

Student Report University of Aruba Fall 2019

Study programme

After my first master's year at the University of Groningen I went on an exchange programme to the University of Aruba for one semester. Because I had already started with my master's, I was only allowed to take master's courses as well at the University of Aruba. The faculty of law of the University of Aruba offers two tracks for their master students. The track "Legal Practice" focuses on the practice of law in Aruba and is offered mainly in Dutch. The track, "International law, Regulation and Governance" on the other hand explores the operation of law from a more transnational perspective and is offered entirely in English.

During my exchange I took courses from both tracks. In the first block I took the following courses: "Capita Verbintenissenrecht" (which is pretty similar to the course "Verbintenissenrecht" at the RUG), and "Overheid en Privaatrecht". In the second block I have chosen to follow "Sanctierecht", "Verdieping Ondernemingsrecht" and "Environmental Law".

By the course Sanctierecht we were given the opportunity to visit the prison on the island. That was a unique experience, because we were given a guided tour through various cell blocks. I would certainly recommend following that course.

The way of teaching is quite different from the way we are used to in Groningen (and the Netherlands in general I think). The University of Aruba is a small University so there is more room for discussion and interaction during class. To give an idea: in my class were about ten students. The way of examining is also different. In most courses I had to do a presentation and write a paper. I only took one written exam.

Language

The people on Aruba speak several different languages. Most of them speak Papiamentu, Dutch, English and also Spanish. I did not get to improve my Spanish as I was planning to, because the locals actually mainly speak Dutch. It is therefore easy for Dutch people to get along with them.

Finance and other conditions

Before you apply to go on exchange to Aruba, I would advise you to think about your finances. Living in Aruba is very expensive. I recommend renting an apartment at Blue Village in Noord. The prices of the apartments vary between \$ 500 and \$ 1000 per month. Besides that, it is a must to rent a car, because there are no bike paths and you cannot rely on public transportation. Many people shared a car to split the costs, because on average it also costs \$ 500 per month. Also groceries are more expensive than in the Netherlands. I think the only thing which is not very expensive is gasoline.

Preparation and contacts with the faculty before, during and after stay

The contact with the faculty of law on Aruba went good. They responded quite quickly, but because of the time difference I would advise to arrange everything as soon as possible. It did has taken a while to figure out what date I had to be on the island. I also had to ask about the introduction days myself, because I heard about it through a fellow student. The introduction

days normally take place in mid-August, but my lessons started at the end of August. So, if I found out about the introduction days later, I would have had to rebook my flight.

I would highly recommend going to the introduction days by the way. It is a perfect way to meet fellow exchange students and the people of the international office are really doing their best to show you around the island, introduce you to their culture and food and are willing to answer all your questions about the exchange programme and their island.

Housing

There are a lot of housing options for students on Aruba. First I stayed at in an apartment at Perle d'Or, but I would not recommend that place. Although there are a lot of other (Dutch) students and interns living there, the apartment is really small and outdated. I did not like the place at all. The last few months I stayed at Blue Village, which is a five-minute drive from Perle d'Or, and that was much better. The rooms are bigger and there are even more (Dutch) students and interns. All of my friends also stayed at Blue Village. At the complex there is a swimming pool especially for the long term-renters and your room is cleaned every week. One thing to keep in mind: they do not provide towels, so you have to bring your own or you can buy it for example at a store called "Casa" which is pretty nearby.

Culture

Aruba is actually a mix of different cultures. There are many people from South America, for example from Colombia and Venezuela, but also people from the Netherlands living on the island. It is clear the island is geared towards American tourists. You can see it in the supermarkets, but also by the many fast-food chains like McDonalds, Wendy's etc.

The Aruban people are very friendly and helpful. They are often labelled as lazy, but I don't think that is absolutely right. I would rather call it relaxed. They will get the job done, but just in their own time, without stressing.

Free time

I had a lot of free time, because most courses only had four hours of lessons a week. In the second block, all of my courses were given by flown in Dutch teachers, so the courses only lasted three weeks. In my free time I mostly went to one of the beautiful beaches of Aruba. We also did some boat trips, road trips across the island and on the weekends we went out.

Traveling

Aruba is close to many countries in North and South America. A few fellow students went to Columbia and Miami during their exchange period. I decided to travel after I finished my exchange period. I went to Costa Rica to travel around. I think it is a great opportunity to travel through nearby countries. I also wanted to go to Curacao to compare the islands, but unfortunately I did not have time for that. The best time to plan a trip is, in my opinion, in the beginning of the exchange period – before classes start – or after. It is hard to plan a trip during, because of some mandatory lessons.

I would definitely recommend an exchange period on Aruba. It is not for nothing that they call it "one happy island"!