

**Exchange university**

Instituto Superior Técnico (IST)

Degree programme

Vehicle Engineering (Aerospace at IST)

Sunshine, trams and neural networks

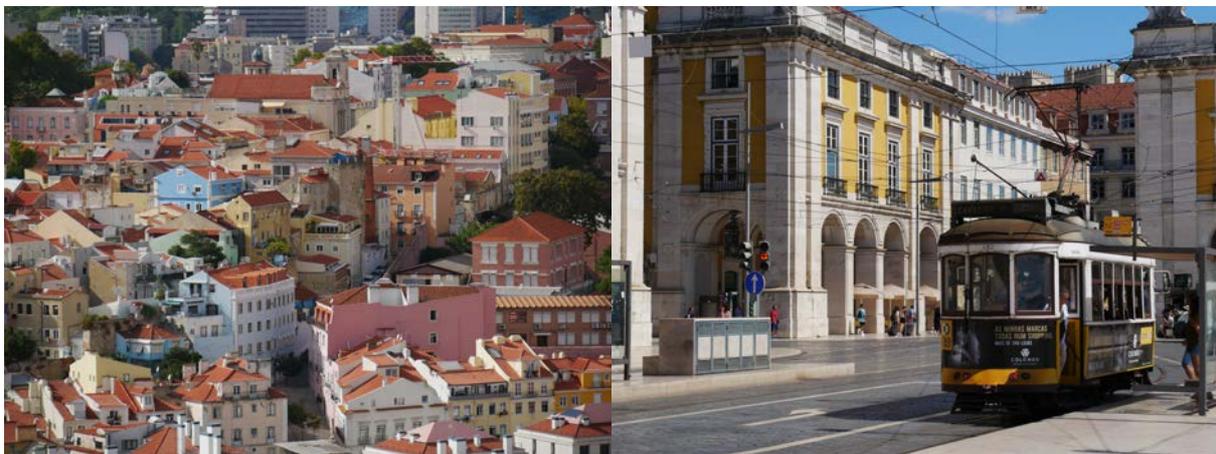
I am writing this a few months after my return home with the initial ecstasy slightly faded. However, I still feel like I cannot praise Lisbon and the rest of Portugal enough. Below follows my thoughts and reflections regarding my exchange at Técnico, as the Portuguese people call it.

Before departure

Due to an earlier exchange in Singapore, I was yearning for more international experiences and turned to the available exchange positions. Since I wanted to explore new parts of Europe and at the same time enjoy sunshine and the possibility to surf, Lisbon was the perfect place. After receiving the acceptance letter I could start the preparation, which like always included some paperwork. This time it was mainly related to the Erasmus scholarship and registration of courses. Make sure to do this in time for a stress-free application process. With all the paperwork done and a flight ticket in hand, I could enjoy the last weeks of the Swedish summer before departing to the southwestern corner of Europe.

Upon arrival

I arrived one week ahead of the Orientation Week, which is the welcome week organized by the university. I thought this would be plenty of time to search for an accommodation. I was wrong. With the increasing amount of students and tourists seeking their way to Lisbon, accommodation is both limited and fairly expensive considering the standard of housing. By pure chance, the landlady hosting my Airbnb was just about to change her guesthouse from short stay to student housing, allowing me to stay in the room I was already staying in. I do not recommend this approach so search for accommodation before departure. With the housing settled I joined all the events organized by the university as well as the organizations Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and Erasmus Life Lisboa (ELL). These events are good in the start of the semester to meet new people and get some useful information about the city.



Financials

Thanks to the Erasmus and CSN scholarship I had enough money to eat well and enjoy some traveling. On average I would say that food and activities are approximately half the cost of Swedish prices. This made eating out and doing activities more accessible and pleasurable. Example of costs:

- Rent (including bills): €400
- Bottle of wine at supermarket: €2 – €10
- Espresso style coffee: less than €1
- Cinema ticket: €7 (iMax €11)

Accommodation

Like mentioned above I was lucky to find accommodation so effortlessly. The flat was relatively newly refurbished and equipped with IKEA furniture. We were 10 people in the flat with our private rooms, three shared bathrooms and a large kitchen. Cleaning twice a week was included which made our apartment a lot cleaner compared to other ones I visited. Having a private room in a shared flat gave a good combination of privacy and social environment. Make sure to get a heater for the winter since the insulation in the old buildings are really poor!

University and studies

Técnico is located in the north part of the city with a campus in the shape of a shield. The school has over 10,000 students from a wide range of engineering programmes. It is Portugal's highest ranked university and considered the most prestigious school of engineering in the country. Compared to KTH, I would say that the level is slightly easier. The exams are less extensive but there are usually projects that can be quite time consuming. The deadlines are towards the end of the semester so take the opportunity to travel in the beginning of your stay. All of my courses were in English but some of the professors had the tendencies to throw in some Portuguese from time to time. Most of the time they would give a summary in English afterwards however. The lectures are usually two hours long without a break but the tutorials and labs are similar to the ones at KTH.



Courses

As a Vehicle Engineering student you can choose courses from Naval, Mathematics and Aerospace according to the agreement between KTH and IST. Since I have specialized within systems and control, the Aerospace programme had the most relevant courses for me. I had some extra credits from my years at KTH, so I decided to only have four courses instead of five, which is otherwise fulltime studying (30 ECTS). I had the courses listed below.

- Computer Control, 6 ECTS
- Intelligent Systems, 6 ECTS
- Sensors and Systems, 6 ECTS
- Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology Transfer, 6 ECTS

City and country

There is a Portuguese word spelled *Saudade*. Its meaning could be described as “*a deep emotional state of nostalgic or profound melancholic longing for an absent something*”. It describes my feelings for Lisbon and Portugal pretty well when thinking back of my exchange. The city is beautiful with its narrow streets and uniquely tiled buildings. The food is delicious and the people welcome you happily to enjoy the culture they are rightly proud of. The possibility to surf the Atlantic waves in the autumn sunshine was for me irreplaceable.



Leisure and social activities

The mentioned organizations (ESN and ELL) arrange several events and trips throughout the semester. This includes walking tours, Champions League games, kayaking and longer weekend-trips. There is a lively nightlife with Bairro Alto being a popular place to start. It is a small district with narrow streets packed with over 200 bars. There are also a lot of clubs (as well as underground clubs) throughout the city. Plenty of traditional culture can also be experienced with the Portuguese music of *Fado* being a favourite. With the city being located close to the ocean means that there are plenty of seaside activities to do as well.

Other recommendations and observations

Some places I really recommend visiting:

- Porto – City in the north of Portugal



- Nazaré – The world’s biggest waves (over 30 m) are created here thanks to the shape of the reef structure.



- Azores – Archipelago out in the Atlantic ocean

