

## Erasmus Diary – Sorbonne University 2023/24

First of all, you should absolutely do a year abroad – I believe everybody should. It is an incredible, unique experience. So, I will try to give you the information to decide whether you want to spend your year in Paris.

### **Life in Paris**

I love Paris. It is a beautiful city with so much culture and history and as one of the major capitals of the world, there is always something going on. It is difficult to keep track of everything, so I would definitely recommend making friends with people who have already lived in Paris for a while because they can suggest things to do, especially things which are seasonal. You will not want to waste any time, the year passes by so quickly. It is also a great public transport hub for Western Europe with many interesting places a couple hours away on the train.

Don't worry too much about your French skills; you can easily get by in English if you needed to and, in fact, you will likely still speak more English than French because all of your international student friends will speak English perfectly, but not everyone will be able to speak any French. But it is a brilliant opportunity to improve your French dramatically. I had completed a level 5 module at Warwick the year before I went to Paris and I was very comfortable in the vast majority of interactions I had.

You will need to get the Navigo card ASAP for travel in Paris and the Ile-de-France region. It covers the Metro, buses and trains. The student one is around 365 euros for the year and is much, much cheaper than anything else. This is priority number one as soon as you get your student card.

The weather was not as good as I had expected. Yes it was a rather poor year for weather, which made it hard to motivate myself to leave my room, but many of my European friends said Paris was known for having poor weather. So, if you're hoping for a different climate to the UK, look further south.

Paris is often romanticised to the point where people are often disappointed once they actually arrive (just google "Paris Syndrome"), so I think visiting Paris for a few days to gauge whether you would like to live there is worth it, especially since we are so close in England.

### **University Life**

University life in France is completely different to the UK. French students tend to stay at their parents' home whilst at university, which means they already have their friends from school and don't feel the need to make new ones at university. There is a lack of emphasis on socialising and it feels like many people treat university like a job. This is a big culture shock as university life in the UK is almost primarily social. Therefore, making friends can be a bit difficult. For this reason, I would definitely recommend that you apply to live in a CROUS accommodation. They are student halls similar to what you lived in in first year and they are full of other international students who are willing to make friends. This worked out great for me in the second semester, but the first semester was a little slow since many people only do one semester in one place. The CROUS accommodation is also very cheap (probably about half of what you pay for accommodation at Warwick) and it could be even cheaper if you can work out how to get the CAF

reimbursement. The CAF is a bureaucratic nightmare (as is much of French life) which I gave up on, but if you want to give it a go, start it ASAP.

An alternative to try to make friends is societies. Sorbonne has a society dedicated to helping international students in Paris. They are called Parismus and in my experience their pub nights are very popular, however I found often you would meet people once and then you wouldn't see them again, especially because they could live on the other side of the city.

You should find the maths course at Sorbonne much easier than at Warwick. I would liken the 3rd year courses at Sorbonne to 2nd year modules at Warwick, except you go through the content a lot slower (2 hours of lectures per week per module instead of 3) and the 3 hours of TDs (support classes) per week basically give you the answers or methods you need. You should be able to pass the year with minimal effort, especially if the grade you get in Paris does not count towards your degree because Warwick only makes you take around 50 ECTS (100 CATS) instead of the normal 60 ECTS (120 CATS) load. Because of this, I managed to organise my timetable so that I only had classes 4 days a week and I would travel to different cities on this extra day off. Therefore you should have plenty of time to explore.

All the courses are in French unless you decide to do Master's level modules (for some reason), but I found that all the important words in French are pretty much the same as in English so you should be OK, even if you aren't too confident in French. Most of the teachers will try to speak to you in English as soon as they find out you're not French too.

Taking a French language module for 3 ECTS is nice way of meeting other international students in the Sciences campus since you will find most of your friends from your accommodation study in a different campus to you because they'll mostly be arts students.

Before you leave for Paris, it might be nice to get in touch with any other Warwick students who are going to Paris or, even better, going to Sorbonne to study maths too. It is really nice to have someone in the exact same situation as yourself and you can help each other settle in.

## **Random Notes**

To get your EU visa, you will need to give in your passport for a week or two, so make sure you plan around this when booking your holidays before you leave. I had a holiday to Athens booked about a week before I left for Paris and there were a couple of very nervous days wondering if my passport would return in time.

If you are moving into a CROUS accommodation, make sure you leave plenty of time to get to the office to collect your keys because they are only open 9-5. When you're leaving, you will need to book an inspection of your apartment before you leave and you can not rely on French people to be on time, so book your travel with plenty of time for things to go wrong. They likely won't, but it will cause you a lot of unnecessary stress.