

## **A very enjoyable and instructive experience, academically but most of all on a personal level.**

I applied for exchange studies because living and studying abroad for a semester is something which I simply find extremely interesting and exciting. My choice of destination, Lisbon, was made quite spontaneously. I wanted to go to southern Europe and Portugal is a country I haven't been to and I don't know too much about. My expectations were not too well defined, I just had a general idea of having a lot of fun, learning about what a life abroad could be like and getting to know people from all over the world. As for preparations there weren't too many requirements, I simply had to make sure all the necessary documents were signed and take a language test in Portuguese.

I arrived in Lisbon about 2 weeks before the start of my courses. In retrospect it might have been a bit early since I didn't really know anyone or anything specific to do, however it was a great chance to get accustomed to my new home. However after about a week there were a lot of activities planned by the Erasmus-group of students at the university in Lisbon. This was very enjoyable and it was great getting to know some people from the courses I was taking. They also took us on a couple of tours and activities around the city, which was really nice.

As for my financial situation I did not receive any scholarships from KTH, but as there weren't any additional fees to pay at my receiving university I don't think it would have been necessary. Lisbon was not quite as expensive as Stockholm but nonetheless much more expensive than I expected. I did however live a lifestyle which was a lot more active than my usual life in Sweden, which created additional expenses. My best tip for exchange students going to Lisbon is to have as many meals as possible in the school canteen. Although it might not be a gourmet restaurant, there are always nutritious meals for 2.8 € and great company. I also advise students to find out about the discounts which are offered to students.

I found my accommodation through a page called Spotahome, which was a very simple and effective process. I got a room in an apartment in central Lisbon, a perfect location close at walking distance to basically any part of the city, including the school. The room was in great condition except for the fact that the window basically didn't let in any light since there was a brick wall about half a meter away. The university did also offer us some help finding accommodation but by then I had already found a place.

The university was probably the biggest difference from Sweden. The campus was very pretty and everyone was very nice and helpful but the manner of education as well as the infrastructure wasn't really what I expected. As for the campus there was a great lack of plug-ins for charging devices, which caused a moment of stress which really affected my studying. There was also no air conditioning, which caused an even bigger challenge since it got very hot by the second half of the semester. The education, which was in English, was extremely theoretical compared to KTH. Mandatory exams which require memorization of a lot of information was something which caught me off guard. I'm used to a lot more practical exercises. Honestly I think the theoretical aspect of Técnico is very outdated and the structure of the courses makes students memorize an unreasonable amount of terms and concepts rather than actually learning to use them as we are expected to do in our careers.

My choice of courses was pretty straightforward since the amount of courses with a suitable corresponding one at my receiving university was pretty limited. The courses I read covered a broad range of fields within machine learning and computer science, which was very interesting. I had two courses regarding the analysis and processing of sound/images. Then

I had two other, quite practical courses, about parallel computing and how to design autonomous agents. Although these courses are very practical I felt like the theoretical aspect was way too extensive, as mentioned. Finally I had a course about different algorithms and how to program these, I enjoyed this course a lot. The transfer of credits will simply be made by taking the amount of credits at my receiving university as credits in my home university, although the courses are worth less credits at my receiving university.

Lisbon was a wonderful city to live in. The people were very nice and it is truly a beautiful place. I feel like the cultural differences were not too tangible except for the organization. In Sweden I'm used to everything being very organized and effective, such as public transport and stores. The lines were very long and, although the cashiers were doing a very good job, the system implemented in grocery stores was overall very ineffective and time consuming for us customers.

In my spare time I enjoyed taking walks through the city, going to different events as well as visiting some of the nice beaches around Lisbon. Most of all I enjoyed spending time with my friends. I also played some football and padel which was very nice, especially at the pitches on campus. This was a very nice thing as they were accessible for everyone and very easy to rent for a couple of hours. ESN and ELL were two organizations who put together a lot of very nice activities for students from all universities across Lisbon, which was a great way to get to know people from other universities.

I would not say my lifestyle in Lisbon was very sustainable, unfortunately. Although I wouldn't say my receiving university was unsustainable there weren't too many initiatives being taken towards a more sustainable environment. As for myself, I traveled a lot by flight, which is very unsustainable. However I saw this as an opportunity to travel and explore a new part of the world, which I don't do too often. I also ate a lot of meat because I was often too busy to cook something or to put too much thought into my meals. Therefore, I usually ended up eating something simple which in most cases contained meat instead of a vegetarian option, which I usually try to choose.

I feel like the support you have given me has been very helpful in the organization of my exchange, which is usually not my strongest side. Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity, I appreciate it a lot!