shock during the first few weeks.

Name one thing you like and dislike about Amsterdam.

I like how everything is so close. The distances are small and the diverse types of transportation makes it easy to commute around the city. I dislike the high prices for everything and the tourists around the center of the city.

Any regrets or joyful moments?

I regret not learning Dutch before coming to Amsterdam. And a joyful moment could be when I realized that I already considered Amsterdam my home.

Do you have any advice for future incoming students?

To read and learn everything they can about the city and the multiple cultures that live in Amsterdam.

Thoughts on the Dutch bike culture?

It's a very good way of transportation, but Dutch people drive fast and can be very rude, so just keep on biking till you become another cyclist in the street .

How would you describe Amsterdam in one word?

I would describe it as "unexpected". Amsterdam isn't a big city, and the main things to do in the city you can do it in few days. But if you let the city surprise you and show you all the little places that it holds, it will be a once in a lifetime experience. Just walking around the streets, taking a coffee, going to the museums or hang out in the parks is magical.

At the crossroad of Istanbul, Ankara and Amsterdam

by Kristina Hansen

Oya's story: From Istanbul to Amsterdam

Peaceful and lively Amsterdam

Peaceful and lively are the first words I connect to Amsterdam. I was born in Istanbul: a crowded and chaotic city. I was really sick of that and I wanted to experience living in a small and quiet town. Any city would be smaller than Istanbul and Amsterdam won the Erasmus race. Transportation is a big problem in Istanbul, but in Amsterdam the furthest place could be reached in 20-40 minutes by bike. That was pure freedom! It was my first time living alone, so I had many "first's" in Amsterdam. Even doing the groceries could be fun. I often thought; "This city has everything". I wanted to go to Spain just to swim, but then I discovered the beach in IJburg and I instantly dropped my plans about going to Spain.

It was really interesting to see men looking after their babies

It was great to see fathers taking care of their babies and spending time with them. This was unusual for me because in Turkey the mother is mostly in charge. The frequent use of "dankjewel" was also a little new for me. When you buy something, people always say "dankjewel" when taking and giving the money. In Turkey, we don't

always say thank you, so I thought that was very kind. I think Dutch people are in general polite, respectful and helpful.

I want to import the Dutch Fritessaus to Turkey

I really miss the fries and the great mayonnaise (Fritessaus). However, the Dutch way of having lunch is much less exciting. Eating cold sandwiches and fruits is never the case in Turkey. We eat a warm meal for lunch, so it took me some time to get used to it. There is also some food vocabulary missing in the Dutch language. I always wanted to say "Eline sağlık", when someone cooked for me or did something nice. It means "may your hands be healthy".

Have a quick lunch, sit next to a canal - alone

I can advise enjoying the canal atmosphere for any upcoming exchange student. I also recommend going with the ferry to the north of the city. Plek (place) and Noorderlicht (Northern light) are awesome places. You should definitely check out the jam sessions in Noorderlicht. It won't be easy to forget to socialize. In the end, meeting new people is the best way to see, feel and get to know the city.

The story of Oya and Sehna

Sehna's story: From Ankara to Amsterdam



Picture: Sehna, Oya and a friend of them (LTR) at a wine festival in the Amsterdamse Bos (Amsterdam Forest)

Gezellig fietsen = cozy biking or an untranslatable concept?

"Gezellig, aardappel, patat, fietsen, voornam, achternaam, werken, afspraak, vriendin, zoet, alsjeblieft, vrouw, jarig, graag, winkel, bellen, dankjewel, aardappel, drinken, wijn, duur, goedkoop, heerlijk en wonen.

Yes, those words will bring you quite far in the Netherlands... And yes, there is why I am mentioning gezellig as the first word. Even though it is untranslatable, I will still give it a try. It is often connected to warm feeling experiences or a nice atmosphere. I connect my time in Amsterdam to meeting new friends from different countries. Spending time with them was very nice and unique for me. We had so many gezellige moments. Aardappel means potato and scores the second place. I really like the Dutch potatoes and the Dutch cheese.

Advice on exchange; Dutch cheek kiss norm

Being on exchange will not only enrich your culinary experiences, but also enrich you with an entire new culture. It took me some time to master the Dutch cheek kiss, where the norm these days is three kisses.

You get used to not being able to say the things that would have come naturally in your own language

You might also be reminded of missing concepts from your home country. For instance, the exact meaning of the Turkish expression "afiyet olsun" does not exist in Dutch. It can be translated to enjoy your meal but that does not accurately reflect the Turkish version. Another untranslatable word is "çok yaşa". We say it when someone sneezes and it literally means long live.

Dutchies are smiling, even when having a bike crash

The attitude of the people living in Amsterdam was very interesting and it took me by surprise. Dutchies are happy and kind people; I have honestly not seen that happy people in Europe or Turkey. Even after a bike crash, they were still smiling.

Last but not least: Explore the green

Enjoy your time away from your usual surroundings and get out of the city once in a while! Explore the green places in Amsterdam and bike along the Amstel River to the wonderful Amsterdamse Bos (Amsterdam Forest). And do not forget to maximise the amount of gezellige moments.



OUTSIDE THE BORDERS

Unique moments on exchange

Name: **Symona Beyer**

Home University: **University of Amsterdam**

Exchange University: **University College Dublin, Ireland**

Exchange Period: **sept 2015 - dec 2015**

It's okay to feel lonely or homesick, missing your friends and family.

It's normal that you go through a rollercoaster of events, feelings, excitement and fear. Enjoy every moment and always share it with your other exchange friends who probably feel the same!

What comes up in mind when you think of a Dublin/Ireland?

I think of lovely and open people. Always in for a talk with strangers. A country full of beautiful nature. A relatively big country with few people makes it very relaxed. Terrible public transport. Great beers. Not a lot of healthy food. A lot of red-haired people.

What were some unique moments of happiness on your exchange?

- Sitting in a taxi with a good Irish friend showing me all the good places in Dublin.
- Meeting great Erasmus people during the weekend trip in Galway, a city on Ireland's west coast known for its traditional pubs and live Irish folk music
- Spending Halloween together with my lovely German housemate.
- The moment I realised I pronounced the beer brand 'Smithwicks' wrong.
- Hiking in the nature all by myself.

Which Irish/Gaelic words do you remember?

'Craic' which means fun!

If you could import an Irish product to your home country, what would it be?

Smithwicks beer. Everyone drinks Guinness in Ireland, but I find it too heavy to drink it all night. I love the red beer called Smithwicks!

Can you think about some very special habits Irish people have that you have never seen before? If so, what?

- Irish people always say 'thank you' to the bus driver after getting out.
- Drinking, drinking and more drinking until the sun rises.
- When greeting someone they always say 'Hi how are you?' very quickly, although they do not expect an answer!

How was it like to be back?

It felt very strange. It felt like a new me in the same home. Everything around me stayed the same and I felt

like I changed. This ended up in getting my old habits back very quickly. It takes a while before you realise how much the exchange has changed you and how much you learned from it in so many different ways. And of course, I missed the amazing people I met and the feeling of 'I can do whatever I want to do'.

What happened on the first and last day?

The first day I arrived I felt lonely, scared with no house or people I knew. I went through a rollercoaster of excitement and fear.

The last day when I drove to the airport I looked outside through the window and thought 'Damn, you are leaving a place that you made your home all by yourself. Be proud of yourself and always remember this amazing time.'





Name: Ariana Marchena

Home University:

Amsterdam University of Applied Science

Host University:

Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HvA)

Program: Erasmus

Interview By:

Shirley Cayetano, Exchange Student in Amsterdam from Peru

Why Switzerland?

My main reason for going abroad was that I wanted to do something else, so if I would go abroad it had to be worth it in a way that I would follow courses I could not follow in the Netherlands. Initially I picked Helsinki, but my grades weren't high enough. So after having cried for two weeks, I heard that there was still a spot left in Switzerland so without thinking I decided to go for it. In short, I decided to go to Switzerland because they offered business engineering courses that I really liked and couldn't study in the Netherlands.

What's the difference between Dutch and Swiss people?

Swiss people can be very closed off and tend to stare at all foreigners. That's something everybody noticed. Furthermore, it wasn't really a cultural shock but in classes teachers make real eye contact with you for at least 2 seconds. I thought it was quite intense and made me nervous. The main differences I noticed were in the teaching style. I guess my biggest culture shock was how polite people are. I also noticed also that I shocked people with my 'Dutch directness'.

