

GRENOBLE 2019-2020

Edward Plumb

edplumb.ep@gmail.com

Contents:

Introduction

Accommodation

Bank Account

Transport around Grenoble

Transport to Grenoble

Modules

Sport

Little things that you'll find weird

Bars

Introduction:

I cannot recommend going to Grenoble enough. I have had such an amazing time and I've meet so many amazing people; it is an experience that I will always remember. Of course, I made loads of mistakes while I was out there, and this is why I am writing this now: so that you can learn from my errors. If you have any questions, feel free to email me.

Understanding a year abroad:

There are two different types of year abroad: one for credit and one not for credit. I chose to not do it for credit, and I am really happy that I made this choice, as it allowed me more free time while at Grenoble than I would have had if I had had to study harder. However, this did mean that I didn't learn as much maths as I would have learnt if I had taken it for credit, but I do not believe that this negatively impacted my level of French.

Accommodation:

For accommodation, you can choose to rent privately or through CROUS (University Accommodation). If you want to improve your French, I would strongly advice against going for CROUS. I ended up in an accommodation solely for Erasmus students, despite specifically asking to live with French speaking students, which meant that I started to socialise in English right from the start. For me, living in a CROUS residence was the biggest mistake of the year.

However, if you don't mind not socialising in French, CROUS could be perfect. It will introduce you to hundreds of Erasmus students and it is so cheap. The price range for most residences is 170€-290€ per month including bills, however this is reflected in what you get for that. For example, most kitchens are just stoves and sinks, so there aren't any ovens, toasters, microwaves, kettles or even bins. Some people are willing to overlook this for the

great social life and some people aren't. In short, CROUS is a very marmite subject: you either love it or hate it.

Bank Account:

By far and away, the best bank account for your Erasmus is Revolut. I found it so easy to use, as did the others who used it. The main advantage for British students is that it offers the interbank exchange rate for currency transfers, which probably saved me over £200 during the course of the year. It was also easy to set up, whereas most people found it very difficult to deal with French banks.

Another warning over French banks is that they will often charge you a fee for having an account, which was a surprise to most British students who were used to receiving interest on their money, rather than losing money.

Transport to Grenoble:

Most people get to Grenoble by aeroplane. There is a choice of three airports to fly into: Grenoble, Lyon or Geneva. Grenoble tends to be cheap to fly to, however then the coach (An Actibus) from the airport to the city is around 15€, whereas Lyon is a bit more expensive, but the coach (A Flixbus) is usually 1€ or 3€ to Grenoble. In general, I went for Lyon, as it turned out cheaper and easier for me.

Some people found that it was easier to get the train, as then they could take more luggage than they could have done on the plane. This can be fairly cheap, if booked well in advance.

There were a few that were lucky enough to be driven to Grenoble, but the journey is very long.

Transport around Grenoble:

I will greatly miss the public transport around Grenoble, especially next year while making my hourly commute on the U1 into uni. While there are both buses and trams in Grenoble, most people only use the trams, which are fast, reliable and (I would even go as far as saying!) nice. The price is 15€ a month (plus 5€ for the card at the start) or 155€ for the year (including the cost of the card) and should be bought as soon as possible. You can buy them at Agence de Mobilité TAG at 49 Alsace Lorraine or the Tabac on campus (right next to the tram stop called bibliotheque universitié).

The course:

As a third-year student, you will be entering into Licence Trois, which is the final year of the Licence (Bachelor's degree). However, there is no need to just stick with third-year maths modules. If you've wanted to try something out (economics, programming, physics, etc), this is a great opportunity, especially if your year doesn't count. The university also offers language modules and even sports modules, which I definitely recommend. For example, I

tried out first year programming modules, second year stats modules and third year and fourth-year maths modules, as well as a French module and a sports module (climbing).

The French way of structuring their university years is very different to the British way. It seems to me that, while we might, for example, do a bit of algebra every year, they would do loads of algebra in one term. So, if you decide to take some third-year maths modules, you might find that they cover a lot of what you've been taught in first year and second year.

Sports:

If you love skiing, climbing or hiking, Grenoble is perfect. It seemed to me that everyone in Grenoble would do at least one of the three.

Skiing:

There's an amazing group called Uglisse, which costs 30€ to join. They offer free lessons for all abilities, huge discounts for ski passes (around 75% discount) and transport to and from resorts. This is one of the best things about Grenoble and you'll spend some of your best weekends of Erasmus skiing in some of the best ski resorts in Europe.

You can also buy really cheap second-hand equipment from la boîte à skis on campus, which will also come with a year warranty.

Climbing:

Grenoble is famous for climbing, which is one of the reasons why I choose to go to there. If you have never climbed before, this is the perfect opportunity, as you can take it for credit as a module and they will teach you. The crags are a short walk away from the city. In general, they are great with beautiful views over the valley, but feel free to send me an email and I can give recommendations. You can buy an annual membership (called ugrimpe) to the uni climbing gym for 30€. There is lead climbing and bouldering, but the bouldering is limited and all overhanging. There is also a really good bouldering gym called Le Labo, but this is more expensive.

Hiking:

There are so many great hikes around Grenoble and it is a really popular way of passing a weekend. There are even nearby mountains with refuges on, which are brilliant on a weekend with good weather.

Little differences:

These are just a couple of little things that I wish that I knew before I went:

- In order to get numbers on a French computer keyboard, you need to press shift. This sounds really unimportant, but not knowing this stopped me from logging onto the university computers for weeks.
- It is almost impossible to buy lined paper in France, as they all use squared paper. Many international students preferred to bring lined paper from home.
- You cannot buy good tea, so I bought some from home. However, they have really cheap coffee machines around the university.

- Flixbus is a great and cheap way to get around France. If you're organised, you can get return trips to Paris for just 2€!

Night Life:

The night life is more focused on bars than it is on clubs in the UK, so here are a few of my personal favourites and ones to avoid:

- La Natation- in my opinion the best bar in Grenoble. Cheap, especially during happy hours. You also get free charcuterie and nuts during happy hours.
- Bar Hasard- A cool bar, which serves good 'cocktails de jour'. A bit more expensive, but worth it.
- Les Copains d'abord- right next to La Natation and also very cheap, but with a lot of choice for beers. No free food though.
- Wallstreet Bar- great bar whose prices change every ninety seconds (meant to resemble the prices of shares in Wall Street). Really fun if you get lucky with the prices.
- K fée des jeux- a games bar, so a bit more expensive but it's fun.
- Le Tonneau de Diogène- probably the most popular bar in Grenoble.
- The bar at Rabot- one of the residences (Le Rabot) has their own bar. Cheapest bar in Grenoble, but only open two days a week and is quite a walk away from the city.
- Sun Valley- cool bar with a big area to dance and a good place to play pool.
- La Bobine- good bar where they play live music every week.
- Barberousse- could be seen as Grenoble's version of POP.
- Bukana- similar to Barberousse, but with fewer French students and more Erasmus.
- O'Callaghan's- An Irish pub which is a good place to watch sports.
- Le vocalise- a karaoke bar.
- Blind pig- A good bar with a classier 'ambiance'.
- The London Pub- in my opinion, the worst bar in Grenoble, but they do loads of advertising for Erasmus students, so loads of Erasmus students go there until they realise that it's rubbish.

There are many others as well, including some actual clubs, so you'll be able to find a bar that you love.