

Report of experience

Two Semester Erasmus in Ankara University

Preparation

I wanted to do Erasmus and I decided to go to Ankara. One year before, I had traveled to Ankara with a student organization and had met Turkish students, had seen the city and some universities and ended up making friends. I was determined to understand this culture. In order to really arrive and learn the language, I wanted to stay a year. I talked a lot with my friends in Ankara which of the two universities is more appropriate for me: Both universities (the Ankara University and the Gazi University) are very good universities, but the Law School of Ankara University is known all over the country and the Gazi University is apparently rather conservative. Therefore, my desired university was the Ankara University.

In the application phase, I have teamed up with other Erasmus students and together we have exchanged our expectations and goals and passed over our application papers together. Since we wanted to go to other countries and other cities, the cover letters were different in many ways but we could help each other much. Unfortunately, a lot of time was needed for the necessary documentation and the examination phase was getting closer and closer. However I could always turn to the ZIB (Center for International Relations of the Faculty of Law) for questions. To say, I was really often there and the workers at ZIB are always helpful and friendly.

Since I went to Ankara and in the preparatory phase the attempted coup took place, my contact with the coordinator in Ankara and my friends in Ankara and other cities in Turkey was very important. Through many emails and messages, we were able to clarify everything and it calmed me and my parents down. Nevertheless, it was not easy, as many of not involved or closed people had interfered with me and my defense why I choose Ankara was needed almost daily. The most important thing was that I really wanted to go and also get close contact with the people.

I have received a list of lectures from the coordinator of the Ankara University. Be careful here, since the Higher Regional Court is no longer allowed to count the law courses of the Political Faculty (which are in English), but only the Faculty of Law. But best to ask again and ask the professors in Ankara. To this are the courses in the legal faculty one-year courses. I did not know this, but in the end it was not a problem to make changes in the Learning Agreement and at the University.

Accommodation

For my accommodation in Ankara I got in advance information from the university in Ankara and from friends. Since I have been discouraged by all of them, I did not apply for one of the students dormitory. Later, I had an Italian friend who stayed in a dormitory: in student halls, the rooms are always shared with others, she was even sixth in a room. Furthermore, many of the accommodations are not close to the city center and also not close to public transport such as buses or metro.

I myself have spent the first weeks with a friend and their family, which was just great. Since I arrived a bit earlier, I had just holidays and I have been able to experience Turkish hospitality right from the start.

However in Ankara it is very easy to find cheap living space and shared flats. It is not like in many German or other European cities, where the lack of housing exist. For shared flats, there are Facebook sites, which also offer rooms for Erasmus students (many Turkish students are looking for foreign roommates to improve their English or just get to know other cultures). In these groups you can either write directly a room advertisement or even place an ad (and there will be many who would like to make a room).

Also the rents are very cheap in Ankara and affordable for students (usually between 100 and 250 Euro).

I myself was first contracted with an Iranian couple, which, in addition to interesting conversations and friendship, has always led to delicious Iranian dinners, dances and sweets. After three months, however, I am with a friend, which has not only led to one of the greatest flat mate couples, but also to a close friendship, which is more like the relationship of two sisters.

Education

My studies at Ankara University started with two students of the faculty who were assigned to me. One was from the student organization ESN (Erasmus Student Network), the other was a mentor directly from the faculty who initially had close contact with my coordinator of the faculty. In the first weeks, I was introduced to lecture halls, canteens, student organizations, libraries and fellow students. Even outside the university we met in the evening and they explained different things to see and to do in the city. Administratively, the EU Office and my coordinator at the faculty were at my side. They helped me with the course assignment and also had several information events. During the semesters, the EU Office and the Faculty of European Studies also had events in which I could also participate in the organization.

The Law Faculty is very well known and respected; unfortunately the courses are only in Turkish. Nevertheless, the professors are very friendly and helpful. My other courses were at the political faculty where there were also English law courses. The courses were mostly very small but very helpful. I could also take other courses and so I had the opportunity to look into other areas. Most courses were concerned with international studies and essays, and we were regularly asked for homework and text processing. Through these courses, I learned a lot about the politics and culture of Turkey and that has enriched me a lot.

Ankara University has different campuses spread throughout the city. I was mostly in the not so large and also not beautiful campus of the jurisprudence and the political faculty, however on this campus it never got boring. The reason was that my campus was very politically charged by these two faculties and there were always demonstrations and clashes. These riots, however, can be observed from a safe distance and I was never in danger of being dragged into (the riots began slowly and then increased among the groupings). For entering the campuses always the students ID was required and security staff checked every person, so only university members could enter the campus.

But one of the best possibilities was that I could go to the language school and thus I could improve myself from an A1 level to B2 level in 9 months. In the language school which is part of Ankara University we had small classes (usually only 8 to 12 people) and contact with people from all over the world (many foreign students were preparing for entering the universities).

Everyday life and free time

Especially for Erasmus students ESN is taking care; they prepares among other things parties, movie evenings and excursions. ESN Ankara is very active, has

always had new ideas and build up new friendships. Especially in the beginning meeting with ESN was a great “ice breaker” and I had a lot of fun with them. In my spare time, I have also visited other student organizations, which have welcomed me a lot.

Of course, I have done a lot with my close friend and together we have a big circle of friends with whom we have traveled a lot in recent years; of course also in my Erasmus year. From Gaziantep in the east, over Bodrum in the south to the Greek border, we have always visited other cities. We also went to the Turkish steam bath (Hamam), to the cinema, to prepare traditional food, to drink coffee and to read coffee grounds, to eat mangal (Turkish BBQ), to visit seminars and much more.

I was especially delighted that I could go twice to an engagement party and attend the Festival of the Revolving Dervish (monks).

My Erasmus year in Ankara was the best year and I will come back more often. Anyone who is thinking about doing Erasmus in Turkey should do it and not let been hold back.