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Exchange Report: Utrecht Feb 2013-June 2013

Introduction

My exchange was to Utrecht University, in Utrecht, The Netherlands. Although I am an anthropology major in Canada, I found myself primarily in Celtic classes. My exchange was from February until June of 2013.

Before the exchange

Organizing in advance is useful in choosing courses that have known course equivalencies at Uvic. I didn't do this, and now I am in a bit of a sticky spot wondering if my Medieval Welsh/Brazilian Film/Continental Celtic... classes will transfer.

In terms of packing I brought almost nothing. In Utrecht the Short Stay Solutions gives you the option of buying bed linens etc once you get there. There are also great once a month clothing markets in Amsterdam at NDSM. Super fun way to get fun clothes.

During the exchange

For me, Utrecht was less expensive than Victoria. Beer is cheap, most of the bars have no cover, cheese costs nothing. Though if you are going for a year I would suggest opening a Dutch bank account, as almost everything runs on cards not cash.

Utrecht is a great place to travel from. You can find really inexpensive flights from the Netherlands (Eindhoven especially) via Easyjet and Ryanair to almost anywhere in Europe. While I was there we went on lots of weekend trips as well as a week here or there when we had a break in school. During the school term I went to Sardinia for 10 days, southern Spain for a week, Berlin for a couple weekends, Belgium for a weekend, London, the Frisian Islands, and Amsterdam at least once a week. It's nice to get away because the weather in the Netherlands can be temperamental and we had a very long, rainy and cold spring.

Within The Netherlands it is very easy to get around by train. With a railcard (OV Chipcarte) you get a 40% discount that makes getting to Amsterdam around 3.50 euro.

We were able to travel so much because the hours spent in lectures was fewer than Victoria. There are only 2 classes at a time for around 7 weeks at a time. And between the 2 terms there is a break. Compared to Victoria it seemed pretty casual, though the grading system is on a 9 point scale instead of letter grades.

I stayed in Short Stay Solutions while I was there. My apartment was shared with 12 other people (2 bathrooms, shared rooms, 1 shared kitchen). It was right in the center of the city and a 5 minute walk to

my classes. It seemed like it would be crazy to share with so many people but it worked out really nicely. No fights, lots of friends around all the time. This was the cheapest option, and there are other options for fewer roommates. We spent lots of time together, having communal dinners, parties, going out, laughing, chatting...

Reflection After Exchange

I wish I had gone for a year. I really enjoyed the experience and I wish it had been longer.

On the flip side I wish someone had mentioned how flat the Netherlands are. If you like being outside/anywhere natural this is the absolutely wrong country to go to. The entire place is cities or farmland. Except where they drained the ocean to create a natural place to put a herd of wild horses.

All the best to future exchangees!

Drink some La Chouffe for us Canadians who miss it!

Attached are some photos of my time on exchange:

Trying to fit too many girls into a giant wooden shoe in Amsterdam, Queensday (the birthday, and this year abdication, of the Queen) celebrations, a dinner in our kitchen, a shot of the garden behind our building, classic dutch windmills, a street on the Oudegracht (old canal) in Utrecht, and a canal on Queensday in Amsterdam