Personally, the biggest culture shock was the food! I know it sounds weird but the food is really healthy and pure. Our food is stuffed with extra ingredients. Their food doesn't have that. My body was so used to Dutch food, which I love, that I couldn't eat all their natural products.

What's your favourite place in Switzerland?

Zurich, because it is the only real city Switzerland has. I really loved Ascona in Ticino as well, which is in the Italian speaking part, because they have palm trees there! I remember standing by the waterside thinking how pretty it was and thinking to myself: imagine if you would live here and have this beautiful view. And that's what I did a few months later...

How was the student accommodation?

Student accommodation was really nice. I had a large room, where I could have even fit another bed, complete with a shared bathroom, and a kitchen. When I received all the information about my application from the university in Switzerland, they sent me a form with all types of student rooms. I didn't really think, filled in the form and voilà, I had a nice student room. It was also very conveniently located. Supermarkets, train station and bus stops were within 3 min walking distance.

Is there a Swiss tradition that you particularly like?

Not really, there were not really traditions that we celebrated. However, we did celebrate "Samichlaus". In Switzerland there are a lot of traditions but every village has their own. Switzerland is like a small country divided into smaller countries with all their own habits and cultures.

Was there anything you dislike or were surprised about Switzerland?

I disliked that it was quite small and there was only one club - , the Black Sheep which I'll never forget. Don't get me wrong, Switzerland is a beautiful country. And it was hotter than I expected. In the beginning I hated that everything was hilly since I always arrived at school covered in sweat but later I learnt to love the hills, though not the sweat.

Locked Up Abroad

A True Exchange Story

Our final offer was now on the table. The translator understood, 1.000.000 KIP. His face as questionable as ever, were these guys crazy? The counter-offer had been discussed a few times now, no beating around the bush; 2 years in a rotten jail cell. You could hear him think. Had they never heard about the inhumane conditions inside a Laos prison? They would certainly know about the targets on their back, right? Right? A little nod convinced him to fill in the crew.

The initial reaction could either be described as entertaining or very scary. Never had I seen that big of a jaw-drop. A long silence followed, which was only disturbed by the sound of typing in the room next door. Two gold teeth appeared in the boss' mouth; they were well hidden behind his moustache before. You know, like the stereotype mafia-kind that Pablo rocked.

Thinking about it, there were more similarities there. His posture, hair, powerful look and not to forget, the fact that corruption was dripping down his sleeves. Who could blame him? Being a cop in Vientiane was not the best paid job in the world. Honestly, I could see myself getting tired of these stuck-up kids as well.

Damn, my hangover got me nodding off again. I had to concentrate. Some of the men became restless and started mumbling. The small commotion stopped when 'Pablo' took out his cigar. All of a sudden, the terrible English accent that he had retained up until this moment just vanished. Good thing, because my acting as a random business man had been rock solid, but risky. Bursting out in laughter would probably not have helped the case. He spoke slowly...

by Luuk Louter,
former exchange student in
Singapore from Amsterdam

"Boys, what you did was illegal. The amount is non-negotiable." I would have loved to discredit his statement, but sadly enough he was 100% right. See, it was not without reason that we were in a police station negotiating a bribe. It was the same reason that I was considering to hurt my companion. It was not like I had not warned him before.

I was not surprised either. What more can I say, the guy liked his weed. I had been telling him that drugs in a foreign country was like asking for trouble. Nevertheless, up until then it seemed like I was overly worried.

It was in Laos that the tables turned. A perfect day of tubing - believe me, getting drunk while floating down a river was even more fun than it sounded - had us craving for a quick dinner. We entered a restaurant and received two menus. Not the usual food and drinks menus, we thought, the latter turned out to be cherishing a variety of choices in weed. And well, you guessed it, my mate got some. After finishing dinner, we hit the bar. Shortly after, my buddy went out to smoke his weed and sleep. At least, that was the plan.

It took 10 minutes for one of our roommates to return with the breaking news that he was in a truck, on his way to the police station. Turned out that asking a middle-aged Laos man for the rolling papers was not the brightest idea. Fast forward to the morning after. The cops wanted all involved to pay 5 million KIP (615 USD). None could come up with cash directly, so passports were taken before they were kicked to the ATM.

'Luckily', my friend had a debit card without a single dollar on it. What more can I say, travelling can get expensive from time to time. It did provide us with an interesting solution. The plan was simple, act broke and let a random business man bail you out. And as most suitable participant: me. Well, my thick accent definitely helped the case as Dutch investment banker.

So there we were: suited up, sweaty and nervous as hell. I kind of felt like they respected us for showing up with such an attitude, at least judging by the way they were laughing. I seized the moment: "If you don't take it, I'm out. I don't care too much either way." A little hesitation... "Show me the money", Pablo said. "Passport first", I replied. And it was at this moment, we traded assets and got our asses out of Laos. Be safe and be sure you don't get into troubles, especially whilst you are on exchange! You are the only one who needs to take care of yourself!

Switch Story

Global Ambassador 2016 | Fall Semester

Why did you choose to go to Korea?

I had experience with K-pop music when I was very young. I grew out of K-pop music, but I still wanted to go to a country that was far away with a different culture. Through some comparisons, Yonsei University seemed like a really good option. Korea seems to be unknown here in the Netherlands, so I wanted to go and experience something totally new.

Furthermore, Korea is very relevant to my studies; I study international development, so I am really amazed by how quickly Korea has gone through economic growth since the 60s. I also study conflict studies, so the ongoing war and tension between South and North Korea is related to my studies.

When you first arrived in Korea, what was the first culture shock for you?

Upon entering the country, I felt very much at home because from my perspective it felt a little bit American. The roads, the buildings and the advertisements, they all kind of made me feel like I was in New York except I was in Seoul. The first culture shock that I really experienced was the drinking culture in Korea. I wasn't expecting Koreans to be into drinking and clubbing. The nightlife was very vibrant there. All the shops were open until very late. Every day after school I had so many things still left to do and explore. It was super fun.

What kind of expectations did you have of Korea and how were they different?

I expected Korea to be less modern than it actually was. I was impressed with its technology. I liked the fact that I didn't have to use any keys. Here in the Netherlands, we have so many keys, but in Korea, they have digital passes or passwords. That was very cool.



Before my exchange, I wasn't really familiar with Korean social culture. I didn't know what to expect at first, but I soon found out that Koreans, once they've become friends with someone, really like to share and do favors for each other and it all seemed quite like a community.

How are Dutch and Koreans different?

One of the major cultural differences that I found was that Koreans have this idea that beauty and talent can be cultivated. You are not just born beautiful or born talented. You work hard to become beautiful and talented. That's a very nice thing. It means anybody has the potential to become the best version of themselves. But on the other side it creates expectations. I felt that there was a high expectation of people to work super hard. People also expect you to wear makeup. If you don't wear makeup they could ask you: "Are you sick today?" or something similar.

How are the lectures different from the Dutch system?

There was a lot more listening involved and less discussion. There were fewer assignments overall and usually it involved exercises that you work out in small groups during class. I think I was probably a bit lucky with my classes because I heard some of my friends complain about how much stricter the teachers were about being able to copy exactly what the teacher had said. Here in the Netherlands it is okay to challenge your teacher and it is also fine to disagree and have a discussion with your teacher as long as you give a good reason or argument. I think there was less opportunity to do that in Korea.

Name: **Eva Lekkerkerker**

Home University: **University van Amsterdam**

Host University: **Yonsei University, Korea**

Program: **Global Exchange**

Do you have any regrets? What do you think you could have done better?

I didn't pick a student dorm. I had problems with my housing. I was lucky to have a Korean friend translate the housing documents for me; otherwise I would have had a difficult time finding a house. I found a really nice studio room thanks to my Korean friend. But next time, because of the language barrier, I will definitely go for a student dorm.

What did you learn from your exchange experience?

I learned a lot about Korea of course. I can honestly say that Seoul feels like a second home now. I also learned that I can trust myself to handle difficult situations, when for instance the language barrier makes things more difficult, and that I can make friends across many different countries and cultures. While in Korea, I learned a lot about myself, became more self-confident and gained some organizational skills because there are a lot of things that need to be arranged when going abroad. I've become a lot happier in comparison to before my exchange. For me it was a really positive experience.

What would you like to bring back to the Netherlands and give to Korea?

