



Università degli studi di Parma

2016-2017

preparation
exchange/placement application process
I applied for Rome as my first choice, because I always wanted to travel to Italy since I never had been there. Unfortunately I was not selected and send to my second choice: Università degli studi di Parma. Which I was really happy about in the end, because I had the best time of my life.
counselling/support at home university
University Utrecht was perfect in helping me going to Italy. Because of the slow system in Italy, it took me months to get all the right documents. But the UU was kind and patience, so they gave me enough time to get all the documents right and still gave me the Erasmus Grand.
academic preparation
I already did all the required courses for Law in the Netherlands, so I was free to choose whatever I wanted in Italy
language preparation
Before I went to Parma, I tried to do a LOI course in Italian because the university already warned me that there were not many courses in English and that they recommend it. But because of my busy life in Utrecht I did not have the time for many courses. So I went to Italy without having a lot of knowledge of the language. But as soon as I arrived I discovered that almost none of the inhabitants spoke proper English and that Italian was necessary to learn. Luckily did the University offer language courses to learn Italian quickly. They started with an intense course with 4 days in the week Italian for 4 weeks and after there was an extended course for 8 weeks and 2 times in a week. So at the end my Italian was quite well!
finances
Before I went I made a plan of how to receive enough money while being in Italy and I had a big savings account to travel around Italy. Don't underestimate the cost of living in the north of Italy.
study/placement abroad period
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
When I arrived a lot of the chosen courses were not available anymore or were not in English anymore but in Italian. Since my Italian language was not good I could not choose the Italian courses. So I had to switch some of the courses. Most of my courses were on Master level because that is the point that the law faculty is offering English courses. This was not a problem because in the Master the classes are really small (max 10 people), which means that there is enough time for questions.



academic quality of education/placement activities

Different from what I expected, where the courses quite hard. Not more difficult than the Netherlands, but we always have the idea that the education is not good in the south of Europe. But this is not true, I learnt a lot from my international courses!

counselling/support at host institution/organisation

My host institution had a great support. I had my own coordinator in the University that assigned me to a law buddy and always mailed me back quickly. She also sometimes came by some classes to check if I made some friends in the University, since there are not many English speaking people in the Law faculty and she always asked if I was able to understand the classes. The organisation from each department was perfect, but I was following courses in three different departments. And when I had an overall question concerning all my courses, finding an answer was always harder. Then they made my e-mail a lot of people. But in the end I always got my answer.

transfer of credits

In Italy the system works a bit slow and takes a long summer holiday. So at the moment of writing this I still have not transferred my credits.

student life

welcome/orientation programme

Luckily, the welcome program was in English. When I arrived at the Erasmus office an English speaking Italian from ESN and from the International office were waiting for me and explained everything in perfect English. ESN started directly with organising events and trips, so it was easy to make international friends.

accommodation

The University does not offer rooms, but has a commission that helps you find a room. But apparently it was really hard to find a room in Parma and also really expensive. I was lucky to find a room via the Erasmus Facebook group that was in the centre and not so expensive.

leisure/culture

The Italian culture, is like all south European cultures, different from our stressful lives in the Netherlands. As soon as I arrived and went to the Erasmus office and asked where the classes of that day were, they told me that I should spend my week exploring the city and making some new friends instead of directly diving into university. This exactly describes my life in Italy. The culture is way more laid back and being somewhere on time is never a requirement. For me this was in the beginning a bit strange because I was used to running all day to different appointments and there was not even time to use my Netflix during the week. In Italy of course I had to study and the courses were quite hard. But because I had more contact hours in a week I did not have a lot of home assignments. And after every 4 weeks there was some kind of holiday week (mostly in combination



with Catholic events or liberation) in which there was time to study and read all your stuff. But there was plenty of time to travel and to hang out with friends.

The other cultural issue was that all the exams were oral. Which means that I had to talk for at least half an hour in Italian/English about what I learned instead of just normal written questions. The exam was held in a big room with 100 students and you were questioned by 3 till 5 professors about your course. This was way more stressing and required a different way of studying.

Also the fact that Italians were a lot more bound to family and older people still think that woman should not work and you should be catholic, was in the beginning strange. But after some time you can embrace those statements.

But overall, I fell in love with the Italian way of handling things and with taking things easy.

suggestions/tips

Learn a bit of the language before going!

conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

Even though at the first moment I was a bit disappointed by going to a smaller Italian city, I had the best time of my life. Because of the smaller amount of internationals it was able to know a big part of them and to make my friends group of 30 people instead of 3 besties like the big city Erasmus students. Everytime I walked around in beautiful Parma, I was not only enchanted by the beauty but I also always saw people with whom I directly went for gelato or pizza. Thereby was Parma perfectly located in Italy which made it possible to travel a lot. I travelled almost every weekend, with ESN and also on my own with friends. I saw a lot of the magnificent cities and landscapes all over Italy.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Don't hesitate to go to a country with a language that you don't speak well. It gives you the perfect opportunity to learn to deal with these situations and you will learn another language quickly!

