

## Studying Abroad Experience Report

- 1) **Are we allowed to publish your report anonymously on our webpage (without your name and e-Mail)?**  
[√] Yes [ ] No
- 2) **Are we allowed to forward your report and contact information to a Viadrina student on request?**  
[√] Yes [ ] No
- 3) **Please confirm hereby that you did not mention names of a third party (lecturer, landlord etc.)**  
[√] Yes [ ] No – in this case your report won't be published
- 4) **Please be aware that all the published photos in this report have to be taken by you and are not the property of a third party. By sending this report you are giving us the legal right of use for your pictures (if we publish the report). The copyrights still belong to you after all.**  
[√] Yes, I confirm that all photos are mine.

- **Preparation**

My preference was Toulouse Business School located in Toulouse, South of France. I applied during the first round and was offered a place around February 2025. So, my studies would begin in the fall semester of 2025. This school is well renowned across Europe with campuses in international cities like Paris, Barcelona and Casablanca but Toulouse is the HQ. My course at my home university was bachelor's in international business administration (English version) and my course at the partner university was bachelor's in management although that was just one program delivered exclusively in English.

If you are a non-European national, then a visa is mandatory to proceed into the country. So, upon receiving my acceptance letter I applied for my French Visa at their consulate in Frankfurt am Main (not available in Berlin). The officers at the consulate were amiable and cooperative, in my case I got my long stay visa issued quickly within a month. Since I was eligible for the ERASMUS funding I got exempted from paying the visa fee amounting to 99 euros. My courses were discussed to be held in English, so an IELTS document was used to prove my proficiency. In a nutshell, documents checklist includes:

Passport/Identity documents, Acceptance Letter, Health Insurance, Proof of Erasmus funding (received from Viadrina), English proficiency certificate, French Language Test (if applicable).

I received the link to set up my TBS account with my login details like the viaCampus and Moodle system we have. They use this medium to communicate vital information to us and to stay in touch throughout the semester. Once set up, you will have to upload certain documents mentioned in their portal, here you are also required to select the courses you wish to attend in terms of preferences and depending on availability you are enrolled so it's basically first come first serve. They have several student clubs/initiatives such as the International Incoming Bachelor Team comprising of regular students who would reach out to us and answer queries, they launch various student activities within the exchange student circle, so everyone connects. In fact, they created a WhatsApp group chat with just the exchange students two weeks before the start of introductory courses so we could meet, share experiences and catch up which made my arrival pleasant. They also have buddy programs which you can apply for, but their execution was not perfect, my buddy reached out to me 3 weeks after my arrival, so it is not of much use in my opinion. They hosted events like welcome parties, bar hopping and restaurant meetups during the first few days. TBS had mandatory orientation sessions which you will need to attend so you get an idea of how their administration plus course structure works. Students there take these sessions seriously as well. For exchange students this is interesting, they make use of this session to allow students to engage in ice breaking games, breakout rooms and more! The orientation events take place twice, but you can attend one of them at your convenience, one was held around last week of August, and the other on last week of September. Majority of students who attend the first orientation are the ones who had introductory courses, so students had an idea about the French Culture right away.

- **Accommodation**

Toulouse is a student city with multiple universities, so the accommodation situation is quite tricky but if you look up say three months prior you have a fair chance to find a decent one. In terms of contracts, most of them are not that flexible and start at a specific date which can be even before your arrival so you will end up

paying for the month you did not stay. Of course, you can apply for CAF (Caisse d'Allocations Familiales) allowance, it is a form of social help from the government, and they will reduce your rent by a certain amount, amount varies from person to person. For this you can refer to their official website where they share more information, but my advice is that you apply for it beforehand to avoid delays. I used the search engine and was lucky to have found a shared student apartment nearest to my campus. I resided at Kley Residence, in their shared apartment for the entire period for 595 euros/month. They have their residence in two different areas within Toulouse; you will be able to find more information on their website. I was recommended this residence by TBS since they have partnerships with various student residences. It was not a central location but extremely safe, peaceful when needed and full of life. There were tons of parties, gathering events, cooking classes, yoga organized by the residence. Very modern, you had designated laundry spaces, working areas, entertainment lounge, bike station right in front, in-house convenience stores (which you must pay for), supermarkets 9 mins by walk away, excellent mobility throughout the day including buses and metros. They are responsive to your needs and make sure you have the best student experience.

Also, regarding the accommodation, I would advise you to go for student residences like Kley or CROUS when in Toulouse. I have heard excellent reviews of these accommodations, and you have chance of finding your stay at reasonable rates.