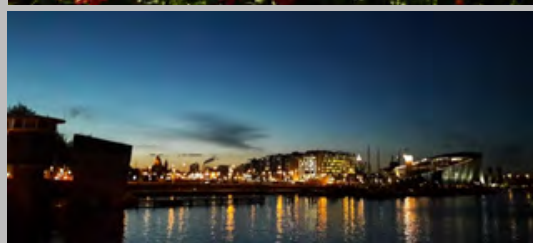
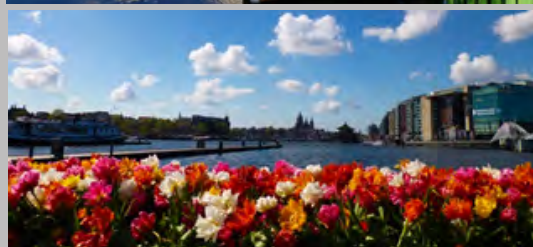
I would take from Korea: Their sense of bonding with the university and the people they are close to, as well as Korea's sharing culture, which I really liked. I also liked the positive attitude that Koreans had and the idea that with hard work you can be who you want to be. What I would take from the Netherlands is our more laid-back attitude towards social norms and individuality, and also diversity. The Netherlands has one of the lowest working hours per week in the world whereas Korea has the one of the highest working hours per week in the world.

Name: **Ji Sun Kim**

Home University: **Yonsei University, Korea**

Host University: **University van Amsterdam**

Program: **Global Exchange**



Why did you choose the Netherlands?

First of all, this is my first time here in Europe so I wanted to travel around a lot. It seemed like the Netherlands had the best location for doing this. Also, I don't speak any of the European languages except for English, so I wanted to go to a place where I can speak English to the locals. I came to the Netherlands for a very simple reason but in the end it turned out to be a very good decision.

What was the first cultural shock that you experienced?

Back in Korea, apart from very exceptional cases, everyone is usually Asian. But when I first walked into

class on the first day of school I was the only Asian in the Humanities Campus.

What kind of expectations did you have of the Netherlands that turned out to be different or confirmed?

Many of the expectations that I had were proven right. One of these was that Dutch people are really tall. I am considered to be quite tall in Korea, but I was really surprised to find out that I was about average here. I heard that a lot of people ride bikes here and that was proven to be correct as well. I was also told that the weather won't be nice in the Netherlands, but for the first few weeks the weather was pretty nice, so that was different from what I expected.

How are the lectures different?

Usually in Korea, teachers call out duty attendance in the first few minutes of class. But in the Netherlands, it seems like they are more lenient with regards to attendance. It is a lot more discussion based, so if you don't do the reading assignments you can't join in the debates. As a result, it really feels like you are studying for yourself. You become more independent and responsible of your own studying at the UvA. Except for a few classes there are not many opportunities for students to actively join in discussions and present your own thoughts in Korea. But in the Netherlands students seem to be more involved in classes.

What have you learned from your exchange experience so far?

I learned a lot about how it is to be living in Europe. I travelled around a lot; almost every weekend, I have visited Frankfurt, Munich, Paris and Prague so far. While I did learn about European culture back in high school and university in Korea, it is definitely different seeing the culture right in front of your eyes and experiencing it directly through your skin instead of just reading it off the book. I also learned a lot more about myself, because in Korea you are surrounded by so many friends, and

you've got a lot of responsibilities and club activities going on and you've got to concentrate a little more on your studies. So you always have a fully packed schedule that doesn't allow you to think and ponder about yourself. But I have a lot more free time here and therefore I have the opportunity to spend a lot more time by myself. When I was in Korea I was a little afraid of being alone; I couldn't eat alone, I couldn't travel alone, but here I think I am slowly overcoming the fear of being on my own. That is one thing I am accomplishing at the moment.

Any comments and tips for future students?

If you are an Humanities major don't be surprised if you are the only Asian. Always do your reading assignments because you can't really do anything otherwise, even if you go to class. Travel around a lot because I feel like travelling is the best thing that studying in an European country gives to you.

What do you want to bring back to Korea and give to the Netherlands?

Transportation in the Netherlands is really expensive in comparison to Korea. I hope in the future the Dutch lower their transportation fees. Also it took me really long to get my bank card and I had to wait about four weeks to get my residence permit. For future students, I hope these services will be processed more quickly. I love riding bikes, but there are no separate roads for bikes in Korea. Therefore it is difficult to travel around on a bike, so I hope Korea makes some improvements on that.

Korea is a very collective country. Everybody depends on each other. For example you've got to eat with someone. I like the idea of caring for each other, but sometimes I think it goes a little too far. At times you can feel very suffocated by the large amount of obligations. In the Netherlands however, society lets you act on your own a little better. I hope Korean society will allow people to be little more independent as well in the future.

The Switch Story



What was something that surprised you about Dutch culture?

I was shocked to see that grocery stores don't refrigerate their eggs! They're just on the shelves.

Speaking of food, what's your favourite food here?

The pancakes, of course!

Where is your favourite place to hang out in Amsterdam?

The NEMO Science Museum. I like it because it's close to student housing, it's free, and it overlooks everything – I like to sit on the roof and overlook the city, there is a beautiful view.

Did you suffer from culture shock?

I would say that Amsterdam is very similar to New Orleans – there are a lot of fun parties, and the culture is very liberal, so not at all! I was shocked by its neighbouring countries, though. Cultures are so different from border to border.

If you could describe your exchange in one word, what would it be?

Adventurous!

What's one quote to live by in Amsterdam?

Watch out for the bikes! (Always look both ways before crossing the street).

What's a new habit that you've picked up since going to Amsterdam?

Riding my bike every day.

What's a new Dutch word you've learned?

Lekker – it means cool!

Any final words of advice?

Always lock your bike and always hold on to your key – treat it like your baby!



by Elli Slavitch

Name: Marley Vebares
Home University: Tulane University, USA
Host University: University of Amsterdam
Program: Global Exchange

Name: Tiemen de Graaff
Home University: University of Amsterdam
Host University: Montana State University
Program: Global Exchange

What made you decide to study abroad?

I was a bit bored in the Netherlands, and I did a gap year in North America when I was 18, and then after three years back in the Netherlands I thought it would be my chance to go again. I also study American studies, so it made sense to go for that as well.

How was it?

Amazing. Really beautiful surroundings, but also cool people.

Did you suffer from culture shock?

Not so much – but that's mainly because I had already gone abroad before my exchange.

Did anything weird you out about American Culture?

People say "Hi, how are you?", without expecting an answer! Over here, you expect an answer to that question. Portion sizes are also much bigger; you get used to not finishing what's on your plate.

Did you pick up any new habits that you brought back with you?

Beer pong – a North American thing that is slowly finding its way to the Netherlands. That and red cups. Also, hiking – I used to never hike while travelling until I came to travel in the USA. Now, when travelling in Europe, I try to do some hikes.

Did you pick up any slang?

No, but I picked up an American accent!

What is one quote to live by?

Make the most of it. Make as many trips as possible, go out, and get to know the locals! It may be hard, but it's so worth it.

Were you happy to return to the Netherlands?

A bit. It's nice for the first few weeks, reuniting with friends and family. But I miss America as you have less obligations on exchange. You have less commitments, and that's what I think I enjoyed about it the most.



Traineeship...what?

By Loreta Muscarella, Erasmus trainee in Amsterdam from Italy

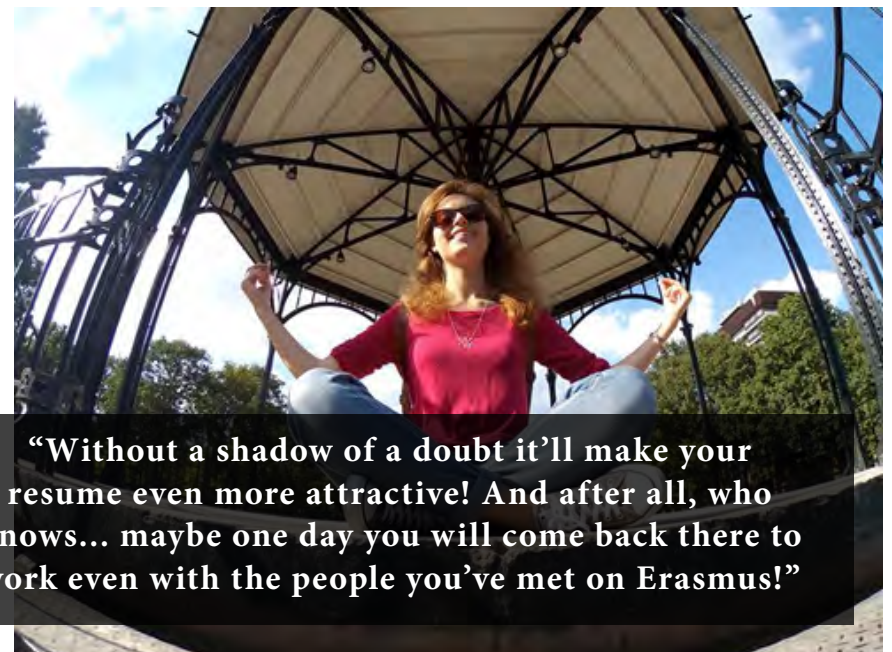
Erasmus Internship

Are you considering the possibility of doing an internship abroad? One of the countless opportunities that the Exchange program offers is to complete your education with an internship abroad. To do this you have to deal with several pre-departure matters, ranging from arranging all the bureaucratically aspects to finding an internship supervisor.