2015-2016

PREPARATION

exchange application process

Very clear instructions and help from my home university.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

Not always clear, but available any time for a call or appointment.



academic preparation
I was not prepared at all for the courses I followed in Italy because I changed my courses in Parma a few times.
language preparation
I followed a language course in Holland to prove I was at least level A2.
finances
Study finances, savings, parental support, and of course Erasmus fund.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD
study programme (content and organisational issues)
My learning agreement had a few problems so it took a while before everything was settled, but when it was, everything went smoothly.
academic quality of education activities
The Italian law educational system is very good, they were a bit 'better' than me, so the law subjects I followed were not easy, but they were definitely do-able.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
You could always step by the international office when you had questions.
transfer of credits
Still not figured out, it really takes a while before everything regarding subjects is arranged. Also the system of overlapping courses from my home university is not a very honest system. If the information regarding a subject says something slightly different than the information you received, the exam committee believes the information instead of your personal experience.

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
Plenty of activities to get to know people.
accommodation
Was already arranged when I arrived, I could move in the day I arrived. I stayed in a shared apartment with other students. On facebook are also plenty of living options.
leisure & culture
Enough time to explore the city and the cities around parma, wit
suggestions/tips
Make sure to have a good contact with the International office of your receiving university BEFORE you're there. It will make things a lot easier regarding finding accommodation etc. And don't be afraid that things won't work out, because they will. Everyone is in the same position as you so there's always a solution! And most important, ENJOY!

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain



Yes! Parma is a very cosy city with a very good university. If you are searching for a city where you will feel like home in no time and eat the best food ever, then Parma it is!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

No.

2009-2010

preparation

exchange/placement application process

I started my preparation long before the period of study in Italy. I had to fill out the application form and I had to hand in a motivation letter, my CV, plan of study and a financial plan. Then a study advisor judged my dossier on the progress of my study. After the positive outcome I was invited for a conversation as part of the selection procedure. Fortunately no one applied for a place in Parma, so I was immediately selected.

By e-mail I received the application form and instructions for the enrolment at the university of Parma. Besides that I had to fill out a form to be awarded the Erasmus grant.

counselling/support at home university

For any problems I could always call and e-mail the International Office and the support and counselling always served in solving my problems.

academic preparation

I have always wanted to study in Italy, but in the three years of my bachelor notarial law I have never had the chance as I only had 7,5 ECTS space for a course of my choice. That is why I decided to take a fourth year of bachelor, in which I went studying in Parma for a semester to obtain the last 7,5 ECTS. Besides that I chose some courses that seemed interesting and those credits are merely serving as additional credits on top of my bachelor. I do not mind, because in my opinion extra knowledge never comes amiss and considering the fact that I might want to live in Italy in the future, anything is helpful.

Because of the fact that I used the 7,5 ECTS of free choice of courses, I did not need any academic preparation. I only had to meet the specific requirements for bringing in the courses in my study programme at the University of Utrecht.

language preparation

As I have always wanted to learn Italian, I started my Italian language course in my first year of bachelor, knowing that somewhere in my bachelor period I would go studying in Italy for a certain period. First I went to Dante Alighieri, then to the James Boswell Institute and ultimately I left this summer to Italy far before my Erasmus period would start, to live in Milan for a month. There I attended level A2 of Italian and during my stay in Parma, the university offered a course Italian for Erasmus students level B1 for 4 ECTS.

However I would recommend whilst learning the language to stay in the country itself. I noticed I hardly learned any Italian in the Netherlands, because I could not practice and forgot the things I learned immediately after. The most helpful was the month I stayed in Milan at Scuola Leonardo da Vinci (officially recognised by the government of Italy) right before I left to Parma.

finances

The possibility of taking the 'Studiefinanciering' abroad was very welcome. Besides that I saved up some money before my departure and I also have a IBG loan and received the Erasmus grant. Thanks to all this I was able to enjoy my Erasmus period to the max, including making trips to Lago Maggiore, Milan, the Appennini, Munich and Gstaad.

study/placement abroad period

study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)

I know Italy's way of life ever since I was a one-year-old girl, so I expected that it would be more unorganised than the Netherlands and that they would be very open and easy going. It turned out it was exactly like that. If you are able to adjust to their way of



living, you will have the time of your life! The University of Parma overall is a good university and for Italian standards organised.

