

Studying Abroad Experience Report

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Preparation

Planning to study abroad at the University of Montpellier was a smooth and enjoyable process, thanks to the well-structured guidance provided by the host university and the collaboration between my home institution and the University of Montpellier. The application process was straightforward, with detailed information on required documents, deadlines, and procedures shared well in advance through email. The comprehensive guidelines covered every aspect of the preparation phase, from applying for courses to arranging accommodation and understanding the cultural nuances of studying in France.

Key Recommendations for Preparation:

- **Visa and Insurance:** For non-EU students, applying for a visa is a necessary step, and it's important to start the application process early to avoid last-minute stress. Be sure to gather all required documents, such as proof of financial support, an acceptance letter, and accommodation confirmation. Health insurance is also mandatory, and students should ensure that their insurance plan covers their stay in France or consider purchasing a local student insurance plan upon arrival.
- **Travel and Arrival:** Montpellier is accessible via various travel options, including flights, trains, and buses. Although traveling by bus is the most economical option, it can be exhausting due to the long travel times. I would recommend flying directly into Montpellier or taking a combination of flights and trains for a more comfortable journey. The city's airport and main train station are well connected to the city center, making it easy to reach your accommodation upon arrival.
- **Orientation and Support:** The University of Montpellier offered a series of orientation events, which were very helpful for incoming students. These sessions, often mandatory, provided essential information about academic expectations, course registration, and living in the city. Additionally, the university ran a Buddy Program, pairing local students with international students, which was a great way to get acclimated quickly and build a support network right from the start.
- **Additional Resources:** The university also provided various resources for students, including access to student services, academic advising, and information on cultural and social activities. These resources were valuable in helping students integrate into the new environment and feel more at home in Montpellier.

Accommodation

Finding accommodation in Montpellier can be challenging due to the high demand for student housing, but the university offers several affordable and convenient options. I stayed at the Triolet Campus student dormitory, which was the most budget-friendly option and came highly recommended by past exchange students. The cost was approximately 1,200 euros for the entire semester, which is relatively inexpensive compared to private rentals in the city.

The dormitory was well-equipped, offering a wide range of facilities that enhanced the living experience. Amenities included a café, gym, basketball court, jogging track, and beautifully maintained gardens, creating a vibrant

community atmosphere where students could socialize and relax. Living on campus was highly convenient, as it was within walking distance of the university, saving both time and money on daily transportation.

Accommodation Tips:

- **University Housing:** For future students, securing university housing early is advisable. The Triolet Campus is particularly convenient due to its proximity to the university and extensive facilities.
- **Private Rentals:** While private accommodations in popular areas like Écusson or Port Marianne can be appealing, they are often more expensive, and finding a suitable apartment can be time-consuming. Shared housing options with other students can help reduce costs.
- **Student Amenities:** On-campus housing often includes additional amenities such as study rooms, communal kitchens, and leisure spaces, which enhance the overall living experience and make it easier to connect with other students.

Studying at the University of Montpellier

The academic environment at the University of Montpellier was dynamic, supportive, and engaging. The classes were relatively small, typically accommodating 10-15 students, which allowed for a highly personalized learning experience. Professors were approachable and often knew students by name, fostering an inclusive and interactive classroom atmosphere.

Academic Structure and Courses:

- **Course Selection:** I was able to select courses from various faculties, offering the flexibility to tailor my studies according to my interests. The interdisciplinary approach was beneficial, allowing me to explore subjects outside my main field of study.
- **Teaching Methods:** The teaching methods were interactive, focusing on group presentations, collaborative projects, and practical learning, which I found both stimulating and effective. The professors encouraged participation, and the small class sizes allowed for more in-depth discussions.
- **Assessment and Exams:** Assessments typically included a mix of written exams, group work, and presentations. This diverse evaluation system allowed students to demonstrate their understanding in various ways, catering to different learning styles.
- **Language Support:** The university offered French language courses for international students, which were incredibly beneficial for improving language skills and gaining confidence in everyday interactions. These courses also provided a great opportunity to meet other exchange students and build a community.
- **Student Support:** The university provided excellent support services, including academic advisors and dedicated coordinators for exchange students, who were always available to assist with any questions or concerns.

Daily Life and Leisure

Montpellier is an exceptional city for students, brimming with life, culture, and endless opportunities for exploration. It is known as a student-friendly city, with a vibrant social scene, beautiful historical architecture, and numerous parks and outdoor spaces. The city's atmosphere is youthful and energetic, making it an ideal environment for students.

Living Costs and Transportation:

- **Cost of Living:** The overall cost of living in Montpellier is moderate compared to other French cities. A monthly budget of 700-800 euros should be sufficient to cover accommodation, food, transportation, and leisure activities, allowing students to fully enjoy their time in the city.
- **Free Transportation:** One of the biggest perks of being a student in Montpellier is the free public transportation system available to students. Trams and buses are well-connected and convenient, allowing easy access to all parts of the city without any additional costs. This benefit significantly reduces daily expenses and provides the freedom to explore the city and its surroundings effortlessly.
- **Leisure and Activities:** Montpellier offers a wide range of leisure activities, including free fitness courses like yoga and spinning, which are available to students with prior registration. The city is also home to numerous

Country: France
University abroad: Université de Montpellier
Beginning of lectures and end of exams abroad: 15/01/2024 bis 23/05/2024
Study path at Viadrina: IBA [] BA [X] MA



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Erasmus groups that organize social events such as bar hopping, kayaking, wine tasting, and trips to nearby destinations like Barcelona, Ibiza, and various cities in southern France.

- **Cultural Experiences:** The city's diverse culinary scene, numerous cafes, and vibrant nightlife add to the overall student experience. From tasting local French cuisine to exploring international dishes, Montpellier offers endless opportunities to indulge in different flavors.

Conclusion

Overall, my time in Montpellier was an unforgettable experience filled with personal and academic growth. I had the opportunity to make lifelong friends, immerse myself in a new culture, and enjoy the vibrant student life that Montpellier has to offer. The best aspects of my stay were the supportive university environment, the lively city atmosphere, and the chance to explore the beautiful south of France.

The only downside was my initial choice of travel. Traveling by bus from Berlin to Montpellier was time-consuming and exhausting. I would strongly recommend future students to consider more convenient travel options such as flights or trains for a more pleasant journey.