

**Disclaimer:** Last year was hard! But there was a pandemic – and I’m sure some of the challenges I faced abroad are a reflection of those that students felt at home. Despite, (many!) tough times, particularly throughout the lockdowns and beginning of my stay, living abroad was perhaps the best experience of my life. I felt challenged in a way that I never had before, and would like to think I came back more assured of myself, my capabilities and my priorities. And so, I can’t recommend taking a year abroad enough!

In many ways the last academic year was one of the hardest years of my life, but with the challenge came the best rewards. As students at university level, we get the opportunity to dive deeply into our subject. Including a year abroad in your studies, gives you the opportunity to instead develop breadth, enriching your perspectives and experiences.

### **Making Friends**

When I arrived in Paris, I knew no-one in the city – big mistake! Having a good support group is everything, especially when stepping into a challenging experience.

As a tip – if you’re not a language student you’re probably heading out alone, so make sure to meet the Warwick language students also heading out before you go, this way you’ll automatically have a support bubble!

However, do make sure to expand your circle. It’s easy to make friends with other international students, but if you really want (what I believe to be) the “true” experience, you need to make friends with people from the country and city.

Last year was quite a particular case and many of us turned to social media on a bizarre search for friendships, hopefully this year it will be easier to make local friends – be confident, meet the people on your course, go to society events, get involved!

As a starter, there are some international student societies in Paris, for example @esnparis can be found on Instagram. Another, great way to meet people and improve your French is to ask the university for a French correspondent.

### **Things to do in Paris**

There is no shortage of things to do in Paris!

For the French student experience, you can’t go wrong with picnics at Buttes-Chaumont or Parc Monceau, or a bottle of wine by the seine at Pont Neuf, at the green by Invalides (one of my favourite spots!) or Canal St Martin.

My favourite museum in Paris has got to be the Orangerie for its gorgeous Monets, but also up there is Musée d’Orsay and, of course, the Louvre.

For something a bit more quirky, 59 Rue Rivioli (galleries where you can watch the artists work), Deyrolle (a taxidermy shop in the 6<sup>th</sup>!) and Lavomatic (a speakeasy with a Laundromat front) are all absolute must-visits!

Finally, some food recommendations: Scoop me a Cookie (you won’t regret!), L’as du Fallafel (for a quick bite in the Marais), Bouillon Chartier (a reasonably priced, but gorgeous French bistro) and Éclair de Genie (for the most extravagant eclairs!).

I'll leave the rest of the city's discovery to you!

### **Administration**

I'm not going to sugar-coat it – French bureaucracy can be somewhat of a nightmare...

My best advice would be to minimise the amount you need. For example, instead of setting up a French bank account if you don't need to, opt for Monzo, Starling or Revolut.

For accommodation I can't recommend Crous enough – it offers government subsidised housing for students. This way not only can you make friends with students in the building, but you'll get central accommodation at an incredibly reasonable price.

For transport – the Carte Navigo is a must. I would recommend the annual student pass, it comes in at around £300 and allows unlimited travel on the metro, RER and bus within Ile de France. If you're a confident cyclist, a Vélib pass is a great purchase too. Lime scooters are also another option to whizz around the city!

### **Lectures and TDs**

Warning: expect 30-hour weeks and longer terms!

Lectures are generally 2 hours, with TDs (sort of smaller tutorial groups) at 3 hours long. The maths course at the Sorbonne is pretty intense!

I was under the false implication that I probably wouldn't find the course harder than I find it at Warwick, and was quickly proven very wrong!

Don't let this put you off though – I think the year abroad is an invaluable experience and it was certainly interesting to see how maths is taught across the channel. The experience allows you to challenge yourself to adapt to a different way of learning and thinking.

(But, I do think it's important to be warned that if academic grades are the most important thing to you, a year abroad may not be right for you. Everyone will manage differently, but I think it is common to see a slip in grades, at least in the first semester. However, what you gain in experience – in my opinion – is a very worthy trade off!)

Good Luck! And feel free to reach out with any questions!

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