On the internet they have a list of the courses they give, unfortunately most of them are annually. The most interesting courses for Erasmus students are given in the second semester, as well as the courses in English. For me that caused some problems in the first semester, so I would suggest to go to Parma either a whole year or the second semester.

Subscription for the courses does not exist. On the internet you will find the timetable and you simply go to the class. This is due to the fact that attending the courses in this university is not obligatory. Depending however on the teacher, because in one of my courses I had to write a paper which was part of my final exam.

At the University of Parma they have each semester 3 possibilities to give your exam. About two weeks before the date of the exam, you can subscribe yourself online up to 4 days before the exam. All of my exams were oral and in my opinion it is better than written exams, because it gives you a bit more space. In case you fail for the exam, you have two other possibilities left. Nonetheless, also this depends from the professor. For the same course I had to hand in the paper, the professor gave us only one possibility to give the exam.

If you might have a problem, the professors are very flexible and always willing to help you.

academic quality of education/placement activities

In my opinion the University of Parma has a good academic quality of education. The professors are very skilled and know a lot.

counselling/support at host institution/organisation

The international office of the University of Parma is always willing to help and they are accessible. Throughout the week their opening hours are from 9 - 12 o' clock, but in serious issues they are also available after opening hours and by e-mail.

transfer of credits

The evaluation system in Italy is different. Their system counts from 18/30 - 30/30 when you have passed the exam. If you failed you receive a note under 18/30. Even though 30/30 is the highest note, in special cases it is possible to receive a 30 con laude/ 30. The ECTS awarded for every course variate in a range from 2,4,6 and 9 ECTS.

Utrecht initially adopts sufficient or insufficient, but in the enclosure of your diploma will be stated the exact evaluation of the attended courses.

student life

welcome/orientation programme

On arrival you go to the International office where they give you the necessary information on the University and the internet access. They also help in finding accommodation.

accommodation

The accommodation I found through the international office and everything I needed was already in the apartment. From cooking utensils to toilet paper. Naturally this is not how it always is. Also I was lucky to live with a French Erasmus student who did not speak English, so from day one I spoke Italian with her. This helped me a lot in developing my command of the Italian language, a lot better then the other Erasmus students, because they only speak English among each other.

If you would prefer to find accommodation living just with Italians, you will have to make work of it. Accommodation offers will be found in the main aula of the University and you will have to make some phonecalls. But I think it is definitely worth it, because you will pay less and you will learn Italian in a blink.

leisure/culture

The central location of Parma is perfect for making trips. For example to Milan, Bologna, Rimini, Lago Maggiore and many more. Parma is a historical city with original streets from Roman times, definitely a pleasant city to live in. It is also a rich city so the environment is well taken care of.

Italy is well known for it's lively nightlife and also in Parma you will find plenty of people



in the streets taking aperitivo in bars and at night dancing in the clubs. Wednesday is students night in one of the clubs NeroBlanco, it's absolutely the place to be!

Because of the fact that Parma is not a big city, it is very personal and you will bump into people you know in the little scenic streets just like that. Basically my whole Erasmus period I had a favourite lounge bar & dinner club, Dolce Vita, where from day one I became friends with the staff. They made my stay very enjoyable. Obviously situations like these will not occur in the big cities like Rome or Milan.

ESN Parma organises many evenings, trips and club nights. However I must admit I did not attend any of these events. Personally I am not fond of the Erasmus philosophy among Erasmus students. They come to a country to party and have a good time, speaking and learning hardly any Italian. I came to Italy not to meet other Erasmus students, but because I wanted to live like an Italian, make Italian friends and open doors for my future career abroad. I feel more at home in Italy than in the Netherlands and in the end I succeeded in all the goals I wanted to reach. I feel I did not miss anything by not attending the ESN movement.

Public transport is quite well organised and the best thing of Parma is that they have people riding on bicycles everywhere!

All this together giving you a 'like-at-home' kinda feeling in no time!

suggestions/tips

I do not really have any suggestions or tips, but if you like traveling around, the train in Italy takes you anywhere you want to go and it is a lot cheaper than in the Netherlands!

conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

Yes I would certainly recommend this host organisation. It is a University with a good image and they offer interesting courses. The destination is also highly recommendable. Even though Parma is a small city, Utrecht students will certainly appreciate this. Parma gave me the feeling of Utrecht, whereas Rome would be more like Amsterdam. Parma is personal and everything is easily within your reach. The central location also offers you many possibilities to travel around in Italy. I would not have wanted to make another decision.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

As written above I would recommend students that want to go to Parma to go there either annually or the second semester to avoid any unwelcome circumstances concerning the courses and ECTS credits they offer.

