My Erasmus semester abroad
In Ljubljana, Slovenia

By Eva Marie Kircher
Preparation

The organization of a semester abroad requires some time and effort. At least half a year, better one year, of preparation time is suggested. The application for the internal exchange program needed to be submitted already in the end of the year before our semester abroad. In this process you get nominated by your faculty and can then apply online at the university of Ljubljana till middle of May. There, you need to submit an English certificate, a transcript of records and the learning agreement which you, in advance, prepare with your coordinator. Around June you will then receive your acceptance from the university. Applying for the Erasmus grant is due to middle of February for the following academic year.

Since my studies are related to design and art, I also had to prepare a portfolio to showcase my work and skills where my coordinator in Bremen gave me support and feedback for.

For the first week I booked myself a hostel, so I would have time to search for an accommodation locally.

Getting to Ljubljana, depending on when you book, is quite affordable. For being so cheap and fast (around 40 Euro with a duration of 1,5 hours) I booked myself a flight from Berlin to Ljubljana. However, going by train and bus is, on the one hand, more environmental and comparable in terms of price. Over Trainline.com or Sparpreisfinder Europa (db.de) you can find the best and cheapest connection.
Accommodation

When applying online for the university of Ljubljana, you get to choose if you want to apply for a room in the dormitories or search for a private accommodation on your own. Though I decided for private accommodation, I would recommend applying for a dormitory room since the rental situation has become more and more difficult in the recent years. A room in the dormitory is usually shared and you pay around 120 to 200 euro. You are then hosted in one of the dormitories in Rožna Dolina, the students dormitory district, or in the Bežigrad district. In my opinion, it is a good way getting to know other students and getting involved in Erasmus life. But if you attach more importance to privacy and tranquillity, searching for a private accommodation is probably more suitable for you.

For searching for a private accommodation, the university provides you with several websites, you can search on.

In advance, I did look on a few websites, given out by the university but found it difficult to look for a room or an apartment without having any knowledge about the surroundings or the possibility to visit the place you’re renting. So, I decided to book myself a hostel for the first week and then search on site when I arrive. This turned out to be more complicated than expected. As already mentioned, the university provides you with several websites for finding a room. Furthermore, searching in the Erasmus Facebook group is an option. You can also visit the ESN international office, so they help you searching online. Though there are multiple options and opportunities the offers are rapidly taken, and the prices differ, depending on location and quality of the apartments and rooms. Especially in the beginning of the semester, when students are coming back to town and new ones arriving, the housing market is very crowded. For a private accommodation you should calculate approximately 200 to 400 euro. After a few days though, my friend and I were lucky and found a well-located and affordable apartment near the train station.
Academics

The situation of my study colleague and I was kind of unusual. We were the first two exchange students coming from our university in Bremen, which is a university of fine arts, to the university of Ljubljana, where we were then enrolled at the faculty of electrical engineering. That was the first thing which was a bit confusing for us since the subjects offered for exchange students in English were intended for the field of electrical engineering. In the study program “Multimedia” which we wanted to participate in, it was not certain which courses and projects would be carried out in English and would be interesting for us. So, we prepared a provisional learning agreement with our coordinator from Bremen before leaving for Ljubljana and planned on adjusting it with our contact person, according to the information we would receive there.

A few days after our arrival we arranged a meeting with our contact person Andrej Kos at the faculty to talk about our courses and projects for the next semester. It turned out that the Multimedia study program was carried out in a separate department hosted by the faculty, namely the LTFE (Laboratory for Telekommunication) and LMMFE (Laboratory for Multimedia).

Several opportunities and options were offered to us. From participating in projects, carried out by the LTFE and LMMFE, collaborating with big companies and organizations (like Telekom Slovenije) over discovering the course offered by the faculty of arts, which I shall come back to it later, to creating and developing our very own projects, seizing and benefitting from the support, knowledge and
equipment from the laboratory. The multimedia department contains multiple laboratories like the EditLab, MakerLab, StudioLab or FabLab. For a few of those we got a permission to enter and use the software, working places and equipment provided. The program offers a broad spectrum of education and practice and I suggest you visit the website of the study program Multimedia and of the Laboratory.

http://www.multimedija.info/eng/
https://ltfe.org/en/

It took me some time and asking around to decide on what I wanted to spend my semester with but after a few weeks I had my courses and projects figured out. I took part in some practice work revolving around studio and recording technology where I was able to learn about and work with the equipment. Furthermore, I seized the opportunity to work on a bigger international project, called ‘kulTura’, which was scheduled for a time period of 4 year, supported and founded by the Interreg Slovenia-Hungary. It was a great experience to work in a team, consisting of both students and graduates, and being involved in the process of creating and developing a “real-life” project. Apart from people from the laboratory and the faculty of electrical engineering, Andrej Kos also introduced us to the head of the faculty of fine arts which had already awoken my interest. They provide a study program called “Video and New Media” which contains similar contents like my study program. I visited their department, talked to a few professors and was then able to participate in a course called “video and postproduction”. In the framework of this course I could work on an own project, the development of an audio-visual film portrait, and did benefit from the support, feedback and technical methods taught there.
Everyday life / Leisure Time

Living and Leisure Time

Ljubljana has a lot to offer for spending your free time. For being a cultural capital, there are many museums and galleries spread out through town. The picturesque city centre hosts many little arts and craft shops, nice cafes, bars and restaurants and runs along the Ljubljanica, the river flowing through Ljubljana.

