

Experience Report – Semester Abroad as a Freemover at the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA)

I completed my semester abroad at the National Technical University of Athens, where I studied Architecture. In my master at the Hochschule Bochum I study applied Sustainability. Since my bachelor's degree only included 180 ECTS and the master's required 210, I needed to collect an additional 30 ECTS before finishing. Instead of simply earning these credits at Hochschule Bochum, I decided to go abroad as a freemover. Having always been interested in architecture and art, I saw this as my opportunity. I reached out to universities in Greece, Portugal, and Spain because I wanted to experience Southern Mediterranean culture and enjoy a sunny winter semester.

I received a quick response from Athens, inviting me to join for the winter semester. A significant advantage of the program in Athens was that I didn't have to pay for the ECTS, unlike in Portugal, where freemovers often have to pay per ECTS at the universities I contacted. After receiving my acceptance from Athens, I coordinated the necessary arrangements between the National Technical University of Athens and Hochschule Bochum. In Athens, I noticed that everything moved at a more relaxed pace. Just before our arrival, the university informed us of some issues but assured us we'd receive our official acceptance once we got there.

I found a flat through Facebook groups but had to pay a fee to the person who connected me with the landlady. My monthly rent was 300€, and I shared the apartment with three other Erasmus students: a German girl and two Italian guys. The apartment was decent, with balconies and a dining room where I often invited friends. However, the noise from the street was loud, even with the windows closed. My apartment was conveniently located just 100 meters from the university and near Exarchia, a former anarchist and left-wing area that is now more gentrified but still retains a unique community vibe. Despite protests, a metro station was constructed in Exarchia Square, leading to significant changes and the displacement of some residents due to gentrification.

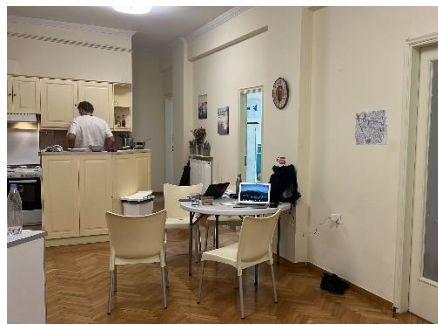
I attended an evening event organized by ESN, a group that hosts events for Erasmus students. Eventually, I found great friends at the university and in my flat. We often hung out and took trips to nearby islands, taking advantage of cheap ferry tickets and metro discounts with our Greek student IDs. Museums were also free for those under 26.

At the university we received our paperworks after quite some time and a "meal card" for free lunches and dinners at the cafeteria. As a vegan, I mostly ate side dishes, but occasionally there were tasty stews available. I had two weeks to explore courses before making my final selections. I chose classes like freehand drawing, plastic arts 1 & 7, and history. I enjoyed these courses, especially the creative ones. In the freehand drawing class, we met weekly at different locations to draw buildings, nature, and statues. In plastic arts 7, I worked on a video project. Everyone was friendly and welcoming, and most spoke excellent English. I also took a Greek language course via Zoom, organized by the university, sadly the quality was just average.

Overall, I loved the city, the people, and the university. I highly recommend Athens for a semester abroad. Additionally, for those needing to earn extra ECTS in the applied sustainability masters, doing so abroad is an excellent choice. It provides not only academic benefits but also invaluable personal and cultural experiences. I encourage everyone to seize the opportunity to study abroad.



NTUA



My Apartment



View from my balcony



NTUA from inside



Free Hand Drawing with Professors dog



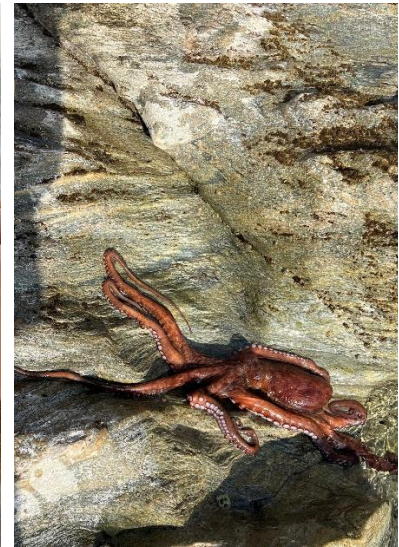
Acropolis



The closest beach from Athens



Hope you love cats. Athens has a lot of them



Octopus I saw



My favourite beach. One hour
from Athens