



IT University Travel Report

Dear Student, this is a template – the aim is to inspire other students who may wish to follow in your footsteps. You are free to give your report the shape you want and to go beyond the questions. You are also very welcome to include pictures and contact information – but you need not.

Note that by filling in and sending the report you automatically consent to publishing it on ITU student.

Host university: Koç University, Istanbul

Study Programme at IT University: MSc Software Design

Exchange agreement or Free mover: Exchange agreement

Courses studied abroad: Data privacy and security, Biological databases, Advanced Data Science for social science and Geographic Information Systems

Period studying abroad: Autumn semester 2023

If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here: spkr.itu.dk

Your stay abroad

What was it like to study at the university (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

Academic level is high (at least on CS/CSS at master level, which is what I mainly know of) – so if you are worried that you will not ‘get anything out of the courses’, then this university will be perfect for you! Most courses are 6 ECTS, and the Turkish students at Koç usually takes 4 courses per semester (I did not meet any Turkish master student studying CS that took 5 courses, but it is ofc individually) Course content varies, but content could include: assignments, in-class assignments, midterms, group projects/individual research projects, presentations etc. I highly recommend taking the ‘Geographic Information Systems’ with Chris Roosevelt, that was my favorite course abroad.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

I went abroad for a semester on my bachelor to The Netherlands and I really loved it – so I knew that I wanted to apply again on my master’s degree as well. I highly, highly recommend it to everyone, it’s a wonderful experience.

Living in Istanbul was amazing. It is a massive city with a +20 million population, it has an interesting history, the food is wonderful, and the mosques are incredible!

Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies

It is difficult to pin down an exchange period to what I got out of it academically and personally – It is my experience, that you learn so much from studying somewhere new and living in a different part of the world. Going abroad has really expanded my horizon and perspective in general. I did not consider how it would contribute to my further studies. I applied for the courses, that I found interesting at Koç (just like I would have at ITU). Most of the courses I took was from the Computational Social Science faculty, and those were really interesting for me because they were

kind of 'bridging' my bachelor's in social science with my master in Software Design.

Arranging your stay

Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay:

At least from a SD perspective, there is some work in putting together courses for your individual specialization. And there are some deadlines to meet along the way from both ITU and Koç. But it's all worth in the end, promise!

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?

We did not know a lot about Istanbul or Turkey in general before going – so we googled a looot before going. You will figure everything out along the way.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

We were three ITU students, who were looking for accommodation together. We tried to apply for the exchange dorms available at Koç University, but only two out of the three of us got a room offered. You must apply exactly when they open up the timeslots for the dorm applications in order to have a chance to get one. We ended up living in different Airbnb's instead. But be aware, that Airbnb standards and quality might be a little lower than we are used too. We had a lot of issues at some of the places we stayed at (broken washing machine, water leaking from the roof etc.) Some of the Airbnb's we stayed at were fine, some of them not so great! There are several Facebook sites for Erasmus students, where rooms are rented out short term also. Also worth to know, Koç University is 1,5 hours away from central Istanbul (if going from Taksim Square for example) Some exchange student chose to live close to the M2 metro line, some preferred to live close to University and live at the dorms.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

We payed around 3500 DKK per person pr month in the Airbnb's we stayed in. You can find cheaper accommodation (but also a lot more expensive places). You can eat cheap lunch and dinner at the canteen at Koç it was around 9-10 DKK per meal. Public transportation is super cheap around 3-5 DKK for catching the metro. In general, everything was cheaper compared to CPH

Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?

I applied for several scholarships for example: Knud Højgaards Fond, Augustinus Fonden, Stibo, Nordea, ITU Travel Pool etc. I got scholarships from Augustinus Fonden and the ITU Travel pool

Recommendations for other students:

There are many kinds of transportation in Turkey, but you will learn about them, when you are there. The Moovit app works well for getting an overview. I highly recommend getting the blue student Istanbulkart, it works as the danish rejsekort. You apply for one at the municipality office in Sariyer or Taksim, and you need to bring passport, a printed statement from Koç University saying that you are enrolled as a student there and a small passport-sized photo. Highly recommend going a lot to the Asian side by grabbing a ferry from Karaköy, Eminönü or Kabatas.

The tourist attractions are expensive as a 'foreigner'/tourist. But with your Koç student card you can buy a Museumskart, that gives either free or very, very discounted entrance to all the places such as visiting the Blue Mosque, Topkapi Palace, Basilica cistern, Archeological Museum etc.

You can go skiing/snowboarding many places in Turkey. Some people even do day trips from Istanbul to the skiing resort Uludag during the winter. We went skiing in Erzurum in Eastern Turkey, highly recommend. You can rent full skiing outfits at all skiing resorts in Turkey, so no need to bring gear from home (besides skiing underwear and skiing socks

