



Erasmus 2017/2018 University of Palermo, Italy

Lukas Münch 5th year Medicine

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Why I chose Palermo

I decided to go to Palermo because I was always thinking about living at least a while in South Europe. Beautiful beaches, good weather and a long summer were on my mind. Even though other cities also met these characteristics I ultimately decided to go to Palermo when I saw that the subjects of the university coincided with the subjects of the 5th year, and that my brother was also able to attend this university as an Erasmus student at the same time. I also had contact with a former student who had already completed her Erasmus year in Palermo and she told me a lot of positive things.

Preparing for Erasmus

the preparation started one year before the beginning of the Erasmus semester. It is very useful to take a language course to learn the language before arriving. Besides the language requirements it is necessary to match the subjects which you would normally have at your home university and see their availability for each semester in Palermo. You can find the curriculum on the website of the University of Palermo.

Shortly before I traveled to Palermo, I looked around the internet for apartments. In a specific Facebook group I found what I was looking for and made an appointment to view the accommodation. But you can also search for flats through the Erasmus Student Network (ESN). Generally, the housing situation in Palermo was good, you could quickly find a room and you could expect about 200 Euro rental costs.



(Palermo and Monte Pellegrino in the background)

First steps in Palermo

After arriving in Palermo I was a bit overwhelmed by the noise and traffic of the city. At first glance, it seems chaotic, but you get used to the new environment quickly. The good food and the nice weather help you feel good. You can also get in contact with the ESN at the beginning and get to know new people there. At the beginning, many meetings and events are organized to get kown to other Erasmus students, for example the "Welcome-Week" or trips to nearby places.

You also have the opportunity to be assigned to an "Erasmus buddy" who can help you out with many things in the beginning and can be a helping person in many matters, also regarding university affairs.



(Cefalù)

University

Within the first few days I was enrolled, which was easily done in the main secretary of the university. The coordination of the medical faculty was more chaotic, specifically the medicine coordinator who was difficult to find in his office. This was only for the incoming students from Romania. However, our colleagues from other countries remarked that their coordination was easy.

Now that you officially became a student of the University of Palermo, you got a student card with which you could eat in the cafeteria (3 € for a meal) and for example got free admission to the botanical garden of Palermo. In addition, every Erasmus student received a free 4-week intensive language course.

The teaching at the medical faculty was in Italian and took place depending on the subject in one of the departments of the Policlinico that can be easily reached by bike or on foot. The lecture period which ended in December/June was followed by the examinations. The dates (so-called "Appello") were determined flexibly by students agreeing with the professor beforehand. The exams were oral (except for neurology which was written and oral). Every subject had

several Appelli, up to 3 per session, so you could choose the Appello best suited to your time schedule.



(View over the roofs of Palermo)

Free time in Sicily

Sicily is a stunning island with many facets, one of which is Palermo. Historically as well as currently Palermo possesses many special characteristics, impressive architecture and beautiful gardens. The market "Ballaro" where you can do your shopping shows you all facets of an authentic Sicilian food market.

The streets of "Vucciria" and "Piazza Sant'Anna" invite you to be entertained for hours on end during day and night.



(Vucciria at night)

Since Palermo is located directly by the sea you can always take a walk on "Foro Italico" or take a 40 minute bus ride to the beach in Mondello, the posh bathing area of Palermo and relax on a beautiful beach with crystal clear water. It is advisable to go there especially in autumn or spring, because the beach is very crowded during summer.

Palermo is also located at the foot of Monte Pellegrino, a beautiful plateau-like mountain where you can go hiking on the weekend. (Mondello and Monte Pellegrino)



(Mondello and Monte Pellegrino)

Generally you can take many day trips in the area around Palermo.

Other parts of Sicily are also very beautiful, e.g. the Aeolian Islands, the Etna, Zingaro to name a few places. Wonderful landscapes and breathtaking scenery can be discovered.

Many of the more distant places can be explored on your own or you can take part in one of the ESN excursions that organize those trips.

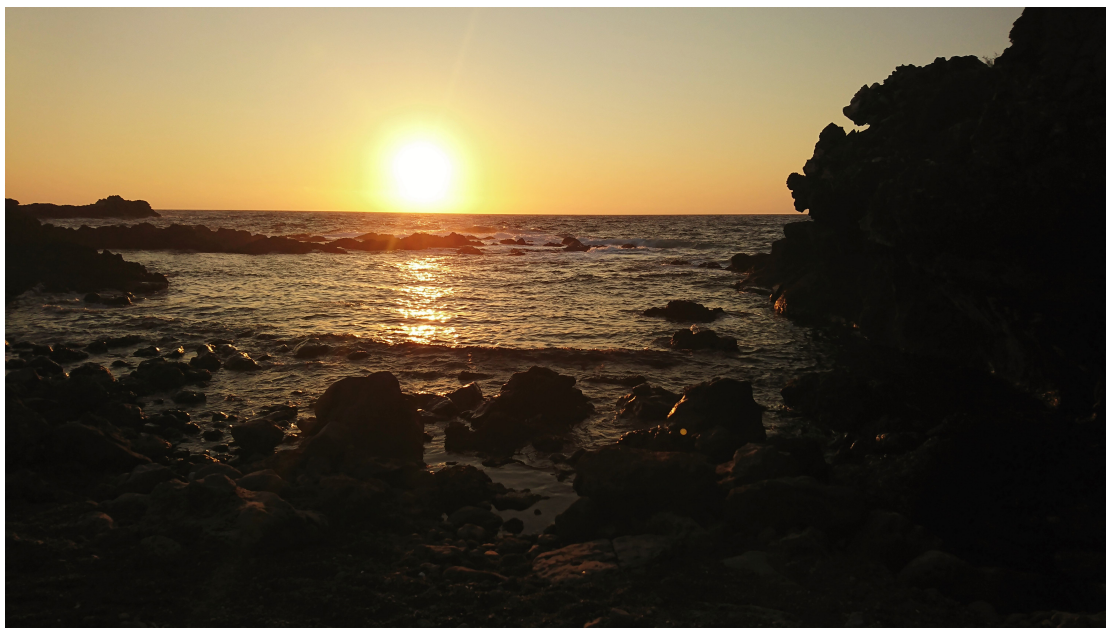


(Riserva naturale dello Zingaro)

Conclusion

"Erasmus is not just a year in your life, it is THE year of your life!" is a popular way to describe Erasmus and yes, Erasmus does mean more than to study a year abroad. It means many new experiences that can be very diverse. To find many new international friendships is almost predetermined.

You will make discoveries that you did not even expect would happen. It's just like traveling but a much longer time and definitely a lot will make an impression on you. You will have to solve difficult situations and overcome challenges. It certainly does not matter where you spend your studies abroad, I think it's always an enrichment. Especially in Palermo, however, an unforgettable one.



(Ustica island)

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