But I suggest you make yourself a picture. The website visitljubljana.com, for example, provides you with ideas and inspirations for your stay there. 😊

The costs for living are a bit lower than in my home country Germany. Eating out is more affordable and a coffee or a beer cost around 1 or 2 euro.

For partying there several opportunities in Ljubljana. Throughout the semester you get invited to many Erasmus parties and events. To me, the local party community and the subcultural scene of Ljubljana was more appealing. K4 is the common techno club in town. Most of the times we visited "Metelkova mesto" (pictures and more information below) which is an occupied building complex and THE place for subcultural events and parties. Especially in the summer time, the place is crowded with people of all ages, chilling and getting together outside.
“Metelkova mesto” is an occupied building complex, transformed into an alternative cultural centre for subcultural events, arts, performances and parties all throughout the week. Especially on Friday evening the place is crowded and in every club there is an event happening.

On their website [http://www.metelkovamesto.org/](http://www.metelkovamesto.org/) you can find their event schedule.

The old bicycle factory “Rog” is the second location of that kind in Ljubljana. It got occupied as well and serves, like Metelkova, as a space for subcultural events and an alternative way of life.

Their website: [http://atrog.org](http://atrog.org)
Students meal system

One great benefit of studying in Ljubljana is the student meal system Študentska prehrana. Using your handy and your Slovene sim card, which you are provided with by the ESN office, you get as many coupons as there are working days in the month. With every coupon you can get a subsidized meal in one of the many participating gastronomic businesses in town and around. From around 11 till 21 o’clock you then get a full meal, including soup, salad, main dish and a dessert for around 1 to 4 euro. At some places, you can even get food for free.
A dim evening at the Ljubljanica, the river flowing through Ljubljana’s city center – October 2018

Travelling around

For Slovenia being such a small country, it is easy and affordable to get around. You can either take a bus for around 10 to 15 euro, go by train or rent a car to explore the country, its lakes, slaps and villages or even visit the surrounding countries like Hungary, Italy or Austria for the weekend.

Winter impressions from Triglav National parc – January 2019
Sports and outdoor activities

In Ljubljana, surrounded by hills, mountains and woods, the people enjoy spending time in nature. You can either go for a walk through Tivoli parc, the Golovec forest or walk up to the castle in the afternoon and see the sunset from up there.

For students, there is a wide range of sports offered. You can attend multiple free sport courses at the sports hall of Rožna Dolina or register for using the free gym. The beautiful nature surrounding of Ljubljana makes jogging, taking walks or biking attractive outdoor sport possibilities.
Transportation

For riding the bus, you can get yourself an Urbana card, on which you can store money for single ride tickets or a monthly bus ticket on. A single ride costs 1,20 Euro and a month student ticket around 20 Euro, which you can apply for with a form from the university. Another opportunity is the city bike system for which you can register online for. Spread throughout the city are bicycle stations where you can borrow a bike for one hour for free. For the initial period of your stay it is a nice way to move around but you should be quite flexible in time because it happens frequently that a station is either empty or full, in which case you can’t lock your bike there and then need to search for the next station. For everyday life usage it takes some planning. If you enjoy riding the bike on a regular basis you can easily and cheaply get yourself a bike for the Erasmus semester which I did as well. It is, in my opinion, the best way of transportation for Ljubljana, since the town is so small, and you are most flexible to get around. You can either search in the Erasmus groups, where are loads of offers usually, or on bolha.com, a Slovene website where you can find second-hand goods. I found my bike as well. The prices vary between 30 to 70 Euro, depending on quality and current demand.
Departure

One day before leaving the faculty we had to visit the international office to sign some papers for our home university and pick up the final learning agreement. The transcript of records gets either handed out to you directly or sent to your coordinator when all grades are entered.

For sending back extra luggage, we used Eurosender and were very satisfied with their service. You pay around 15 to 30 Euro, depending on the weight of your package which is very cheap compared to other companies and they even pick up the package from your home.
Conclusion

My semester abroad in Ljubljana was all together an interesting, exciting and formative experience for me. It gave me a new perspective of the world around me, as well as of myself. My time there really awoke my interest in the less-popular eastern part of Europe and the Balkan states. Spending some time abroad, if it is for the purpose of studying or just travelling, comes with many benefits, both for your personal development and broadening your horizon.

In conclusion I would say, if for studying or just for holidays, Ljubljana and Slovenia in general is definitely worth a visit!😊