

Study abroad in Eindhoven

For my exchange semester I was in Eindhoven in the Netherlands studying at Fontys in spring 2024. In Denmark I study Computer Science and when I saw Fontys offering a minor called 'AI for Society' I was really interested. Through my study at KEA, AI and especially ChatGPT were becoming bigger and bigger, and I wanted to go deeper down into what AI was.

It was easy for me to see what program at Fontys I wanted to study. It was easy to navigate on their website. When I arrived in the Netherlands and started the minor, it took me some time to settle. The minor is different from a normal study at KEA. You do not have a lot of classes/sessions, but you must work and research a lot on your own. But mostly, you need to talk and get feedback from the consultants/teachers. The minor is built around your process throughout the projects and not focusing much on the result on the projects itself. That also means that you do not have exams at last, but you show your work continuously throughout the semester. That is how the consultants/teachers in the end will grade you. I had to adjust to the way you receive grades which could be a bit confusing in the beginning, but in the end, I really liked the idea. The consultants want to help you, and mostly they just expect you to be proactive about your study.

From this kind of working process, I got more confident about the knowledge I found out myself with my project. Normally I am used to a teacher teaching and then I use that knowledge, but here you mostly had to figure out yourself and decide which direction was the best for your project.

The application process was a bit stressful. A lot of paperwork should be done and often several times. But Anne Dibbern (counselor) was a good help in informing about what should be done and other questions that could occur. One time I had missed a deadline for uploading some papers, but then I got a reminder from Fontys about it, and it was not a problem at all.

Fontys have some apartments in Eindhoven that you can apply for. I applied for one and got a place to stay. It was easy. You get a mail saying you can choose a room and then you pay for all the months you are living there at once. Also, you pay for a 'welcome' package which includes kitchen things, bedlinen, drying rack and other necessities. Another good thing about this arrangement is that the room already has furniture such as a bed and desk. You share the apartment with a maximum of 2 people, who also are exchange students. That was also a really nice way of meeting others in a city where you do not know anyone. In total I paid 23.315 Danish kroner for living there for almost 5,5 months. It also includes a deposit.



Fontys TQ building, where I studied

23-07-2024

During the semester I received the Erasmus and SU. Besides that, the first two months of the stay I also received money from my student helper job in Denmark.

Before going I did not make any budget for my stay. I had a good saving and had allowed myself to use a good part of that. But what I have experienced is that I easily used more money than I expected, mostly because I also want to go on trips with the other exchange students that I had not planned.

In general, the Netherlands reminds me about Denmark. It is a flat country, they like beer and the language could also sometimes remind me of Danish. But of course, there are also differences. You should be aware that it is not all public outing areas where it is allowed to drink alcohol and of course also that it is allowed to smoke weed, so you could often smell it while walking around in the city.



Me in Rotterdam at the Erasmus bridge

Something I noticed already the first days by being in Eindhoven is how accommodating people in Eindhoven are. Often you will receive a 'Goedemorgen' or 'Hallo' while walking past someone on the street. They often also want to small talk if you meet them while grocery shopping.

Another fun thing to know about the Netherlands is that they test their air alarm first Monday every month. I did not know that in the beginning, so I was a bit shocked the first time it happened.



The start of the bar street in Eindhoven named Stratumseind or Stratum

But the best cultural experience was the King's Day and King's night. It is a street party where the Dutch people celebrate their King's birthday by dressing up in orange and party all day on the streets. There are also flea markets during the daytime where people sell stuff they do not want anymore.

The best personal experience for me was meeting people from different countries. Not only from the Netherlands, but also from Brazil, Italy, Finland, South Korea, Poland, Spain, and Germany. It was fun to discuss differences between the countries and everyday habits such as the difference in

dinnertime. Often when I was getting ready for bed, my Spanish roommate was eating her dinner.

An advice to give to other students going abroad is to be outgoing and proactive. Both with experiencing other cities in the country, but also with meeting people. It is giving to talk to people around your own age, but from other countries. You see that there are differences, but also a lot of similarities.

Cities I loved to visit in The Netherlands were Amsterdam (a must), Haarlem (cute little town), Den Haag (go on a sunny day. The beach is amazing) and Utrecht (mini-Amsterdam with a funny church story).

To get properly in place at Fontys, and especially with the program I did, is to talk a lot with the consultants/teachers. They love to talk to you and really want to help you and guide you throughout the semester.

Enjoy the semester abroad! Time flies fast!