

# Erasmus Report

Université de Strasbourg 2020/2021, Renee Grant

## Introduction

As soon as I heard about this amazing opportunity in first year, I knew I needed to take part. Initially however I did want to go to Australia however after some prayer I felt like I needed to change my option to France. That is then when I had to narrow it down to where in France, I initially thought Paris, I live in London and thought it would be a swifter adjustment. However after speaking to Anca she explained that adjusting and finding friends in the big city can actually be way more difficult than a smaller city. So that is how I choose Strasbourg. Before I go into details on my experience, please consider that I spent majority of the year with harsh covid restrictions.

## Modules and Teaching

You choose your modules before you arrive at the university you can find modules and listings on the Strasbourg maths site. I didn't realise that in this university (and maybe all French universities) in the second year they decide if they want to specialise in Pure or Applied maths unknowingly, I decided to pick modules from both paths. I wouldn't recommend this as there could be clashes in your schedule. However, it worked out in my benefit as I didn't have a clash and was able to pick a computing module where I learnt how to code in C++ for the first time. The teaching style in France is very different you get 2 hours of lectures and 3 hours of TDs. TDs is classroom style teaching where you go over exam style questions with a professor. I loved TDs as its smaller teaching groups, and you get a lot of practises and help which really solidifies your learning. Considering this means you have 5 hours of teaching for each module. This can be extremely tiring especially when the course became completely online due to national lockdown however it also does limit the amount of independent work needed outside these timetabled hours. Exams are also different you get 2 exams throughout the semester for each module consisting of 10% each of the module grade and then at the end of the semester you get one week break and then you the final exam which equates to the rest of the module grade. I also preferred this style of examination as it ensured your following the course well and helped me to be more equipped for the end of semester exams.

## Accommodation

Strasbourg offers student accommodation through Crous and this is done when your filling out your enrolment online however I got the instructions misconstrued. So, in August I realised I wasn't going to get university accommodation through Crous. However, I was able to find a nice flat share via UniHomes. All the other websites were asking for a French guarantor however Unihomes only asked for a deposit my letting agent was called Colivys however I wouldn't recommend them as they had a lot of extra fees. My accommodation

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was lovely and I was with other university students one was also an Erasmus student and the other was an international student.

## Student Life and Entertainment

There's not much I can say on this topic as I spent a lot of time online. For the month and a bit that we weren't in lockdown I had a wail of a time. They have a lot of student nights; they have a strong Erasmus community so you can easily make friends if you're struggling to make friends with the non-international students. I would highly recommend making friends on the course as this will help with note taking and just making the lectures more enjoyable. The city is also beautiful and fun to explore as it's the perfect balance between urban and rural. I was also able to take a trip to Paris during the time I was there I did plan to visit more French cities but was restricted by covid but Strasbourg train station and airport does have good links to other cities in France and around Europe. However due to school being online I was able to visit my sister in Dubai (as I know some are more intrigued by the prospect of being able to travel whilst on their year abroad). For people who might feel concerned about racism or prejudice at Strasbourg I didn't experience any of that as black female everyone was really friendly and I felt very safe during my entire time in the city.

## Costs

Word of advice to picking your placement, I would recommend checking the price of flights/train to your home and the destination and even to countries that you may want to go whilst on your year abroad. I didn't expect the price to be as high from London to Strasbourg to be as high as I thought I could get cheap flights as its in France. French supermarkets are more expensive than the UK so there were times where I would take a 20-minute cycle to Germany to go to cheaper German supermarkets. I would also recommend hiring a velhop bike for the year or term as there's a student discount and will cut down the cost of using public transport as the city is very bike friendly and there's bike lanes nearly everywhere.

## Language

I went into the course with an A2 level French when B1 is recommended I thought at the time I was a B1 but once I did the OLS language test I wasn't at that level I did GCSE French and did the French Language course at Warwick for Second Year. However, considering my basic level of French course wise it was fine as mathematical terms and principals are the similar in French as to English and the use of mathematical symbols makes it easier. Nonetheless when it came to navigating around the city and talking to people it was difficult at times however majority of people did end up speaking English when I was really struggling.

## Final Thoughts

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It was a great year and an amazing experience I met some amazing people and learnt so much. There may be times where your homesick and not enjoying yourself as much but ultimately those are all worth it and when you look back on your time you will want to go back.

If you have any questions on going abroad, feel free to drop me an email at [renee.grant@hotmail.com](mailto:renee.grant@hotmail.com)