

Introduction

Maastricht University, Maastricht, The Netherlands

Major: Psychology / Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience (FPN)

Dates: September 2012 – June 2013 (Fall and Winter semesters)

Preparation for Exchange

Before you leave: Look at a city map to see where your accommodation is relative to your university. Having a long commute to school is no fun. Be open to all experiences and know that things won't always go according to plan.

What to pack: It's nice to have some sentimental things (such as pictures or your own pillowcase) or reminders from home for when you get lonely. Pack electrical converters because they're expensive to buy and sometimes hard to find once you arrive to your new city. You don't need as many clothes as you think, you will shop over there and then have too much to bring back!

Travel and Transportation: Everyone rides bikes in The Netherlands! It's very handy for getting around and cheap because the busses are expensive and don't follow very good routes. Trains to Amsterdam or Belgium come often, but don't buy tickets from the train station because you can get cheaper ones from Kruidvat and other places as well. There is an airport just outside the city but only serves limited destinations and you can find cheaper flights leaving from Brussels Charleroi for example.

Financial details: If you are staying for one year I would suggest opening a Dutch bank account with ING. Grocery stores and other small shops do not accept credit cards. You can always find a cheap way to do whatever it is you want, but you WILL need more money than you think!

During Exchange

Arrival and orientation: Do the group city tours because they are helpful and you will meet lots of people. Ride your bike around for a few days to learn where everything is. Everyone speaks English at least a little bit so don't hesitate to ask a local, after all they do know best. Try to arrive in time for INKOM; it is an amazing experience. Go to all the ESN events even if you go alone. You will meet all the exchange students and more there and they are always so much fun!

Accommodation and living: Guesthouse can be a real pain so make sure you pay your rent on time and KEEP ALL YOUR RECEIPTS! The main guesthouse is the most fun for living and I would 100% suggest to live here! The friendships and good times you'll have will be unforgettable!

Academics: At Maastricht University they have 5 (or 6) periods last about 8 weeks each. You'll have 2 classes each period. Each class will usually have a lecture once or twice per week as well as a tutorial once or twice per week. It's not much class time so you're expected to learn on your own time. The most important advice is to **STAY ON TOP OF YOUR WORK!** It seems like you don't need to do anything during the period but you'll struggle in the exam week if you fall behind. And definitely contribute in tutorial to help your own learning and make it interesting, otherwise they will suck. The grades work on a scale from 1 – 10. It's VERY hard to get a 10, between 6 and 7 are average grades, an 8 is good! Exams are written in the MECC with 1000 other students from many faculties and are formal, also don't get overwhelmed it's a huge building!

Country information: The Netherlands has similar weather to Victoria and Vancouver. It doesn't get too cold (maybe -10 the coldest), it snows a bit but mostly grey and rainy. Learn to bike with an umbrella because it will help you. Maastricht has a few cool tourist places like the bookstore is one of the most beautiful in the world, St. Pieters fort is good for watching the sunset. Go to Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam for sure. Delft, Lieden, Haarlem are all really cool too! ESN does a "Discover Holland" weekend trip, I would highly recommend it!

Social and extra curricular: There are two main associations for exchange students. ESN does events in Maastricht and Way2Go does trips outside of Maastricht to other countries main metropolis cities. Way2Go give you a good price for what you're getting, the guys are very fun, and they are a good balance of sight seeing and partying! ESN has fun parties for just about every night of the week!

Reflection after exchange

Exchange was truly the best experience I have had! I couldn't have asked for more, except to be on exchange for the rest of my life! The friendships you make are long lasting, real, and invaluable. The people you meet are amazing and there is no judging on exchange, you can be who you want and that is why your new friends seem to know you better than anyone else! Enjoy every moment, do everything you want! You only get one chance so take risks, go on adventures, travel alone and in groups, and just do it all! You will grow and change as a person, learning lots about yourself so don't expect life to be the same after exchange. Coming home is so hard, adjusting to Canadian life and missing your new friends all over the world. I wish everyone on exchange to have the same amazing experience I did!









