

**Exchange university**

Instituto Superior Técnico, Lisbon, Portugal

Degree programme

Integrated Master Degree in Environmental Engineering

Mais um semestre, por favor?! (One more semester, please?)

Before departure

I applied for a semester exchange because, as an international student, I feel like I owe it to myself to experience what Europe has to offer at its' fullest. This is also the reason why I wanted to also try 'go as far away' from Stockholm as much as I can, geographically and culturally, but still trying to be within Europe. Portugal offered such a great choice when it comes to all of these considerations I set for myself. One of the main advantage of going to Lisbon is its warm weather and the friendly culture. However, on top of that, there are great selection of renowned universities with world class teaching qualities. It was therefore, my top choice as the place I want to 'live and study' for half a year!

Upon arrival

Before arrival, it is crucial that you find out as much information as possible about the university. A great place for doing so is the Exchange meet-up that is organised by KTH prior to the summer break. This is where you get to meet with people who are also going on the same exchange as you, as well as those who came back from the exchange that you did, and those who are exchanging from the university you are going to. It is a great place to exchange information and shoot queries of what you might find confusing.

It is also crucial to ask about how the university system works there. Migrating your working knowledge from Swedish 'Canvas' system to Portuguese 'Fenix' system can be confusing and not easy to tackle with. Make sure to make some contact with your peers so you can at least be on the same boat together. Also, be prepared. Nothing will work out as planned. Especially when you are only there for one semester. Be prepared to change some courses or modules. Best recommendation I could give you is to come up with Plan B, C, D, and so on. But hey, you will have a great time! Trust me ☺ It's the adventures and the journey that counts right?!

Financials

Erasmus + definitely helps in aiding with finances. One of the advantages in living in Lisbon is that it can be cheap for living expenses. However, also keep in mind that like many capital cities around the world. There are a variety of choices on offer. You could find some restaurants that are as expensive as the ones in Stockholm, and some that are very cheap. Always gauge your spending. It can be easy to overspend especially when you pre-perceived that everything is cheap and wonderful. Best way to do so is to set a daily budget, then work around that. If you ended up spending more on day 1, then be prepared to live less on day 2 and 3. Or if you want to splurge on day 4, make sure to save up on day 1-3. If you know what I mean :P

Accommodation

Accommodation in Lisbon is notorious for being hard to find, on par with that in Stockholm. However, unlike Stockholm, it is a lot less organised, and scam are very prone and common. Beware and be careful before you make any payments. Make sure to check, double-check, and triple-check. It was common to hear stories of people getting scammed, especially among students. Best way to do this is to arrive at 1-2 weeks prior to your university start. Perhaps you can scout the places out yourself through Facebook groups or university chat forums. Check the place out yourself, and make sure that it is legit enough before putting your money down.

It is great to be close to university, however, Lisbon is well connected, so don't be discouraged to look outside of university zones too.

University and studies

The IST campus is compact, and it's situated on a 'hill' right in the city. It is convenient to travel to and from! The university itself, at first, can be quite confusing. Keep in mind that the "international office" and the staffers there are your best to-go-to friends when you have any problems! They know exactly who you should contact and what you can do to solve your problems.

The studies can be quite demanding. Unlike Sweden, Portuguese classes are more theory based and not so much practical. So be prepared for some long hours. But overall, I found it to be manageable, and it was one experience I wouldn't trade for anything else.

Courses

There are many courses that are on offer! Make sure to thoroughly go through it and study it properly. Every degree offers different courses, and it is best that you take couple of days to familiarise yourself with what they have to offer. There are no short-cuts to this. You just have to sit down and invest your time in getting yourself used to their system.

City and country

AMAZING. All I could say for myself. The people, the city, the culture, the country. It was definitely one of the best experiences for me living in Europe. Getting to know the people there and traveling around the country. It definitely is a must.

Leisure and social activities

Lisbon offers a great variety of leisure and social activities! From surfing to hiking, from museums to flea market. Make sure to follow Facebook pages that involve cultural spots. There will always be something happening every weekend, that I guaranteed!