Most students choose to join the Erasmus program to attend lessons abroad. Well, a 'minority' of students, especially Masters, applies for Erasmus for training! Similar to a real job, it allows you to interact not only with students, teachers and other figures in the national scene but it also offers a great opportunity to **step into the field of work** you have always wanted to approach. Whether it is a **company or a research group**, since it can vary depending on the various European countries and therefore, the most important thing that an internship abroad can teach you is "versatility".

The **free time** of an Erasmus Student and a Trainee Erasmus Student is sometimes very different. Since an internship is a real job, free time for trips and meetings may seem less, but thanks to the activities organized by ISN you can still enjoy the weekends in different parts of your host country, going to explore the culture with new local and international friends. You just need to plan your weeks in advance to be sure you can fit everything together!

The hardest part may be to learn **how to work**, but it is also the most formative part. Those who have never read documents in English will learn to do it, as well as learn how to communicate in a professional and technical language. You will learn to discuss labour issues, giving ideas, proposing projects and solutions. This is an experience that does not only enrich your knowledge of other cultures and traditions, but it also improves your working style. Have you ever discussed a thesis, a project in front of a corporate group? Well, now it's your time to shine!



Check what Angela, who's doing an internship at the department of chemistry, has to say about her

Internship!

Name: Angela Xia

Home University: University of Edinburgh

Period of staying: Sept 2016 – July 2017

Here for: Internship for Master's Thesis Project

What encouraged you to go on Erasmus in Amsterdam?

I met a friend in high school who comes from Amsterdam, and I have heard a lot of positive things about it. I've always been attracted to living in another country at least for a few months of my life, and then I wanted to improve my language skills. I also like meeting new people from all around the world. So, I thought that this would be the right experience for me.

What are some pros & cons regarding Amsterdam?

I like that Amsterdam is very international, everyone here speaks English, so I don't need to worry about communication with people. Despite Dutch is the main language, everybody knows English, children or elders. I think this is really interesting for a European country since usually people do know English, but still, it's not as well as the Dutch. This makes integration much easier and it allows you to forge friendships more easily. I haven't found things I dislike yet. Everything works great!

What has been the most academically challenging

portion of your immersion experience in Amsterdam? I am working with a research group in UvA and I find that writing lab reports in a scientific manner is very difficult. I have to think a lot about how to write sentences and often rewrite them other two hundred times until I feel


satisfied with how it looks like. It is not easy, but in recent months I have noticed a great improvement.

Has your experience here helped you adapt more easily to diverse cultural groups?

My colleagues are from various countries and I am from China. We always discuss things that are different between our home countries during our lunch. I have learnt a lot about other countries' culture and also about their history and therefore I think it's an opportunity to learn even more, not only about Dutch people. Having to spend the whole day together, you get more and more comfortable with multicultural groups as the days pass by. Plus that you can always ask a Dutch colleague to offer a piece of advice on the typical dishes or places you must see!

Would you recommend Erasmus project for an internship? If so why?

Certainly I think it's a great opportunity to live somewhere else for a relatively long term, to learn a different language and then about a great variety of cultures.



“You have the opportunity to do what you like the most and develop a sense of independence!”

If you like museums you can go visit the museums. if you want to meet new people you can explore new cultures anytime you want.

All that Erasmus organizes is naturally in such a way that you will never feel alone or bored! Then again, doing an internship abroad also offers you a great experience abroad in your curriculum, something that companies cannot wait for!

So, in a nutshell, what you have to do is your own responsibility, but that doesn't mean it has to be difficult:

1. CHECK YOUR UNIVERSITY WEBSITE

First thing to do is to check your university's website as soon as possible to find an internship compatible with your interest and sometimes, it might even be in a different domain. However, I would give you a good piece of advice that you should keep in mind: if you plan your internship for the first semester, it is a great idea to start looking for a suitable internship before the summer!

2. FIND AN INTERNSHIP SUPERVISOR

You have to talk with a supervisor of the project, usually a professor, who can give you all the information about the internship. If you have to continue with the research once you came back to your country, it is necessary to have an intern supervisor who knows about the project and then can supervise your work.

3. SIGN THE INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT

Once you have found an internship that is interesting to you, you have to talk with your supervisor to sign an internship agreement. This is meant to provide clarity between you and the organization where you do the internship. Keep in mind that signing it always implies rights and duties: working hours, writing reports of your work, getting results etc. It's like a job contract.

4. START TO WORK

Once your contract has been signed it is time to work. Make an effort to get to know new colleagues, get informed about the subject of the internship and you'll have a unique experience of working abroad, without a shadow of a doubt!

Still uncertain?

5 Reasons to apply for it now!

1.
Language
skills!

2.
Creating your world
map of friends from
everywhere around the
world

4.
It's going to be a
unique experience
for sure, way
more valuable that
something you would
have probably done in
your country!

3.
Have we
mentioned
how this will look
on your resume?

5.
Get to know different
cultures!

6.
There is not going to be
a better chance to find
a trustable internship
abroad, as well as
receiving a grant for
your living expenses
just because you are
Erasmus!



CULTURALLY NAKED

Culturally Naked: The Netherlands



Life at university on exchange

by Elena Montenegro Borbolla,
exchange student in Amsterdam from Madrid

During your exchange, you will discover more than another culture and city; you will discover a different way of learning. The system in my home university (Spain) is predominantly the same, but sometimes the content can be far away from reality. At UvA, I've found a new world. Here, they focus on current issues instead of only a general overview of the course, which is the most useful approach in the society we live in today.

Team work is a basic request for most of the courses you will take, so you will develop valuable skills dealing with people from all over the world. Sometimes, this is your best way to engage with the local Dutch students that people usually say it's so hard to make friends with. Not anymore! Don't forget that you can also be the one to take initiative and organise the work you have to do. Don't wait for the others to be the leaders!

Teachers are willing to solve any question or problem! ... in connection to the course and usually in an informal way too. Regardless of their age, (because for some cultures age is a really important factor when it comes to addressing) you can have a relaxed conversation whether you need some advice for engaging with the Dutch students or just some tips regarding preparation for exams.

Take initiative! Teachers will give you the tools to work and you will eventually need to learn how to be 'autonomous', handling them. For instance, in the science area during fieldwork this could mean working with a wide range of instruments. In my case, I had to learn all by myself how to be confident in using that equipment, after they explained the basic steps to me.

You will become an expert in time management so you can forget about the chaos! The schedule at UvA is very well organized which makes learning easier. In my home university with five courses

within five months, people were usually lost and stressed around the exam period.

Here, the semester is split into three blocks of eight, eight and four weeks, so you can easily concentrate on two, three and sometimes just one course per block. That is extremely useful since you will have 'final exams' after every block for the courses you have been studying for the past two months and then you are done with them! You will start to concentrate on your next courses for the next block!

A downside, however, could be the intensiveness and therefore the difficulty in revising for exams in such a short time.

The Erasmus exchange experience can challenge you at many levels, but it will only help you discover new ways of working, so that you can be better prepared to face life. Just be sure you manage to balance free time and studying effectively!



How to Befriend the Locals –

Jumping in and out of the ‘exchange bubble’

by Kristina Hansen, exchange student in Amsterdam from Copenhagen University



When going on exchange it is very likely that you meet many other exchange students from all around the world. That is because the exchange program in Amsterdam or abroad has trips for you where you get to spontaneously meet other exchange students.

