

To which foreign university did you go: Universidad Austral

Country: Argentina

- study period in 2nd semester
- start date study abroad: 27-02-2015 end date: 13-06-2015
- period of classes: from 02-03-2015 until 12-06-2015
- examination period: from 12-06-2015 until 19-06-2015
- did you follow a language course: no.

Courses completed at the host university:

1. International development cooperation
2. Cultural identity and multiculturalism through contemporary film

### My experiences in Buenos Aires, Argentina at the university Austral

My name is Manon, I'm 24 and I studied Dutch law at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen until September 2015. The last semester of my masters I decided to do a period abroad. Because of my first study, Roman Cultures and Languages (Spanish), I wanted to go to a Spanish speaking country. The options were a few universities in Spain, Buenos Aires Argentina or Guadajajara in Mexico. I preferred to go to South America, and because Mexico's semester started while I was making exams in The Netherlands, I had made my choice: Buenos Aires. Although it does not seem very logic to study abroad when you study Dutch law, I think it's the best choice I could have made because it was an unforgettable experience and I've learned a lot! I will now elaborate on a few aspects of my stay, such as study programs, housing etc.

#### **Study program**

The law faculty of Universidad Austral has a lot of courses to choose from. Of course, all the law courses are in Spanish and you definitely need to be able to speak and read Spanish before you get there. It won't be sufficient if you take a language course upon arrival (a Spanish certificate is also mandatory when you apply), you will not be able to take the courses because of the high level Spanish. Initially, I chose two Spanish courses (Derecho de los contratos and Filosofía del derecho), and two in English (international development cooperation and cultural identity and multiculturalism through contemporary film). When I arrived at the introduction, the

exchange officer from Austral told all the students that two courses in Spanish would be too hard for us and that it would be better to do just one. Therefore I chose to do only Derecho de los Contratos and the other two English courses. The English courses are general courses, they are for every student from every faculty. They don't give the courses in every semester, so be sure to check beforehand which courses are available.

### *Derecho de los contratos*

The Spanish course I took was a good choice. It was quite a lot of work, but the subjects were not too hard, because it had a lot of similarities with the Dutch course. Every week there was a class of three hours on Tuesday. You had to prepare and do the readings every week, because the professors would do a little oral quiz at the start of every lecture. The professors were really friendly and willing to help and explain when you did not understand the first time and you can always send them emails for extra information. In the middle of the course, there was a written mid-term exam and in July were the oral final exams. Due to some problems with other courses and some absence during sickness, I didn't meet the minimum attendance, so unfortunately I did not finish the course. But I think I would recommend this course to other students, because of the way it is taught and it is interesting.

### *International development cooperation*

The subject of this course was new to me, but I found out it was new to most of the international students. So they start from the very basics of the topic, so it made it more interesting and easier to follow. Every week we had a class of approximately 3 hours. It was not just a lecture, you had to prepare every week to discuss, we had to write two papers and give a presentation. There was no mid-term but all the abovementioned was taken into account for your final grade. The final exam was an open book exam from all the topics we discussed in the previous weeks. You could miss 3 out of 13 classes. The classes were interactive and we had some guest speakers, which made it more fun. If you do the readings every week, you write the papers and you participate in class, you will pass the class. I think it was an interesting course.

### *Cultural identity and multiculturalism through contemporary film*

The second course was about movies (Hollywood and Argentine cinema), related to different subjects such as discrimination, class differences in modern society etc. Every other class we watched a movie, and we would discuss it the next class. The discussion was based on readings we had to do every week. Examination consisted of two papers: one in the middle of the course and one at the end. Those papers were basically everything we discussed in those weeks, and you had to relate that to one or two movies we saw. If you attend class and pay attention, it is not very hard to pass the class and the professor is very friendly. I think it was a fun course, but I don't know if I would choose it again.

### **Financial aspects, general matters and housing**

Buenos Aires is not a cheap city to live in. You can pretty much compare it to a Dutch big city if you look at expenses. Going to restaurants is a little bit cheaper, but supermarkets and housing is expensive. Public transport though is very cheap, the subway costs €0,50 per ride for example. Also the buses are very cheap and they run 24/7. A lot of people also take taxis, which is a cheap option and also recommendable at night (look for radiotaxis).

I found my room through a website named [www.compartodepto.com](http://www.compartodepto.com). It is a website where people can offer their room or house and people who are looking for a place can sign up and comment to the rooms. I made an account and just started looking for affordable rooms with nice roommates. Within a week I found a nice room in an apartment right between Palermo and Colegiales. It was a perfect location: it was quiet, close to Palermo (where all the restaurants and clubs are) and most of all it was a safe neighborhood. It was a little bit more expensive than what I'm used to in Groningen. I paid €400,- a month. I recommend to find a place in Recoleta, Palermo or Colegiales. They are the more safe, and also richer, neighborhoods and are really nice to live in. You can also choose for the homestay option that the RuG offers, but I chose to do it through this website.

I think I spent almost €800,- to €1000,- a month, if you include everything like groceries, going out in weekends, books, trips and traveling, transport etc. With housing you can do a little bit cheaper than €400,- but then you would have to go to a different neighborhood. I would advise everyone to bring euros or dollars in cash, to exchange them there for a much higher rate (the 'blue dollar' or 'blue euro'). Life there will be a little bit cheaper if you do that.

If you stay for 6 months, you have to get a visa, which you have to obtain in Argentina once you're there. You have to follow certain steps like going to the police station and to the migration office, and it costs about €70,- in total, but they will give you information at Austral and they are also willing to help set your appointments if you need help. You may hear from some other students that you don't need to do it and that you can get away with it. I don't know if that is true but they asked for my visa several times when I left and entered the country for travelling, so I recommend to get one. I don't think €70,- is worth the trouble.

### **Preparation and reception at Austral**

The application takes a few steps and papers, but it is not very hard. And also the international office was very kind in helping and answering questions. All the papers you need are listed on the website and they will ask you for it on the application form. For the language courses: I took an extra Spanish course at the RuG to obtain the certificate. It was cheaper for me to do it here, but if you don't have a lot of time, I suggest you take a private teacher or a different school. Because the language courses from the RuG have very big classes and with different levels among students. Although the professors are nice and classes are fun, progress for me at least was very slow. I took some private lessons afterwards, which were way more efficient.

At Austral, you get two days of introduction. You will get a tour through the building, some lectures about Argentina, about the people, the city etc. And they will also explain the visa procedure. Afterwards, you get to choose your classes. That means you can change the classes you chose back home. The first two weeks you can attend every class you want and then make your definite choice. So you have all the time you need to figure out your schedule. If you have any questions, you can always go to the office of the international exchange officer. She will also help you with your visa if you want her to.

### **Some tips**

There is an organization for international and national students, Argentina For All, that organizes events, fun trips and bar crawls several times a week. It gives you a good opportunity to get to know a lot of people from all over the world, but also Argentinians, in a fun way. You can look them up on Facebook, but they will also

come to Austral in the introduction days. I would also recommend, even though you are studying, to travel around. Argentina has a lot of different landscapes, and also the neighboring countries are amazing. The most common way to travel in South America is by bus. They are cheap and it is very well organized. You can also fly, which saves you a lot of time, but keep in mind that flying is very expensive in South America.

I would definitely recommend Buenos Aires to everyone! I had the best time there, made a lot of friends and improved my Spanish. People there are very welcoming, they are warm and like to have a good time. They will make you feel at home and you must be aware that you might not want to leave!