



Tel Aviv University
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Report on Erasmus University – Rotterdam School of Management

1) Visa

This was a fairly organised and simple process to follow from RSM's side as well as from the Dutch Embassy in my home country of South Africa. There is a lot of paper work to get done and, since I come from a third-world country, I had to deposit about Euro3200 with the RSM as surety that I will have enough funds for my stay in the Netherlands. This deposit was fully refundable about 2 weeks after I had arrived into the Netherlands. They also require an original and recent (within 6 months) unabridged birth certificate, which is sometimes a long process for third world countries. But everything was well explained and transparent. I also registered at City Hall in Rotterdam as part of my Visa requirement.

2) Housing

This was the most difficult and annoying part of arriving in the Netherlands. Suitable accommodation is few and far between and there is more demand than supply. The university was very lax in helping short-term students as most outside accommodation required longer contracts. If you do not apply early and are not quick to answer Facebook adverts offering accommodation, then you suffered. Eventually, the university was able to assist me with accommodation far from the university, but it was a lovely studio flat. The problem with being so far was having to change trains or trams in order to get to university, thus increasing the cost and the time it takes. Biking to university is also far. But the accommodation was one of the better ones being offered at a reasonable price.

3) Living expenses

Cost of living is high in Europe! It is much cheaper than Tel Aviv and a much better quality of life, but it is still expensive for a third world budget. I managed to get by, and it helped that I had to have money in a bank account as part of my Visa application. Student life is as cheap as you want it to be, and I tried my best to live in my means. But transport is expensive, especially since discounted travel cards are only for long-term stays. Food is not cheap, but once you figure out where to buy, it gets a little better.

4) Transportation

Most people bike around the city and to university, or you can walk everywhere you want to go. Rotterdam is not big and everything is accessible. Transport is not cheap, especially for short-term stays. There are trams and trains and busses too, but all transport ends at about midnight and there is no transport on Christmas and New Year. The OV-Chip card can be purchased and uploaded at a lot of the busier train stations and at some big supermarkets.

5) Courses

I enjoyed most of the classes I took, but I thought Foundations in Consulting was very badly taught and run (MOST PEOPLE FELT THAT WAY). I was surprised that the exchange was not into the MBA program, but rather into the Masters program. This was fine since the classes I wanted to attend in accordance with my MBA concentration were offered in the Masters program. I was happy with the class work and interaction, I was happy with the level of English, I was happy with my class mates, and I felt that I bolstered my knowledge. Classes were held frequently enough and were at times too long, but I was not put off by this. Work load was very intense, especially for what I thought an exchange program would be. We had a lot of work to get done, a lot of pre-reading and homework. Some classes were tested through exams, while others were through projects.

6) Recreation

The ESN (student council) club was extremely organised and kept offering group activities to ensure that no student was left bored. There were lots of parties and club nights. They also offered reduced rate gym membership. There was always something to do and they were always friendly enough to offer guidance. There is a lot to do in the city too and a lot to see around the Netherlands (eg, Amsterdam, Gouda, Utrecht). The university also gave out coupons for museums and fun activities in the city. And then of course...for some people...they can enjoy the liberal offering of certain recreational activities that are legal in the Netherlands.

7) General experience, tips, and be aware

Most important is that the Dutch are very friendly and helpful and sweet....BUT they are not warm and will not easily let you in their inner circle. So they will happily point you to the nearest great bar, but will not offer or invite you to a drink with them. Having said that, Rotterdam is an awesome city for those with confidence and willing to seek out adventure. The other exchange students are your allies and share your experience, so they are great buddies to hang with. The city is hectic and full of fun, but it also does sleep and you may find yourself with little to do at 3am. As liberal and free as the Dutch are, they are also curiously conservative and prudish and sometimes their senses of humour is annoying and childish. But with a positive attitude and a good outlook on life and cultural exchange, this can be a really wonderful experience. I loved my exchange and even tried looking for jobs in the Netherlands, however it was too expensive to stay on and hope that the company that hired me would also help with a work permit.