The exchange bubble can sometimes be enough

One thing that builds a common ground between you and the other exchange students is your *newness* in the country where you are on exchange. I bet you can be on exchange for 4 or more months without having any substantial contact with the locals and you can still count that time as the best times of your life. So, yes, one can lead a completely happy and enriching life in an exchange bubble :) ! But, don't forget that hanging out with the locals will significantly enrich your exchange experience as well.

What about the local bubble?

For some people it can be completely effortless and natural to build a network of locals and for others it might be more difficult since it requires more effort. Being on my second semester of my one year exchange in Amsterdam, I would personally say that connecting with the locals is really worth the extra effort, no matter what.

Embrace the culture! It will spare you of “what ifs”

Locals do not include only Dutch people, but also people that currently consider Amsterdam as their home and do not plan to move away soon.



see: www.uva.nl

Learning Dutch is also a worthwhile option to make local connections, but some locals actually do not speak Dutch.

And of course **embracing key cultural aspects** such as biking, drinking beer and knowing what *gezellig* and *lekker* can also help.

Join interesting activities!

So think about what you like doing or trying out and go find that social activity on your exchange right away. Personally, I joined a lindy hop and swing dancing school and a windsurfing club, where I go at least once a week. Through the windsurfing club I met many locals and we even went on a weekend trip together to Friesland (the windy north of the Netherlands). I met another bunch of locals through the lindy hop classes and then again we spent a really nice summer vacation to Portugal.

So, in a nutshell, jumping into the local bubble from the exchange bubble or even combining them is a really cool thing to do. It will give you a better cultural understanding and help unearth some hidden exciting spots in the city. And don't forget, in turn, you will also enrich the culture of the locals by just being who you are!



A vibrant photograph of a narrow Amsterdam street at sunset. The sun is low in the distance, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that fills the street. Tall, multi-story buildings line both sides of the street, with many windows visible. Lush green trees are planted along the sidewalks. In the foreground, several bicycles are parked on the left, and a dark car is partially visible on the right. The overall atmosphere is warm and picturesque.

AMSTERDAM AT ITS FINEST

Exchange Essentials

by Tin Tin Kao & Alex Gallaer, exchange students
in Amsterdam from Hong Kong & New York

Welcome to Amsterdam! Get ready to meet new people from all over the world, and to be mesmerized by the city's sprawling network of canals, Dutch architecture, and sheer diversity of residents. To maximize your exchange experience in the Lowlands, we've prepared a list of essential items for living in this city.

1. Bike and a sturdy lock - With good reason,

Amsterdam is often referred to as "The City of Bikes." In a city where there are actually more bikes than people, it should come as no surprise that bikes are its most popular mode of transport.

Biking in Amsterdam is safe and convenient thanks to the combination of extremely flat land and well-maintained bike paths. Depending on the length of your stay, you may choose to either rent or purchase a bike. Rentals generally start at about €9 for a single day, with lower rates for longer terms.

A bike can be purchased for anywhere from €50 to €150, depending on its quality. Bikes can be purchased at any bike shops or markets – but purchasing off the street is illegal (since they were likely stolen).



see: www.uva.nl

But remember
that they usually
stop working after
midnight.

Check the rest of the
article for extra tips
regarding where to go and
how to get there!



2. OV-chipkaart –the transport card used in the Netherlands.

If riding a bike is out of the question, or even if you simply want to have another option in the event that you cannot ride your bike for some reason, you can use your OV-chipkaart for other forms of transport, including the metro, trams, buses and trains. The OV-chipkaart can be purchased at major train stations for €7.50, and it can be personalized for an additional fee. Note that you'll need a minimum credit balance of €4 to travel on buses and trams, and €20 to travel on trains. Remember to check in and check out – failure to check out will result in an extra charge of €4 on your card, which is much more expensive than you would pay for most trips in Amsterdam.

4. Raincoat —

In Amsterdam it rains very often, especially during autumn and winter. Buy yourself a raincoat at HEMA or Flying Tiger or at any other clothing outlet to stay dry!

... or you'll end up dancing in the rain like our friends here:

5. Group discounts —

a one-day return ticket which allows you to travel to and from a specific destination for a significantly lower cost, depending on the number of people in your group. For a group of 10, tickets are only €7 per person. Check out the various NS Group-ticket groups on Facebook by typing in "NS Group-ticket" and your destination.

Here we are in Rotterdam!

3. Museumkaart —a card that gives you access to roughly 400 museums in the Netherlands. Amsterdam itself is home to over 50 museums showcasing a wide variety of items, including bags and purses at the Tassenmuseum Hendrikje, and even items related to funeral rites at the Museum Tot Zover.

Considering that the entry to major museums in Amsterdam usually cost upwards of €15, a Museumkaart is certainly a great bargain. You can buy a Museumkaart at any of its participating museums for €59.90; it is valid for a year after the date of purchase.



Dutch cuisine and restaurants

On exchange, you will taste a variety of international foods. However, you must never miss the opportunity to experience real, traditional Dutch food! These are some of the best Dutch kitchens in town.

Jordaan's De Kat in de Wijngaert feels both very Dutch and yet, oddly, also a world away.

On the one hand, this bar is about as Dutch as it gets: cozy, charming, 'gezelligheid' in every sense of the word. On the other, the wood paneled walls, chairs clustered around a card game out back, the orange glow through big windows at night, all allude to something not dissimilar to the beloved British pub. Whilst pie and mash may not make the cut, sandwiches, soups and apple pie are all there. Tap beer and a fine wine list go down well. This is a local haunt, a place for Friday (Monday?) drinks, but equally a coffee at midday. Bring a laptop for some studying or sunshine out front.

Sir Hummus brings Jerusalem to Amsterdam in the form of some superstar hummus.

Looking for something further afield? Something a little off the beaten track, but without needing to leave the canal rink? Fresh made daily, the hummus here is a far stretch from that in the supermarket down the road. Warm, welcoming, and topped with tahini. Eggplant maybe. A "magic" egg even, and splashes of color with new tomatoes, olives and pickled cucumber on the side. Sir Hummus knows how to do hummus. It's tasty, cheap, and in our age of kale chips, hummus is a natural superfood. This place fills up and sells out – quick (and understandably so). This 'hummusiya' is not to be missed.

Roest is unexpected.

Unexpected in the sense that it's a beach in a city with canals, sure, but one more than a stone's throw from the ocean. Unexpected in its laid-back-cool-by-day, energy-by-night type vibe. Dropped in the midst of Amsterdam's industrial east, and Roest has some serious undertones of Berlin. Beyond this, Roest is difficult to define. It's an urban beach for sun-baking. It's a restaurant. Bar. Good coffeehouse and live music hub. It's a market with fresh produce, cheese and bread ready for picnicking. A secondhand clothes stall some Sundays.

Dutch cuisine and restaurants

After you had all the international food, it is also time for some typical Dutch food! You can find Dutch food at these places.

- ◆ **Wilde Zwijnen** is a restaurant in Amsterdam East serving a 3 or 4 course menu based on local and seasonal products.
- ◆ **Moeders** is Dutch for 'mothers,' and serves traditional Dutch food, such as 'stamppot'. The restaurant is decorated with pictures of mothers, you can even bring your own - they'll put her picture on the wall!
- ◆ **Appeltaart** is a famous Dutch pie, and Winkel43 is the place to go to experience it. They serve it with a generous portion of whipped cream (which, as we all know, is the only way one should eat pie).
- ◆ We all know Heineken is a Dutch beer, but do you know **Brouwerij 't IJ**? It takes tradition to a whole new level as it offers locally crafted beer, and is located in a windmill!
- ◆ **Par Hasard** is a Belgian stop for fries and kroketten. Even better, it serves 'patatjestoof', which is fries with stew.
- ◆ If you like steak, make your way to **Loetje**. And don't think twice about it.
- ◆ **Stroopwafels**, synonymous with heaven, are Dutch caramel cookies and can be found fresh at local markets, or packaged in any store. You haven't lived until you have tasted one.

Vegetarian Dutch food

Eat your veggies, the Dutch way! Many restaurants serve something called the Weed Burger. No, this it is not comprised of the weed we are famous for, it is in fact made with seaweed. Served in many restaurants, it is delicious, nutritious, and suitable for many food diets.

Who says drunk food isn't best vegetarian? The **Meatless District** has vegetarian 'kroketten', and **BarJames** has veggie 'bitterballen'. This lets you get your vitamins and minerals whilst being drunk.