2008-2009

Erasmus in Parma

De voorbereiding voor mijn Erasmus periode in Parma begon ongeveer een jaar voor mijn vertrek. Nadat alles in Nederland in orde was, kwam er echter een lange periode van stilte, want in Italië kwam het proces niet echt op gang. Hierdoor wist ik tot een week voor vertrek niet of ik toegelaten was tot de universiteit van Parma, wist ik niet wat voor vakken ik kon volgen en had ik geen huisvesting. Ik was echter klaar om te vertrekken mede omdat ik al redelijk bekend was met de wat mediterrane manier van handelen, wat voor mij juist een van de redenen was om naar Italië te gaan. Uiteindelijk bleek dat dit communicatieprobleempje veroorzaakt was door de verhuizing van het international office.



Toen ik in Parma aankwam ben ik meteen naar het international office gegaan en daar waren ze ontzettend behulpzaam. Ik heb mezelf meteen ingeschreven, na twee dagen huisvesting gevonden met behulp van het international office en ben gaan uitzoeken welke vakken ik wilde volgen. De vakken vond ik op internet, deze worden slechts kort voor het begin van het semester gepubliceerd. In Parma is inschrijven voor vakken niet vereist, dus je kunt tot op het laatste moment kiezen welke vakken je wilt volgen. Het enige waarvoor je jezelf moet inschrijven is voor de tentamens, maar die zijn over het algemeen aan het einde van het semester en ook de inschrijving hiervoor is aan het einde van het semester.

Studeren aan de universiteit in Parma verschilt ontzettend van het studeren aan de UU. Om te beginnen zijn er slechts hoorcolleges en geen werkgroepen, dit betekend dat je geen opdrachten maakt om te zien hoe de stof in de praktijk wordt toegepast. Je bent geheel vrij in de vakken die je wilt kiezen, maar er zijn wel veel vakken die een jaar lang duren, wat voor mij betekende dat ik deze niet kon kiezen aangezien ik slechts het tweede semester in Parma studeerde. Het volgen van de colleges wordt door veel Italiaanse studenten overgeslagen, ook dit is namelijk niet verplicht. Zij bestuderen het boek en schrijven zich in voor het tentamen. De tentamens zijn mondeling en vaak zitten alle studenten in hetzelfde lokaal als waar de tentamens worden afgenomen. Je doet je mondelinge tentamen terwijl alle andere studenten in dezelfde ruimte aanwezig zijn. Voor Erasmus studenten zijn ze wel wat soepeler dan voor Italiaanse studenten. Met de studiepunten werkt het hetzelfde als aan de UU. Wat het studiesysteem betreft moet je dus wel met de vrijheid en Italiaanse ontspanning om kunnen gaan als je aan de universiteit van Parma wilt studeren.

Wat de taal betreft kan ik zeggen dat toen ik net gearriveerd ik me wel even in het diepe gegooid voelde toen ik ontdekte dat echt bijna niemand je begrijpt als je Engels spreekt. Ik had me natuurlijk wel voorbereid en Italiaans geleerd, maar toch hele dagen in het Italiaans spreken, dat had ik nog nooit gedaan. Na een maand wist ik echter niet beter en ook onderling met alle Erasmus studenten spraken we in het Italiaans. Iedere maand verbeterde onze kennis, ook dankzij de taal cursus die georganiseerd was voor Erasmus studenten en er was ook een cursus Italiaans voor juristen. Deze cursussen waren ontzettend behulpzaam, niet alleen om de taal te leren, want dit instituut vertelde ons ook de basisinformatie over Parma en waar we wat konden vinden etc.

Het studentenleven in Parma daar was nog niet veel van te zien toen ik hier net aankwam. Ik ging naar ESN om daar met de Italiaanse studenten te kletsen, maar veel van de Europese studenten waren nog niet gearriveerd. (de vakken voor rechtsgeleerdheid begonnen eerder dan voor andere faculteiten). De welcome day van deze vereniging was dan ook pas 5 maart. Vanaf dat moment leerde iedereen elkaar kennen en kwam ook het studentenleven op gang. ESN is hier echter niet zo goed georganiseerd en zij organiseerde dan ook niet zo veel feestjes etc. Gelukkig was ik met een ontzettend grote, leuke, spontane groep studenten vanuit heel Europa en onderling werden er huisfeesten, stapavonden, avonden op het plein en filmavonden georganiseerd. Ook de reisjes naar mooie steden in de buurt van Parma deden we samen (Natuurlijk hebben we eerst Parma uitgebreid bezichtigd, want ook dat is een geweldige stad). Ook kregen we allemaal Italiaanse vrienden, wat heel handig is aangezien zij alles weten wat er in de stad gebeurt en andere nuttige informatie.

Uiteindelijk is het een hele hechte groep geworden met wie ik een geweldige ervaring gedeeld heb! Onvergetelijk!