

Report Form Exchange Period Abroad 2018 – 2019

Host university: University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Mobility period: 1 October 2018 – 31 January 2019

Courses taken;

- Diplomatic and Consular law
- Roman law
- Decision Making in the EU
- Medical law
- International Criminal law

The location

Slovenia is a very small country so it's unsurprising that the capital, Ljubljana, is also very small. It takes roughly 10 minutes to walk from one end of the pedestrianised city centre to the other.

For those interested in travelling while on an Erasmus exchange, Ljubljana is a good option because of its ideal location and affordability of public transport. Whilst on exchange I managed to visit Venice, Zagreb and Vienna without missing any classes.

Studies

The exam system was different to what we are used to in Groningen; each exam had 3 possible exam dates and it was for the student to decide which attempt to take. This was very convenient as it allowed me to plan my trip home for Christmas in advance and tailor my exam month to suit me. Also, most of the courses included the opportunity to gain extra credit by giving a presentation to the class. I felt that the teachers were more approachable than the ones in Groningen, and because of that I felt comfortable asking questions and taking part in class discussions rather than silently following lectures.

Diplomatic and Consular law: This course included content that was mostly already covered in Groningen but went more in depth, particularly with consular law. Part of this course was a compulsory Model UN activity over one weekend. Although tiring and very challenging, it was educational and something I would definitely recommend.

Roman law: This was the hardest course I took, due to the study hours required for the exam and amount of content covered in class, but also probably the most useful for a law student in my opinion. The teacher was very old fashioned in his teaching style by refusing to upload the slides or offer any additional support to students, but I do believe I obtained valuable law knowledge from this course. I would recommend buying a textbook on Roman law, or taking one out from the library as this course required a lot of self-study.

Decision making in the EU: This course basically only covered content already covered in Groningen, but required 3 written reports of cases and presentations of each of these cases. It covered areas of EU law such as preliminary rulings, direct effect and actions or annulment.

Medical law: This was a very interesting course and probably my favourite one. It mainly focused on the rights of a mother and father in reproduction law, looking at how these rights differ between a

natural pregnancy and IVF. Other topics covered included doctor and patient rights and duties with a focus on the comparisons of medical laws across Europe.

International Criminal law: This course didn't require much learning or studying but focused more on a student's ability to think in an exam. For example, one of the exam questions was to discuss the moral debate over shooting down a hijacked plane, which was only briefly covered in class. It would not be possible in this course to simply copy answers from lectures and apply them to the exam. I found this course very easy and scored a 10 without too much effort or stress (my average grade in Groningen is a 6 for comparison).

Most of my classes were 2.5 hours long, with a 15-minute break halfway through. One criticism of the teaching at Ljubljana was that many teachers seemed to forget that students often had another class immediately after theirs, and either didn't allow a break at all, or went over their class schedule.

Public transport

Transport within the city is very convenient and cheap. After buying a yellow urbana card from the tourist information office you can ride the bus for 1.20eu each way. Another option is to buy a green urbana card which costs 20eu a month and allows for unlimited bus journeys.

The same card can be activated online to hire one of the bikes around the city (similar to the 'Boris Bike' in London) for only 3eu a year. As I lived next to one of these bike-stands, I used this every day and dropped the bike near the bike station by the law faculty.

Food

The main appeal of Ljubljana is the affordability of student meals, obtained through a studenski boni card and a mobile phone. Most cafes and restaurants offer subsidised student meals for between 2-4eu which gets you a small soup, a main meal and a piece of fruit. The law faculty canteen lunch cost 2.57eu for a salad bowl and a main meal which I enjoyed and ate most weekdays, though many other international students complained about the quality of this food. The studenski boni can be used up to 20 times a month, and twice a day with a 6-hour gap between uses.

Library

The law faculty has a small library open on weekdays until 8pm. For a one-time payment of 10eu you can take out any book from the library for a month at a time. The staff at the desk were very helpful and happy to help with ordering in any request books.

The National and University Library was also a good place to study but it has a very strange system. You must first drop off your coat in the basement and chose a seat, before going upstairs to the study room and logging in. Then, every time you leave for a toilet or coffee break you must sign out and back in again, with a maximum of 90 minutes away from your seat across the day. This was a hassle, but it at least prevented students taking a seat and leaving for a 3-hour lunch break without giving up their seat as happens in the UB.

Accommodation

Most accommodations available in Ljubljana included shared bedrooms, something which I wasn't comfortable with. These rooms could cost between 150-300eu a month but I ended up so desperate for a place to stay that I ended up paying 750eu a month for a small apartment for myself. Some students managed to find single rooms for between 300-400eu but only if they began searching for

accommodation at least a month before the semester began. I would recommend either choosing dorm rooms (shared bedrooms) which allowed for easy socialising and partying, or searching for accommodation early. Some students staying for the winter semester visited Ljubljana in the summer holidays and booked rooms then, which I wish I had done.

Other

The main complaint received by the university in past years was that international students didn't get to interact with the local Slovene students, so this was something they really tried to encourage in my time in Ljubljana. I was paired with a 'student buddy' who helped me with any questions I had about the city and the university and social events. This was very helpful as it allowed me to find out minor things which I wouldn't want to bother the university staff with, such as how to apply for an urbana card.

Slovenia is a very cheap country to live in, compared to Groningen at least. Groceries which would cost 10eu in the Netherlands would be around 6eu in Slovenia by my estimate. The cinema in Ljubljana cost between 4-6eu depending on the day of the week and sending a small package to my sister in Australia only cost 2.40eu.

Ljubljana is a very beautiful city with a rich history. The centre itself is mostly pedestrianised with only registered delivery trucks allowed through and small electric busses, which still give right of way to pedestrians and cyclists. I would recommend Ljubljana as an Erasmus exchange destination as I thoroughly enjoyed my experience abroad and found my studies interesting. The only criticism I would say about my experience is that I found my stay quite lonely, but my choice to stay in a private apartment, rather than having roommates was probably to blame.