It's all about that moderation, no?

Museum sight seeing

by Fallon Salomon, exchange student in Amsterdam from The United States

Amsterdam is a thriving city with a lot of accessible history. Around the center of Amsterdam, there are multiple compelling museums to see. While the bigger ones such as the Royal Palace, which used to be the town hall in the 16th century, the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh museum and Anne Franks house are the most well known, there is also several small museums one can go.

As an international student studying abroad in Amsterdam, museums are a way to be able to get invested into a different culture. Emulating history, they show what the creators of the museum thought were most important to show the world.

The Royal Palace

is open for the public to enjoy, with art showcased throughout. It is the symbol of Amsterdam's wealth as well as its international attitude.

The Rijksmuseum

has about 5 floors full of beautiful art, and for someone with not much background in Dutch history, this gives you a pretty good taste. Art goes from the 11th century

to the 20th century, though the floor for the 20th century art is much smaller than the rest of the collections.

The Van Gogh museum

is much smaller, but it isn't less significant. The museum displays art from most of Van Gogh's life, telling a story as well as giving the viewer a sense of what it was like to be an artist during Van Gogh's time period. The museum not only holds Van Gogh's art, but also the works of his colleagues and friends.

Anne Frank's house

while not based so much around art as the museums mentioned above, it dives deep into the history of World War II. It's a very emotional, very real experience not only about Anne's humanity but also about our own!

Other museums worth noting:

- **Cat Museum or the De Kattenkabinet, solely showcasing cats and art,**
- **Our Lord in the Attic Church**
- **Torture museum**
- **Tropenmuseum,**
- **Cheese museum**
- **The EYE museum of Photography**
- **NEMO Science museum**

- **Nieuwe Kerk, a church located next to the Royal Palace at Dam Square** that offers a fantastic view over the city

The University of Amsterdam also hosts its own museum, **the Het Allard Pierson Museum.**

There are many student discounts throughout Amsterdam, and many museums offer them. Getting the museumkaart is the best money saver, as it is just a flat fee of 60 euros and it lasts for about a year- and you can go to participating museums as much as you want.

For Anne Frank's house, it's best to get a ticket online and reserve your place weeks in advance- or wait for hours! In terms of time, the Van Gogh might take you about two hours, the Royal palace even less, but I suggest taking a day out for the Rijksmuseum and really enjoying the view there.

When coming to Amsterdam, one can easily get overwhelmed with all the sights, smells, and magnificent sightseeing opportunities. Taking full advantage of Dutch museums is only the topping of the cake!



BARCELONA

by Tao Platt, exchange student in Amsterdam from South Africa

Gaudi's architecture, delicious tapas, Lionel Messi and true Spanish sangria are just a few of the many amazing things that Barcelona has to offer. It's one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, and its weather is perfect for a getaway if you're tired of rainy Amsterdam.

If you don't mind large crowds and little sleep, try arriving in Barcelona in late September for La Merce, the annual celebration of the city's patron saint. The streets transform into a wonderland of parades, music, human towers, fireworks and much more. Between running from fireworks in the Correfoc to watching psychedelic bands in the harbor, you're guaranteed to have an exhilarating time. Don't stress if September doesn't fit your schedule; the city is buzzing all year round.



What to See in Barcelona

It's obvious, but La Sagrada Familia by world famous architect Antoni Gaudi is a sight to behold. The cathedral is in the heart of the city, and it attracts thousands of tourists for a good reason: it's simply magnificent. Remember to book in advance though!

Park Güell is another wonderful experience. A passion project of entrepreneur Eusebi Güell and Gaudi, the park astounds with its beautiful views over the city and its mesmerizing architecture. Do note that – the park's pricing is a contentious issue for many Catalan people, who believe it should be a free treasure for locals, rather than a tourist hotspot.

If you're looking for amazing views of the city combined with some historical knowledge, look no further than the Bunkers of Carmel. Labeled as a "local's tip", these old war bunkers on the edge of the city offer an unparalleled view of the second biggest city in Spain.

A two-hour train ride from Barcelona will bring you to Figueres, a small town northeast of Barcelona. Make it a must to visit Teatro Museo Dalí, a museum designed by artist and moustache connoisseur Salvador Dalí. However, it's more than just a museum as it is described as the largest surrealist artwork in the world, and it's no exaggeration. The whole building is a piece of art, and it will be one of the most spectacular places you've ever been.



Travel Tips from Amsterdam

There are three airports near Barcelona but, if possible fly to El Prat. It's nearest to the city center, which lowers transport costs and means that you're less likely to get lost.

Flights can be relatively cheap from Schiphol. KLM, Transavia and Vueling all offer the route, but the latter two are usually the least expensive.

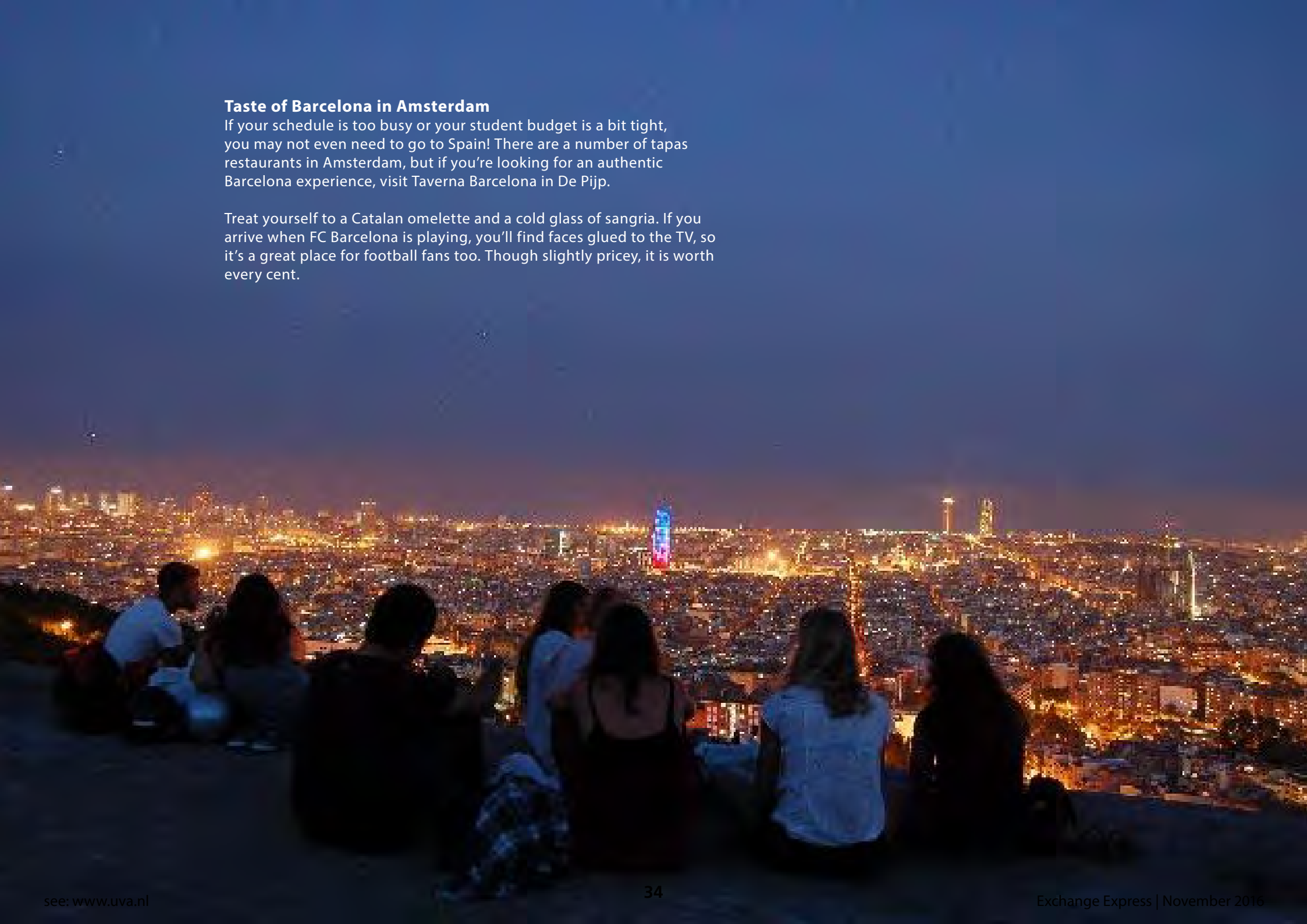
Aim to book a hostel in the city center. They're reasonably cheap, very convenient and are a great place to make new friends!

