

The dark side of being an exchange student

Just to clarify: this article is not about change anyone's mind about going to Erasmus, because that's the BEST THING you can do in University! I would recommend every single student to live with this opportunity, this is why first I'm gonna start by collecting the advantages of it:

1. You learn to be more independent – Before I came to Milan I've never lived on my own. Here, I have to cook for myself, do houseworks, groceries, shopping etc. Being in an unfamiliar city makes all these things even harder and challenging, but at the end you find yourself being better and better at cooking, finding the best offers in shops or managing your time effectively and there is no better feeling than that.
2. Learning a new language or developing one you've already learned – Well, I don't really have to explain this point. It's obvious. I started to attend Italian language course, but also learned some other new words from international students and use the English every day.
3. Experiencing your studies from another point of view – Every university has a different method of study which doesn't mean that one is better than the other. It means, that if you're lucky enough, you'll get some extra knowledge to your studies.
4. It's useful for your future career – You can write it in your CV or motivation letter, mention it in a job interview etc.
5. Getting to know new cultures and making international friendships
6. Travelling – It's true that during the week you have to focus on School, but sometimes you can allow yourself to make a short trip during the weekends or in the breaks. I've already seen a lot of beautiful cities in Italy since I'm here.

I could continue this list indefinitely, but the thing is that deep down I think everyone knows that it would be a huge mistake to miss out a scholarship like this. However, most of the returned exchange students only report about the bright side. In order to be prepared, you also need to know the drawbacks, because it's not all about endless laughs and fun. You have to

deal with the difficulties all by yourself and I'm almost sure you'll have at least a bit of homesickness. When I arrived to Milan, I was scared: I didn't know anybody and I didn't know the city. But I was also excited about the first week in School and meeting with other Erasmus students so I didn't have enough time to freak out. It wasn't until my first three weeks were over. And then, I find myself being lonely, lost in the city and having troubles. I spent only one week at home between the summer and the Erasmus so I missed my home, my family and my friends. I missed the feeling of being secure and safe and missed having somebody to trust and rely on. I have to admit, I fought against these feelings a lot, but fortunately not for too long. I also felt like I failed in being intergrated eventhough I had so many people around me and I hung out with them a lot - I felt like an outsider. I was totally lost in School, didn't know what the teachers expected from me and how to do the things I've never done before or how to fit into a group of people who already knew eachother for one year. I hated being alone in my room. I didn't know who to ask for help. In additional, I had some unserious health issues and I needed to find a doctor. I was fed up beeing not able to communicate in places like supermarkets, shops or restaurants since in Milan a lot of people doesn't speak English. I talked about these feelings with my family and my friend which helped me a lot. Two friends of mine visited me at the end of October and my family suprised me on my Birthday which was alos helpful. Everyone kept telling me how lucky I am to study Fashion in Milan. I know they were right and I knew I had to pull out myself from this condition, because I only have one semester here. I need to enjoy every moment. I realized I was getting to be too negative and I complained too much when the truth is that I'm SO SO SO LUCKY to have an opportunity like this. I love Milan and I already know that at the end of Feburary, I'm gonna be super sad about leaving the place what I call my second home.

If you're an exchange student or you'll be one and have the same difficulties as me, I hope this article will open your eyes and manage to change your attitude. I recommend you to be more cool and not overthink everything. Enjoy what you have now, otherwise you're gonna regret once it's over.



This is how happy I am now 😊