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EXPEDITE

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Introduction

I chose to go to exchange during spring 2022 as I had heard so much about other people's experiences. I really wanted to see how living outside Nordic countries would be and that is one of the reasons why I chose Lisbon. I had visited the city once before and I really enjoyed the laid back attitude and the cultural scene in the city. Exchange felt even more special after the pandemic and all the restricted times in my home countries.

I attended IADE Creative University as it sounded like a place for me and most related to my studies at KEA. At KEA I had studied AP in Design, Technology and Business and had one semester of the Top Up BA specialized in Branding - school with more creative approach was what I wanted. I expected the time there to give me broader idea of my future field of work and of course exciting new experiences and great friends.



Academic experience

When I started the application process, I had some questions in the beginning. It was great how KEA's international office - special thanks to Hanne - answered all my questions and contacted IADE with matters she was unsure about, the collaboration worked really well. On IADE's end, it was unclear regarding one course if it was taught in English or Portuguese and unfortunately for this question I didn't receive clarification before the semester started. It was a new course package also for the host school so I think after this semester we are all a bit wiser with the content of the course package.

During my exchange semester I got to choose a course package and we didn't have to use time on choosing the courses ourselves. I chose a Design course package which included communication design, creativity and innovation, drawing and visual culture, branding and Portuguese language and culture. I enjoyed the courses and they felt like a perfect match for me and my studies.

Communication design, branding and creativity and innovation courses reminded me a lot of my studies at KEA and during those classes I got to study similar things as before but gaining a different kind of point of view on each. Drawing and visual communication was mostly about art and our own visual style as well as trying new things and techniques on that field. I also enjoyed our course regarding the Portuguese language and culture as it was interesting to learn more about the country I was living for five months.

For me, the branding course was the most interesting even though it did contain a lot of similar things as my studies at KEA. The teacher was amazing and assignments were interesting. She had a lot of experience and actually she was an IADE graduate. We had a lot of group assignments which I of course was very familiar with. I feel that I was able to combine my experience at KEA with the new knowledge and got great grades throughout the course. Communication design course was the most challenging but mainly because it was mainly taught in Portuguese. We did get guidance in English which obviously helped a lot.



Cultural/personal experience

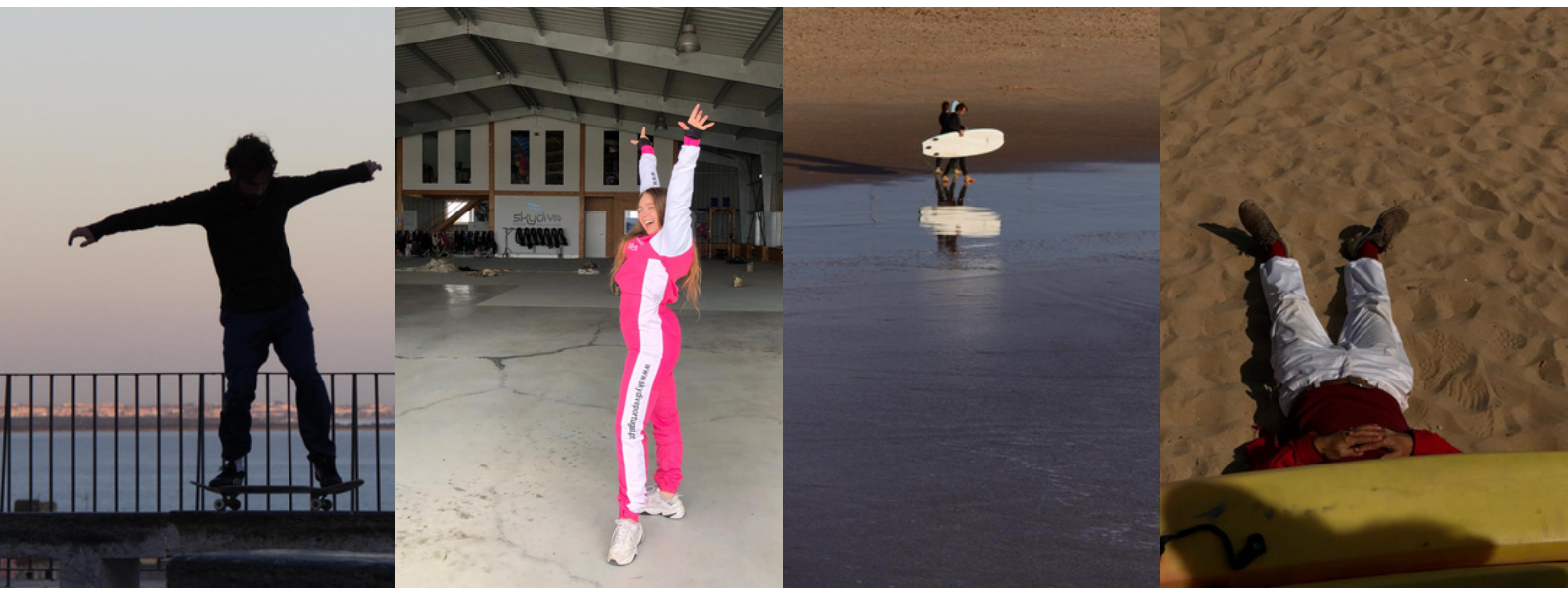
The culture in Portugal differs a lot from the Nordic way of doing things but I was already tried to prepare myself for it. People in Lisbon were very laid back and schedules were 'flexible' and the language barriers that I faced with locals were sometimes a bit difficult but I always managed to explain myself somehow. Later during my exchange I learned a little bit of basic level Portuguese and that made communication a lot easier.