Make sure your phone will work in Spain! Wi-Fi is easy to find in Barcelona, but make sure you'll have data that is valid outside the Netherlands, just in case you find yourself in a sticky situation.

Taste of Barcelona in Amsterdam

If your schedule is too busy or your student budget is a bit tight, you may not even need to go to Spain! There are a number of tapas restaurants in Amsterdam, but if you're looking for an authentic Barcelona experience, visit Taverna Barcelona in De Pijp.

Treat yourself to a Catalan omelette and a cold glass of sangria. If you arrive when FC Barcelona is playing, you'll find faces glued to the TV, so it's a great place for football fans too. Though slightly pricey, it is worth every cent.





Brouwerij 't IJ - Funenkade 7

Brouwerij 't IJ is a local brewery and an atmospheric cafe. No worries, it's not the only place where the delicious Brouwerij 't IJ beer is served; a lot of other cafes and restaurants in Amsterdam also stock this beer.

Plek - Neveritaweg 59

Located in the north of Amsterdam by the docks, Plek is a restaurant made out of a shipping container and offers stunning views of Amsterdam and the water. It's a pleasant place to just have drinks, lunch or dinner on a beautiful spring or summer day.



HOTSPOTS IN AMSTERDAM

by Berfin Yurdakul, former Erasmus exchange student from Amsterdam in Barcelona, Spain

Coffee&Coconuts - Ceintuurbaan 282-284

This former cinema in the 'De Pijp' area of Amsterdam is now a chic cafe to study, meet friends or have meals. The building is spacious and gives off a modern, comfortable vibe. Although it's called Coffee&Coconuts, it offers more than just coffee and coconuts, including tea, wines, salads, breakfasts and many more. Although it's a nice place to hang out with your friends, it's also a good place to study while enjoying a coconut and feeling like you're on an exotic island.



De Hallen - Hannie Dankbaarpassage

De Hallen is a former tram depot that has since been renovated into a centre for food, media, cinema and other cultural activities. It offers a variety of international food and has a bar, which is perfect for after a movie

Vleminckx friethuis Voetboogstraat 33

This is the best place to get fries in the city centre of Amsterdam, for locals and for tourists. Although lines are long, it is definitely worth the wait. There are more than 25 sauces available, including mayonnaise, satay, . Drop by to buy a delicious snack while exploring Amsterdam!

A very 'non-touristy' bucket list

by Symona Beyer, former exchange student in Dublin from Amsterdam

'Must do's

Plan a trip in the future with your exchange friends

To think of all the amazing memories that you made together.

Take pictures/videos, write a blog

To show your friends and family at home that you are having an amazing time and make them jealous.

Go to your classes

It is important to get good grades, because in the end this was the reason they let you come here, right?

Fall into a canal

Many tourists fall into one (or more) of the 165 canals in Amsterdam.

Get into a bike accident

With 881.000 bikes in Amsterdam, this one should be easy!

"Yes we can!"

Celebrate a national holiday: King's day

Dutch people party on the street in orange outfits!

Take a spontaneous weekend away

Travel to other beautiful cities in Europe!

Go skydiving

Jump out of an airplane above a Dutch island Texel!

Climb the Westertoren

Climb the 85 meter high tower of the West church of Amsterdam.

Visit Keukenhof gardens for tulips

More than 7 million of typical Dutch flowers.

Karaoke night

Many bars in Amsterdam give you the opportunity to show your singing skills.

Go to Sensation White

Dance party in the Arena and people fully dressed up in white.

Locals

Couchsurfing.com

Sleep on couches of locals' homes to experience the real Dutchies

Try new foods!

Appeltaart, Patatje Oorlog, Old Amsterdam cheese, bitterballen, stroopwafels

Patatje Oorlog

are french fries with peanut sauce, mayonaise and onion.

Bitterballen

are fried meat balls eaten together with a beer around 4 o'clock during 'borreltijd' or in the evening. Always eat them with mustard!

Stroopwafels

are cookies with caramel inbetween and go together with a cup of coffee/tea.

Drink local beer: Brouwerij 't IJ

Drink one of the 7 local craft beers in a wind mill or do a tasting of all of them.

Explore your neighbourhood

Every neighbourhood has its own shops and kind of people. Try to discover all of them!

Learn the language

'Gezellig', 'Lekker', 'Leuk' – these should be enough to make people appreciate your Dutchness.

-Bike Tips!

Amsterdam Transportation

Guide by Anne van Binsbergen.

Obviously, the flow chart has made clear you will be using your bike 99% of the time. These 10 rules will make sure you feel safe and comfortable roaming around the city on your steel stallion:

1. Use hand signals to indicate turns;

don't cut people off without warning

2. Don't stop suddenly;

Amsterdam cyclists bike fast and they will yell at you

3. Get working lights on your bike; even though most locals don't have them you can get fined by the police and it's expensive

4. Avoid tram rails; if your wheel gets stuck you will fall and it will hurt

5. Watch out for taxis; they're crazy drivers

6. Don't slip; the stone curbs in the city centre can get slippery

7. Get a second lock for your bike; bikes are precious items and they get stolen a lot

8. Don't leave your bike at a station for too long or park it somewhere you're not supposed to; it will get taken to the bike impound which is where bikes go to die. It's horribly far away and you won't want to go there and you'll just end up getting a new one because let's face it we're all lazy and ain't nobody got time for that

9. Watch out for pedestrians; you can be a total bike pro and do everything right but they will cross the street without looking and get in the way

10. Don't get distracted: we know Amsterdam is a beautiful city but keep your eyes on the road and don't be an idiot

**LIFE IS LIKE
riding a bike**

**TO KEEP YOUR
BALANCE**

*You must keep
Moving*

*Keep Calm
and
Drive Safe!
-Ambassadors Team*



Traveling through Europe can be quite expensive. Luckily, by being a little bit flexible and resourceful it is very well possible to travel through Europe while on a budget. One way to save a few extra bucks is being smart about your transportation.

1. BlaBlaCar

Share a ride, share a story. BlaBlaCar connects drivers and passengers who want to travel to the same location within Europe. It is Europe's largest platform for sharing a ride. BlaBlaCar offers rides all throughout Europe, and their prices are generally about 75% lower compared to taking the train. Besides the low pricing, BlaBlaCar is a safe, comfortable, sustainable, and most of all fun way to travel.

by Bart van Teutem.

Traveling Europe

-Transportation Guide-

2. Interrail

Planning on doing a big Euro-trip after the semester ends? Then you should seriously consider purchasing the Interrail pass. The Interrail pass is a fun and budget way to explore Europe's best bits, by allowing travellers to travel freely by train in thirty European countries within a chosen time period for a discounted price. Young adults, aged 25 or younger, even get an additional 25% discount. The Interrail pass is only available to European residents. Non-European residents can purchase a similar pass, called the Eurail pass.

3. Cheap Flights

Although flying is usually a more expensive option, sometimes flights can be cheap. Dirt-cheap. Go to Skyscanner and search for flights from 'Netherlands (NL)' to 'Everywhere'. Don't choose a specific date, but instead, select a full month. This will give you a list of the cheapest destinations to travel to from the Netherlands during that month. It requires a little flexibility in choosing dates, but that is often well worth it. You might find return tickets for as low as 20 euros. Isn't that crazy?! Also, ask your Dutch friends to monitor Paperflights and TicketSpy for you. I have seen flights to places like Stockholm, Barcelona, or Rome being offered there for as low as 9 euros for a return flight.

4. FlixBus

Amsterdam -> Brussel: 9 euros. Amsterdam -> Paris: 25 euros. Amsterdam -> Berlin: 29 euros. FlixBus offers comfortable bus rides to over 700 destinations in Europe for cheap prices. Their modern buses are spacious and all equipped with WIFI. A big plus of FlixBus is that the busses for many of their connections drive during the night, which saves you time as well as money for accommodation ideal for weekend trips.

5. Hitchhiking

On a very tight budget and always been more of an adventurous type? Do you prefer the better story to the easy way out? Then you might want to consider hitchhiking. Most countries in Europe, especially Germany and the East European countries, are safe and relatively easy enough to hitchhike your way through them. Beware though that hitchhiking requires patience, and being stuck on the side of the road for half a day is not uncommon. Tip: sticking to petrol stations on the motorway is often the best way to score long-distance rides.

by Bart van Teutem.