- **Studying at university abroad:**

TBS starts their lectures early in the morning and are mandatory for all the students. When logged in to their student portal, you will find your timetable on which courses are planned for you and at what time of the day including the room it will be held in so do not forget to take a look beforehand. Attendance is mandatory, during your orientation day you will be given your student card which you must keep with you all the times when you are on campus, before any class starts you have a timeframe of first 5-10 minutes to validate your presence by tapping your card on the machine present in each room most importantly you will need to show your card at the entrance of campus to the security guards to be allowed entry. You will need to have a certain percentage of attendance to be eligible to appear for the exams which are usually held in December for the fall intake before the holidays. If you want to give a retake, chances are you will need to go back in April to do so. TBS is a business school, so no other faculties exist there, I took 5 courses plus French language training. My elective at TBS was International Business and it went well. The courses were designed in a very interactive and structured manner. The professors are highly qualified and are present to assist you with anything good or bad. What I noticed was that every course and setting within class encouraged student interaction and by the end of the semester you got to know everyone.

It is a very international atmosphere; you will have mates from different corners of the world sharing their experiences with you. Most of my courses involved groupwork, presentations and research paper which was pressurizing towards the end of the semester when all the deadlines came together. The course contents are understandable and interesting if you invest right amount of attention and effort. Course materials and required resources will be made available on the student portal for purpose of reference. At TBS we have our language courses once a week, my French language training went amazingly well, the professor and the class was a vibe. Throughout the semester, you will be visited by TBS alumni who will come up and share their stories and give extra guidance if needed in class. There isn't a big canteen but a mini cafeteria with basic food or say snacks, a box of pasta costs 8-9 euros (my Italian friends were not satisfied with the food), hot beverages and cookies come at 3-5 euros each, you also have access to vending machines placed at every corner of the campus providing more selection. We have a one-hour lunch break when we chill with our friends and recharge, we have seating area on campus and surrounding the campus with a beautiful view of the lake present on-campus. During our orientation day, the professors had shared contact details of different offices within the campus if we had doubts later. International students were able to blend in and be comfortable with the regular students starting the first day, everyone you meet will be open and diverse. TBS has two campuses within Toulouse, one for bachelor and one for masters, the bachelor's campus is on the outskirts whereas the master's campus is central to the city (just to avoid confusion).

- **Day-to-day life and free time:**

Toulouse has a huge student population, if you have access to 900-1000 euros/month you will be fine given you manage to rent an apartment that goes between 300-400 euros/month. I had to commute via a metro plus the bus to reach central areas of Toulouse. You will need to get a "Pastel Card" available in several metro stations in Toulouse, price ranges from 9-15 euros/month. You need the Pastel card to access buses and metros across Toulouse. Also download the Tisseo app, it will show you the transportation modes available, routes and timings in Toulouse. The transportation infrastructures are well kept, updated, punctual (most of the time) and clean. The city is big with loads of fun activities to do big enough to find your crowd even. Shops



like Lidl, Aldi, Auchan are available for shopping though I would say groceries and supplies go from 10-20 minimum per basket. Toulouse is home to AIRBUS; hence you can go visit their museum and I highly recommend booking an AIRBUS tour, it will be an interesting experience. I went during the fall semester, and the weather was as perfect as it got, sunny throughout the day and cool at night.

You have student organizations like ESN and AEGEE that will hook you up with tons of activities and people from different universities within the city. Toulouse is also known for Rugby so if you want to witness a classic rugby match make sure to book weeks prior, people there go crazy for this sport. Apart from this, student organizations schedule trips, bar hopping, parties, café discoveries, dinner, brunch together, cooking classes, karting, hiking, wine tastings, bowling, padel tournaments, volleyball, ice skating, laser games all of which I did but the list goes on and on. I also volunteered with local organizations engaged in food distribution so I could develop personal and lingual skills. To mention, every first weekend of the month, you will be able to purchase tickets for just 1 euro, which enables you to travel to different places in the Occitanie region (Toulouse belongs to this region) and I highly recommend this. Overall, you would not get bored in such a city, there is so much to explore.

- **Conclusion**

Living in Toulouse was one of the best times in my life, I do not regret my decision one bit. I got to learn more, meet the best people and make friends, try different things and grow all at the same time. I travelled a lot this semester and ate so much I would not complain about. Safety is a priority and in Toulouse I cannot recount a single instance when I felt insecure. Food, People and More Memories is how I will remember Toulouse. Every corner of the city felt beautiful and cultural to me. Another issue was my language skills did not develop to its peak because everyone in Toulouse spoke good English so not much motivation to learn the language and I ended up conversing in English to everyone I met. When in France, live like the French you would most likely find cheese and wine everywhere!