I traveled couple of times during my exchange. I went to Porto in the Northern part of Portugal. The city was very 'authentic Portugal' and it was nice to experience that as well. I also made a short trip to Algarve, more specifically to Albufeira and Faro to see the South Portugal. Those trips I made with my friends and it was a lot of fun for all of us. Sometimes we made some short day trips for example to Cascais and Setubal. I definitely recommend all my travel destinations in Portugal as in my opinion it is interesting to experience different parts of the country when you are staying there quite long time. It gives a nice overview of the completely different culture. It is also affordable and easy to just hop on a train from Lisbon to easily get all around Portugal. I would have wanted to visit Madeira and Azores but unfortunately I didn't have the budget or time to do that in the end of my semester.

One of my definitely most memorable experiences during my exchange was a day trip to Evora where me and my friends did a sky dive from 4.2 kilometers - this was AMAZING. I wasn't sure if I was really up for it and able to do that but when it was time to jump, the feeling was incredible and something that you can't experience anywhere else. These little trips were arranged by student organisations so booking them was made very easy through online platform.

We always found something fun to do with my friends. Lisbon is very lively city and also close to some beaches. We went surfing many times in for example Caparica beach and got better at that lesson after lesson. I had tried surfing once before in Bali but this was way different and to be honest, better. The teachers were extremely professional, circumstances were better even though they were changing all the time but I really learned a lot!

After all, I think with everything you do in Portugal, you don't have to stress about it - nobody else does either. It was something that I needed some time to get used to but acclimating to this very different mindset taught me a lot and afterwards I have understood that stressing about everything doesn't get you anywhere faster but all will workout in one way or another.





Practical experience

Hanne from the international office was extremely helpful with any questions and difficulties. I needed a motivation letter, CV, portfolio and few other documents to apply through Mobility Online. The application platform was a bit unclear from time to time but we got instructions as we proceeded further in the process. IADE answered to questions we had, mainly through KEA's international office. It was nice to notice how the collaboration between KEA and IADE worked throughout the application process. All in all, I feel that everything went smoothly with the process.

It was very easy to find accommodation. Of course it depends a lot on your budget and other preferences like area and if you wanted to live by yourself or with room mates. I lived all my time in Portugal at Livensa Living Marques de Pombal housing which is mainly meant for students. I had a small room with my own kitchen and bathroom and in the building we had for example rooftop, pool, sauna (very important, as I am Finnish), gym, game room and laundry room. I found couple of more Finns in the building and we enjoyed the facilities together many times like by watching ice hockey world champion ships in the great common kitchen areas. The location was great as there was a bus going from our door straight to school and the metro station was near. With the bus you might need some patience as the schedules weren't as strict as I was used to but otherwise the public transportation was good.

The pricing of my accommodation was fairly cheap when compared to the prices in the Nordics. Especially when thinking about the fact that I lived in a studio apartment with all the facilities mentioned before. Otherwise I did thought that I would have spent less than I did in the end. You get easily tricked by the cheap restaurant prices and over all cheaper living in Portugal and might end up using a bit more. But if you make a budget and are good at following it, you can spend a lot less than when living in Denmark. Unfortunately I am not so good at that - but I still survived well.



Conclusion

All in all, I had a great exchange experience in Lisbon! It was definitely the right decision to move to Lisbon for five months and get to know a new culture that is quite different from ours. I met amazing people, had a lot of fun and experienced things that I don't think I would have without leaving for exchange. I had my once in a life time moments like the sky dive as well as just fun casual hanging out with my new friends in the beautiful city of Lisbon. I experienced a culture in a way that you possibly never have the opportunity later in life, learned a lot academically but also personally. Gained new friendships and grew as a human. If someone is considering exchange in total or exchange in Lisbon, I advise to just go for it.

KEA did amazing with all the practicalities regarding the exchange as well as IADE. This is a great help when planning something as big as moving to a new country for almost a half a year. Thank you for the schools for all the support!

