



IT University Travel Report

Host University: Universidade NOVA de Lisboa

Study Programme at ITU: Global Business Informatics

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad: Exchange Agreement

Courses studied abroad: Artificial Intelligence, Data Analysis, Market Research, Organizations Behavior, Computation I, Personal Development II

Exchange Period: Autumn 2022

Your stay abroad

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

It was very interesting and insightful to study at another university in a different country, as there are many dissimilarities to studying at ITU. The learning environment is different, as the classes are smaller and the professors seem to familiarize themselves with the students. There is no mandatory reading as preparation for lectures, and the duration of each lecture is 75 minutes, but there are more lectures per week, which meant that I attended classes Monday through Friday. Even though readings are limited, there are more hand-ins during the semester, as well as midterm tests in addition to the final exams, which all contribute to the final grade of each course. I found the academic level to be easier than a typical semester at ITU, but it must be noted that many of the courses offer new material and award competencies that are not offered at ITU.

The bachelor students are younger than the average ITU bachelor student, as it is normal to start university at a younger age. The size of the NOVA IMS faculty is very alike the size of ITU which I enjoyed. There are loads of other exchange students, as Lisbon is one of the more popular Erasmus destinations. I mostly socialized with other exchange students and ITU students, as that came most naturally. I know this to be true to most other exchange students in Lisbon as well.

I attended six courses during the semester, as the ETCS points are lower for each course than at ITU. As the courses must be approved as replacement for the courses one would have attended at ITU, they become a mix match from different years and programmes, which meant that most of my initial courses overlapped and I therefore had to change many of them. I came to be quite happy about this in the end, as I thereby attended the course Data Analysis, which I would highly recommend. Besides that, I attended the courses Artificial Intelligence, Market Research, Organizations Behavior, Computation I and Personal Development II. Artificial Intelligence has some very interesting themes and the professor is very nice, but it is also very messy and unstructured. Personal Development II was very different from any course, as it is focused on how to train oneself to be an attractive candidate for a job, and had some good topics, but is only 2 ETCS and there is therefore not much depth to the course. Market Research was very survey oriented and offered knowledge in conducting larger quantitative projects, which is opposite the frequent qualitative projects of GBI. Organizations Behavior and Computation I are both 1. Semester courses, which is evident when taking the courses.

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

My initial motivation for going abroad was basically that I truly desired a new adventure and to experience being a student in a different country with different ways. My stay definitely met my expectations, as I made a great deal out of immersing myself in Portuguese way of living. I made sure to experience all the things I had planned and spent a lot of time travelling around the country as well as in Lisbon. I enjoyed studying at NOVA, but must admit that there were some things that were slightly disappointing, such as the quite unorganized (do not really care) handling of some lectures, papers and even exams. One will also find a that some students have a different view of lectures, where many students will talk while the professor is speaking (at times will overshadow the professor) and many will turn up and leave as they please. I found this very frustrating in the beginning, as there would often only be actual teaching for three quarters of the class due to interruptions and that during the actual teaching it could be very difficult to hear the professors. This seemed to settle as the semester progressed and we moved closer to tests and other important things.

As my partner graduated university as I was to leave for an exchange, we decided to do the experience together and both moved to Lisbon. This was super great and made the trip more nuanced in experiences, so this is definitely also possible. All in all, it was amazing, and I would do it again without hesitation. Another great thing about an exchange in Lisbon, is that it is fairly close to Copenhagen, so arranging for friends and family to visit is easy and makes it possible to share some of the experiences with them.

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.

I have had many conversations about what I have gained by doing a semester in Lisbon, and there is a lot to tell - but if I was to try and compile it into some areas, I would say that a lot of it is related to new perspectives and coping. With coping, I do not mean it in any negative way of dealing with unfortunate events, but more in the sense that there are many new experiences and arrangements, where some will force you out of your comfort zone. I clearly felt my learning curve climbed a few degrees in dealing with all the different things I was faced with, which occur much more frequently than otherwise. This awards a great sensation of willingness to toss myself at the next adventure, as there is a large amount of confidence and managerial skills attained. The experience also awards new and valuable perspectives, both in regards to perceiving the present but also the future. During such a stay you meet a lot of people from all walks of life and corners of the world. I really liked meeting all these people whose focal point is pinned differently from myself, as there is a lot to learn about and from each other as well as oneself. Living and establishing oneself in another place brings new perspectives to the life had at home, where I gained many new assessments in the form of discovering what I truly enjoy at home, but also in introducing new aspects gained, that I would like to live after. Conclusively, I believe that all the experiences from such a trip only awards new competencies or strengthens old ones, be it both negative and positive experiences.

Arranging your stay

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

The process was fairly easy. The exchange department of ITU are extremely helpful and quick in sorting any issues out, which made the whole experience smooth and with limited “bumps” throughout the process. There were some hiccups as I started my studies at NOVA, as I had to change most of my courses and therefore request new Learning Agreements. The dealings at NOVA are not as fast paced, so one must keep their head cool and trust the process, but otherwise it was quite straight forward. Some might find that there are dates and papers that must be in order (and remembered), which can be a little stressful at times, but if a clear plan is made then its no biggie - especially as the partnerships ITU has grants the comfort of many arrangements already being handled.

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

I used the good old internet a bunch both before and during my stay, as to familiarize myself with the necessary things and places. Additionally, I made sure to pick the brains of anyone I knew who knew a thing or two about Lisbon/Portugal.

