

**Exchange university**

Eindhoven University of Technology

Degree programme

Architecture, Building and Planning

Bikes, bikes and more bikes

Before departure

I have decided to go for an exchange in order to broaden my perspective as a future Urban Designer and learn how Urban Planning is executed in another European context. I was especially interested in the Dutch planning practices, therefore I chose TU Eindhoven as my destination University. As an EU citizen I was not obliged to perform any extensive preparations for the exchange, such as extra vaccinations or visa application. The IELTS exam that I took in order to apply for my master degree was valid for 2 years, so I managed to use it for my exchange application as well.

Upon arrival

I have arrived in August, one week before the beginning of the studies. Some introduction events have already taken place, but I managed to make it for the main ones, such as campus tour with a field game and meet-up event in the local student bar for all the incoming students. The campus tour focused not only on the physical environment of the University, but also on the possibilities for spending free time and extra activities. The field game took place together with the campus tour. The tour was performed in groups with one guide per group and each team had to perform tasks in order to collect points. Later, the team that collected the most points received extra vouchers for drinks in the student bar. The game and tour allowed me to break the ice and enter the socialising space a bit more confidently, so the meet-up event in the evening went smooth and I managed to get to know a lot of fellow Erasmus students.

Financials

During my exchange, I have received the Erasmus scholarship, which was around 385 euros a month. Of course, this was not enough to cover all my expenses, so I was supporting myself with money I have saved up before the exchange. Life expenses in the Netherlands ended up being comparable to these in Sweden. Some costs are slightly lower (like food and going out), but some are slightly higher (like the cost of public transport). I was able to survive a month with 800-850 euros, including all the leisure activities, which was very similar to my average month expenses in Stockholm. My tip to save up is to avoid using public transport and get a bike. There are companies that rent bikes to students with a monthly fee of 15 euros, which includes the bike service whenever necessary. A lot of Erasmus students from my year used it and were happy with it.

Accommodation

Unfortunately, finding an accommodation was one of the most stressful aspects of my exchange. The university is collaborating with Vestide, a housing agency that owns and rents all the student apartments in Eindhoven (similar to SSSB in Stockholm). As an exchange student one is guaranteed to receive a housing offer from Vestide, and I received mine mid-June, two months before the beginning of my exchange. The price for a room in a shared flat usually ranges between 400 and 500 euros, but I've heard of some lucky students paying only 290 for their accommodation. In my year, in order to

secure the offer one had to accept it within a short time of receiving it and pay upfront for the whole stay of 6 months. The transfer had to be made within the 10 days from receiving the offer. I couldn't make the payment at such short notice, so I decided to search for housing in private market and I regretted it a lot later on. During my exchange there was a housing shortage and finding a flat was extremely difficult. Some students were forced to spend their entire exchange in various Airbnb's and hotels. I managed to find a room eventually, but it was far away from the University. It required me to commute 1h on train every day. Even though I don't consider the offer of the agency to be moral or student friendly, I'd recommend accepting it, simply out of lack of better options. Neither the university nor Vestide are keen on assisting students in their room-hunt beyond that one time offer, so accepting it will save up a lot of time, stress and money in a long run.

University and studies

TuE is a quite large University with a very spread campus. Every department has its own building and in between there are many other facilities such as cafes, restaurants, bars, a grocery store, an artificial pond and designated space for temporary exhibitions and installations. I studied most of my courses in two buildings: Vertigo, the Built Environment building and Atlas, the main building of the campus. I took all of my courses in English. For those interested in learning Dutch, the University was offering Dutch classes. My regular school day consisted of lectures, classes and project work. Depending on a subject, they either took place in large lecturing rooms or smaller project studios. At TuE, students have a lot freedom in choosing their subjects, so oftentimes one meets a completely new group of people on each course.

Courses

I study Sustainable Urban Planning and Design at KTH and TU/e did not offer a program that would be exactly aligned with my program's curriculum. However, the Architecture, Building and Planning program, which I got enrolled to, offered enough subjects with the theme of Urban Design and Planning to collect 30 ECTS points in one semester. Therefore, I chose these subjects:

7QX5Mo Seminar Urbanism and Architecture (5 ECTS)

7QW6Mo Architectural and Urban Theory (5 ECTS)

7QW1Mo M1 Project Urbanism (10 ECTS)

7XX9Mo Urban trends and strategies (5 ECTS)

7QX8Mo Urban Form (5 ECTS)

It is worth noting, that despite some subjects having the same number of ECTS points, they may vary in workload. For example, Architectural and Urban Theory was one of the heaviest subjects I took and it was worth only 5 ECTS points. In comparison, Urban Form course, also worth 5 ECTS points, consisted of writing only one report as a group. Therefore, before selecting the subjects, I recommend checking not only how many ECTS they are worth, but also how many lectures/supervisions a week are allocated to them on the schedule.

City and country

Eindhoven is a medium/small size city in the South of the Netherlands. It is known as the "brain port" of the country, since it is a home to many educational institutions and businesses. Local people seem very friendly, open and curious of the newcomers. One cultural shock I've had in the university environment was the omnipresence of beer. A couple of times we celebrated project milestones with our teachers, by going out for a drink, so the atmosphere is very casual and drinking is a big part of social life here.

Leisure and social activities

The University offers many options for leisure such as team/individual sports, well priced gym pass, dance class etc. It also organizes events, which help students socialize. During my stay, there were exhibitions in the campus as a part of Dutch Design Week and a few parties organized by the University. Apart from the officially organized activities, I have spent a lot of my time with fellow Erasmus students. I connected with a group of friends who were interested in exploring other Dutch cities. The Netherlands is a relatively small country, so every major Dutch city (and parts of Belgium and Germany) are easily reachable with a 1-2h train ride from Eindhoven. This allowed us to frequently organize weekend trips to places such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Nijmegen, Antwerp and plenty more.

Sustainability

Bikes, bikes and more bikes! Eindhoven was full of bike paths, and so was the TU/E campus. The quickest, most efficient and most sustainable way to travel is by bike. Moreover, the university strives to reduce waste by encouraging staff and students to reuse cups in vending machines or promoting refillable water bottles, which can be refilled at designated water tap points in the campus. Apart from practical improvements, the university also puts emphasis on sustainability and climate awareness in its education. These concepts are a common theme in a lot of subjects that I have taken during my exchange.

Other recommendations and observations

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