Transcript Information

-What to Do with Your Grades?-

1. The transcript

Once you have completed your courses, your host university should issue you an official transcript. This transcript is a record of all academic work attempted at your host university. You will need to present this official document to your home university as proof for the courses you have taken and the grades that have been awarded to you.

2. Making the request

Most host universities require you to request them to send a signed copy of the transcript to either your home address or your faculty at your home university. Do not forget to make this request before leaving for home or for travelling in order to ensure you will receive the transcript on time. Usually, the transcript will be received in about two months after the semester ends. However, there are exceptions. Hence, it is important to enquire your host university about its specific arrangements. Doing this will allow you to make sure you will receive the transcript on time.



3. Converting your grades

Once you have received the transcript you must apply to the Board of Examiners of your faculty within your home university to convert the details recorded on the transcript into official study credits and grades. Make sure you hand in an official signed copy of the transcript, since a printed copy of an electronic transcript is usually not considered to be official and will therefore not be validated by your home university. In some cases your faculty may require you to hand in a detailed description of the courses taken – from the student handbook, for example – as well as a conversion formula in addition to the transcript. Therefore, you need to ensure you obtain an explanation of your host university's credit and marking system. Its international office or registry should be able to provide this.



ISN AMSTERDAM

This year, International Student Network Amsterdam celebrates 20 years of existence as a student organization that organizes low-priced activities dedicated to international students from UvA and HvA. It's part of ESN (Erasmus Student Network), present in 36 countries, that makes sure that while you are abroad you will have the time of your life! Be sure you become a member by buying their 5 euro card in order to receive discounts and join their events!

JOIN ISN INTRO WEEK OR YOU'LL REGRET IT!

Whoop Whoop! When you are coming to Amsterdam for your exchange in such a lovely city with a rich history, culture and traditions, what better way to discover all of this than through an intensive week that will lay the foundation for your entire stay?

GET YOURSELF A DUTCH BUDDY!

More exciting parties and activities will come with a Dutch local willing to show you around, join you and other Dutch or international buddies at ISN activities or not!

AND IT WAS ALL ... PARTIES!

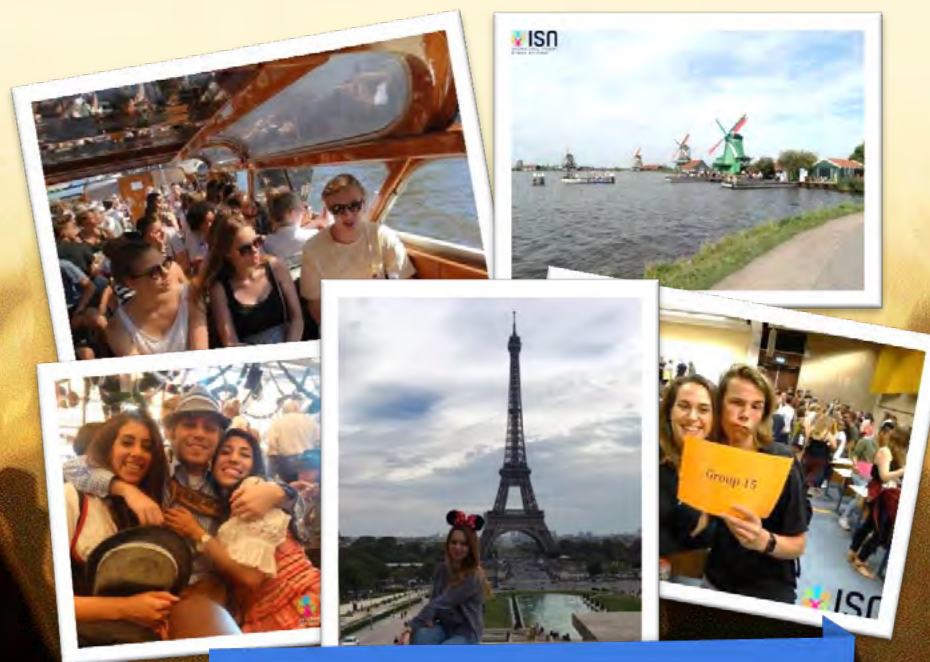
Now that you have some 'go-to' friends, it's time to join all the GRAND! parties: Opening Party, Erasmus Madness, Formal Ball, Halloween and Goodbye Christmas party!

ON WEDNESDAY WE GO COCO-NUTS!

Don't miss the weekly borrels at Coco's Outback, student's most beloved activity where international students enjoy lousy food and warm beer – aussie bar in the heart of Amsterdam!

CONQUER HOLI AND EUROPE IN WEEKENDS!

Travel with great international students just as eager as you to visit lovely cities whether you think about in the Netherlands or Paris, Berlin or Prague!



KEEP CALM AND STAY UPDATED:

CREA, Nieuwe Achtergracht 170, room 1.15

Office Hours: **Wednesday & Friday between 1-5 PM**

www.isn-amsterdam.nl

info@isn-amsterdam

Study Abroad Report Contest

This semester the UvA International Office has organized the Study Abroad Report Contest. In order to provide more information to UvA students who wish to learn more about their host university, this contest was designed to collect testimonials from current and former exchange students.

Are you going on exchange soon and do you want to find out more about your destination and host university ? Then do not hesitate and read some of the testimonials written by your fellow students !

There are two different contests: One for the Erasmus/Faculty Exchange program and one for the Global Exchange program.

Erasmus

Find more information and testimonials written by exchange students with European destinations here:

www.facebook.com/uvaerasmus/

Global

Find more information and testimonials written by exchange students with destinations outside of Europe here:

http://www.wereldkaart-uva.nl/abroad/map/type/1/faculty/3/global_programmes/

We hope you will like reading the testimonials uploaded by your fellow students !

Enjoy the rest of your semester abroad !

THE HOMECOMING BLUES

by Lavinia Burtumac

That's the name we give to the "reverse culture shock" we all experience after coming back from our exchange abroad. Be it a whole academic year or half of it, arriving back home is a lovely and exciting feeling for sure! You have tons of stories to tell and experiences to share, everyone is curious, you are happy to see familiar faces and glad to recount all you have seen and done.

After a while though, things start to get different colours, especially blues, "the homecoming blues"... You start to miss being abroad, the people, the climate, the city, the country and it becomes unbelievable that you had to give up your life abroad to be home again. As weird as it might sound, something is missing and home is not quite as exciting – everything seems the same, plodding along at its own sedate pace...

Surprisingly enough, a lot has happened while you were away and at a certain point, people are not that enthusiastic about your stories. They've heard them all before. Life goes on and you have to pick up where you left off. The culture shock experienced when you arrived abroad is now happening in reverse. A more negative frame of the mind is given way in comparison with the "back-at-home" euphoria.

Don't worry! Some of us have already been there, others will too. We felt lethargic, tired and restless, but at least we can take comfort in how the homecoming blues are a usual phenomenon happening to all students on exchange.

On a more positive note, these feelings will soon fade away. That longing to be back abroad, the irritation with life at home will slowly but surely transform into a "normal" rhythm. For sure, you won't be the same again, your experiences abroad have beautifully molded you into the person you are today. You've become more independent and confident, more grown up emotionally, more eager to challenge your limits! Nobody can take that away from you, so use it wisely!

BEAT THE HOMECOMING BLUES BY:

❖ Inspiring other students! Writing about your experiences might help them get a better image of how small the world really is!

❖ Traveling forever! Keeping in touch with your friends abroad, be it on Skype or by texting. You never know when they can visit you, or vice versa! Maybe plan your next trip.

❖ Find a great job!

❖ Join the Couchsurfing community

❖ Getting involved in ISN activities for the incoming students: apply to be a buddy, a coach, a representative at the Study Abroad Fair maybe. They not only give you the chance to talk about your experiences in length, but they also help a different audience, more eager than ever to see how their world can be painted in a broad spectrum of cultural colours as well!

Make
friends

Register for
the Master
Program

Volunteer
as an ISN
coach

RE-enroll
at UvA

Be young!
Live!

**Just Say
yes!**

Enter
report
competition

Volunteer
as an ISN
coach

**Lastly,
Do not
forget
to...**

Keep calm
and enjoy
your
exchange!
Arrange
accommodation

Just
Say
yes!

Have your
credits
validated

Be
young!

Make friends