My partner and I sorted a few practicalities upon arrival, some necessary, some that proved not to be. First and foremost, we went to the Financas Office and got a tax number. This proved to be a waste of (lots) of time, (lots) of effort and (lots) of paper work. The number is only truly useful if you are expecting to receive a Portuguese salary or, for some reason, subscribe to a bike service that lets you pick up/drop off rental bikes around the city. Other than that, we never encountered situations where we needed it. We rented multiple cars, both through established renting firms and smaller online platforms renting out private cars and never had to use the number in relation to those. If you for some reason need this number, be aware that it is completely free but some companies will try to sell it (expensive) and in return handle the hassle of arranging it.

If you wish to go on a road trip through Portugal (highly recommended) then check out the app Yescapa for renting converted vans and download the app Park4Night, to find amazing places to park for the night (especially by the long coastline by the Atlantic sea).

We also arranged Portuguese bank cards. This was in the true Portuguese spirit of a lengthy process, but rewarded us in not paying any fees and being able to use card more places than what is possible with foreign cards (just remember to close them before leaving).

Another recommended thing to obtain, is the personal Navigante public transport card. This can be arranged by the metro station Marques de Pombal. Again, a strange system of filling out a paper (where everything is in Portuguese, so remember a phone to translate), then waiting in line for ages to give the paper and then come back the next day to wait in line forever to pick up the card. But, once you have the card, you can load any fares you wish on it - monthly passes, single tickets, zapping (equivalent to rejsekort) and much more.

Besides that, most other practicalities were mandatory, such as statement of residence after 3 months and insurances (remember the blue social security card - it came in handy for me...).

Many things may seem a bit lengthy and disorganized, but Portugal has a way of doing it with an immense bunch of charm, which in itself is almost a joyful experience.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

I decided to arrange accommodation before I arrived, as the housing/rental market has gone bananas in Lisbon, and is not as cheap as it once was. There are many different opportunities, as there are many foreign students. I decided to give it a try and look for longer rentals through Airbnb, as I would then be protected through them in case of fraud. I messages three apartments that were situated places I preferred to live and asked them if I could get a better price if I rented for 6 months, which was the length of my total stay. Within a few hours they had all replied with counter prices and I settled the price of 1.000 euros for an apartment just around the corner of the viewpoint named Santa Catarina. As my partner was with me, this was the perfect solution for us, but if I was alone I am aware that it would be quite pricey. However, I do recommend trying this out (maybe if you are going with someone else), as it is a very safe way of renting, but also because I got to live in an apartment in the center of Lisbon, surrounded by locals. Many foreign students are forced to live outside the center, as that is where most affordable renting is. I highly recommend contacting different rentals and seeing if they can cut a deal. We had the best time living where we did, and used the city every day.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

Due to current events, Lisbon was not as “cheap” as first anticipated, but still more affordable than Copenhagen. Dining and drinking out can be done very inexpensive! We really enjoyed having friends visit, go out a lot and travel round the country on multiple occasions, which of course costs some money, but I found that the money I saved up reached far.

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

I applied for a bunch of scholarships through the various sites that gather scholarships and was given some money. There are many that are directed towards master students, but I recommend spending a good amount of time browsing and writing up applications, as it takes a lot of time - but is worth it! I also applied for the ITU travel pool and got that.

Recommendations for other students:

Lisbon is an amazing city and Portugal is an amazing country, so I would recommend it to anyone. I enjoyed the time at University and learned new things, but must admit that it was many of things related more to being abroad that took most of my attention and time. I have gathered some (of many) recommendations of places and things I think are worth checking out below.

Areas

Principe real, Sao Bento, Bica, Santos, Bairro Alto, Belem, LX factory, Alfama, All parks (as they are very cozy), All viewpoints (as they are very cozy), The “forest” Florestal de Monsanto (visit the viewpoint building)

Things

Peep inside the many churches, they are very beautiful, Visit the many Quiosques for drinks or coffee, Visit the many tabernas for Portuguese food, Visit the many rooftop bars (my favorite is ZDB in Bairro Alto - they also have music, exhibitions, etc.), Make sure to visit local pastelarias and cervejarias for cheap and authentic vibes, Find a place to enjoy dinner while listening to traditional live Fado music (I enjoyed Maria da Mouraria)

Food

Fares, Dear breakfast, Fauna & Flora, As bifanas do afonso (buy bifana), Timeout market, Ground burger, A Valenciana (buy piri-piri chicken), Visit the Brazilian restaurants (really good meat), Ponto Final, Yallah Lisboa, Oficio, Pizza place opposite Miradouro Sao Pedro de Alcantara, Pasteis de Belem, Manteigaria

Drinks and beer

Musa, Delerium, ZDB, All bars in Barrio Alto ☺, Quiosques around Lisbon, Foxtrot, Wine bar close to Yallah by the Marionet doll museum (sorry do not know the name, but they are very good with wines),
By the wine, Quimera brewpub

Outside Lisbon

Sintra, Cascais, Porto, Obidos (cutest place in the world), Lagos (visit the small Italian restaurant), Sagres, Nazare (for the big wave season, the town is not that interesting), Peniche (surfing), Baleal (surfing and light house), Coimbra (oldest uni in Portugal), Evora (bone chapel, yes they are real human bones), Madeira, Azores, Cabo de Roca (most western point in Europe + Walk the 30-40 minute walk from there to the beach: Praia da Ursa, it is amazing), Any beach on the west coast is amazing and worth checking out

Beaches (close to Lisbon)

Costa de Caprica (on the other side of the river), Carcavelos, (There are tons of beaches other along the river towards Cascais that are also fine, but the two mentioned were the best I think)