

Exchange Aruba Fall semester 2016-2017

### **Your study programme or internship programme**

I did my exchange at the University of Aruba, as part of the bachelor programme 'Rechtsgeleerdheid' (specialization International & European Law). I decided to first complete all the mandatory courses in Groningen in three years and go on exchange after the summer. Basically I was already graduated, but I wanted to experience at least once in my life an exchange semester abroad and did not know what Master I wanted to do after my Bachelor, so I decided to add the extra courses in Aruba to my Bachelor diploma. I highly recommend to go on exchange at the end of your Bachelor (or Master) study since it is more relaxing and you do not have any rush to go home (which you shouldn't because there is too much to see around Aruba!

At the University of Aruba I chose one Bachelor course, and four Master courses. The Bachelor course was called 'Internationaal Publiekrecht', a course I already completed in Groningen but I wanted to refresh it a bit and in this course they also concluded aspects of Aruba and their position in the world, which I found really interesting. The Master courses I had were Comparative Private Law, where you had to write a paper about an issue in the area of private law and make a comparison between two states. I also had 'Nationaliteitsrecht', which I found interesting because the course was all about cases from where you could learn a lot. The exam was a take-home exam, so you could plan by yourself when you wanted to do it. Another Master course was Law & Smart Regulation, which is very different from the other courses because it less about law and more about psychology. This course consisted of a small paper and an exam. The last Master course I had was 'Sanctierecht', which I found the best of all courses. I learned the most of this course because it consisted of writing a paper, presentations of classmates and discussions about the issues in Aruba. At the end we visited with our class the prison in Aruba, which was a real eye-opener. I really liked and enjoyed studying at the University of Aruba. It is a small, open university and everyone knows each other which is really nice.

### **Language**

The official language in Aruba is Dutch, but the locals speak Papiamentu, a mix of English, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch. It is difficult to learn Papiamentu but normally you can get around with Dutch, English or Spanish. The locals are very used to foreigners and you won't have any language problems here. We were with a group of (mostly) Dutch, Belgium, German, American and Spanish exchange students, so it is easy to practice your Dutch, English and Spanish. A lot of courses at the Law Faculty of the University of Aruba are in Dutch, but there are also a few courses in English. To follow the Dutch courses you should speak, read and write some Dutch, since you have to read a lot and write a lot of papers.

### **Finance and other conditions**

For a Dutch student it is easy to stay for a few months in Aruba since the island is part of the Netherlands. We did not have to arrange any visas, we got a temporary stay permit arranged by the University. The formal requirements to enter Aruba are that you have to show a letter from DUO that you have sufficient financial resources during your stay, proof of medical insurance and a return- or onward flight ticket.

### **Preparation and contacts with the faculty before, during and after your stay**

Contact with the University of Aruba before my stay was really easy and convenient. The contact person had clear answers to my questions and made sure everyone handed in all the application forms before the deadline. She also gave us a lot of information about housing and car rental in Aruba. During my stay in Aruba it was the same. Our contact person was a lot of times present at the University, otherwise you could email her and she answered really quick. Because students and staff at the University have Christmas vacation for three weeks and my courses finished right before this

holiday, it was unfortunately impossible to contact anyone from the University and complete my exchange during this holiday. I would therefore recommend to arrange this before the holiday or just in January if you are not in a rush.

### **Housing**

Arrange housing in Aruba on time! Especially if you have a small budget and cannot or do not want to share a place with more people. Like most other things in Aruba, apartments are expensive compared to the Netherlands. I booked a one-person studio in Blue Village for 500 dollar per month (including water and electricity), and did it about five months before my departure. Two months later all these studios were full. I did not find it difficult to arrange housing from the Netherlands, except that you have to be patient and really clear in your questions. I think Blue Village is the cheapest accommodation in Aruba if you want a place for yourself. And they have two pools and a bar, which is really nice. The cheapest accommodation to share an apartment is Montaña Park, which also has a pool. Disadvantages of these accommodations are that they are not close to University or a bus stop, so you definitely need to rent a car.

### **Culture**

If you would ask me what exactly is Aruban culture, I would not know the answer. Because Aruba is a really small island and the population consists of a lot of foreigners, there is not one specific culture on the island. I noticed of course the Caribbean culture that you could also find on the other Caribbean islands such as Curaçao and Bonaire. What I did not expect, was that there would be a Latin culture. A lot of Venezuelans and Colombians have moved to the island so you can notice the Latin aspects, for example with the music and food. And of course there is the Dutch culture, that you can notice easily in Oranjestad, the language and the food as well. Then there is also the American culture, which is noticeable because of tons of American tourists visiting the island.

### **Free time**

I came to Aruba on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August and the Bachelor course started three days later so I had time to arrange things like renting a car. The other two Master courses started two weeks later, so I had a lot of free time (to see the island!) in the beginning, later it was a bit busier. Overall Master students have a lot of free time here. You could plan to write your paper whenever you want. Most teachers had to come from the Netherlands and stayed on Aruba for two or three weeks to teach the course. That meant there were less or almost no classes for the other four or five weeks. Some weeks it was busier because all courses were given at once, but other weeks there were almost no classes which was really relaxing.

In the weekends but also during the week we went to the beach or drove around the island to see new things and do new activities. In the beginning I was afraid that I would be bored of Aruba after a month, but after four months I am still not fed up with the island and have not even seen everything.

### **Travelling**

Before I went to Aruba I thought travelling from Aruba to other countries would not be easy since Aruba is an island, and flying is expensive. Though if you search well, you can find cheap flights to the other Dutch islands, Miami, Colombia, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. I went with a friend to Puerto Rico during our stay in Aruba. After Aruba, I went to Colombia and Curaçao and planned to travel through Central-America and Cuba. It is just a pity when you are in Aruba and do not visit the beautiful countries around this island. So during or after your exchange I highly recommend to travel around!

### **Other**

When you are on exchange in Aruba, it is best to rent a car, and that does not have to be expensive if you share it. Further I would advice to just relax and enjoy your time in Aruba!