UvA Study Abroad

Exchange Express

www.uva.nl/ambassadors
A current incoming student and a former outgoing student volunteering to lead groups of ten fellow students in a plethora of activities such as a photo contest or creating and writing a digital magazine amongst others usually face surprise from their colleagues when they try to explain to them of what the Ambassadors Programme consists of and why they would want to be involved with it.

Unfortunately, the answer boils down to a cliché: a year abroad is a unique experience that will allow you to grow in ways you can’t even imagine. In fact, being as close to radically opposed people as it gets (personality wise), after a semester of friendly debating subjects as trivial as fonts or templates, that is probably the one point we never disagreed about.

Our generation is lucky enough to have the opportunity to explore the world and adventure ourselves into the great wide, something that wasn’t necessarily true for our parents. An exchange year is somehow representative of our generation’s culture and of the values we all expect to dictate behaviours in our societies, such as open-mindedness or willingness to learn, but also a very peculiar experience of personal growth: you learn discipline and patience and you force yourself to face your fears and take a step outside of your comfort zone.

The adventure is unique and thrilling, but it can also be scary to dive straight into the unknown. With this Exchange Express and by our participation, we are looking to encourage and help people facing the same doubts and concerns we one day faced, by giving you testimonies, tips and many more information on how to have a successful year abroad, whether it be in Amsterdam – where UvA will very soon become your home away from your country –, or anywhere else in the world – before returning to Amsterdam, the city you are lucky enough to call home.

The Ambassadors Programme consists of our way of thanking and giving back to the experience we had by studying abroad. Of course, it would take a 500 page book (at least) to adequately be able to describe the exchange experience, but throughout this magazine we hope to give you the final push for you to go abroad or for you to fully appreciate your exchange experience in Amsterdam. We hope to be helpful and we remain at your disposal for advice or whatever else you might need to take the great leap.

Have safe exchanges!
# Exchange Express

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The Amsterdam Experience

Inbound Exchange Interview by Mokgadi Marishane
Name: Nikki Mendu
Home University: University of Cape Town
1. What made you decide to study at UvA?
To be honest, I didn’t know a great deal about the University of Amsterdam initially. I’d never been out of South Africa before so it was exciting to have the opportunity to study and travel outside of it; and Amsterdam seemed like a good base to explore other parts of Europe. However, after being in Amsterdam I’ve realised I couldn’t have made a better choice due to how amazing the city is, and the availability of many experiences which aren’t available in South Africa – and the openness and tolerance of its people!

2. What have you been surprised by so far?
The contrast between the more archaic things associated with the Netherlands – like windmills and the countryside – and the actual experience of living in Amsterdam, which has far more to offer. Amsterdam is also a great deal more multicultural than the stereotype of the Dutch blond-haired and blue-eyed people one expects; and beauty of the Netherlands as well as the lifestyle which people in Amsterdam live (like cycling everywhere, rather than always relying on cars and Uber) is wonderful. Cycling home from University in the evening is certainly one of my favourite parts and it’s exciting to always have something to do, or something going on.

3. How different has the University been here in comparison to in Cape Town?
Here, there is a more individualistic approach to coursework and how well you do is dependent on what you put in. Having fewer classes here is something that my friends do envy, even though they are longer than at UCT. I have learned to appreciate my home university’s style of education, and the social aspects of the university experience at home.

4. Have you found any differences between South Africa and the Netherlands?
My first few days here were insane. Moving from a developing country to a developed country meant that a great deal more things here are digital; and the efficiency of things like the public transport system have amazed me. I certainly miss the “character” which SA and its people have and I have realised that there is a great deal of potential within SA for development and education, even though a great deal of people have left it for a better life elsewhere. I’m greatly motivated to go back home and ensure that happens.

5. How did you go about making friends and interacting with locals?
I think being offered housing through the residence system here was helpful, and fortunately with the kind of accommodation that I got, there is opportunity to interact with and meet other students. Lowering your inhibitions makes it easier to meet people, and on exchange people are more open to meeting new people – just trust your gut instinct and ask for someone’s number or Facebook if you get along with them. Attend as many events as you can but it’s also okay if you get tired and need a break!

6. What are you looking forward to the most during or towards the end of your exchange?
I’m not looking forward to the end of this exchange and I don’t want it to end. I’m excited to travel around the Netherlands and to other European countries, particularly as I have learned so much about the country and met people whom I would like to travel with. So definitely meeting more people, embracing new experiences and growing in a way that I wouldn’t have if I weren’t on exchange!
The next chapter in the series of ISN trips this year took us to a lesser known, albeit historic, city in the Netherlands. Maastricht, the southern-most city in the Netherlands, is a gateway to the neighbouring countries of Belgium and Germany in addition to being the birthplace of the Euro (by virtue of the Maastricht Treaty being signed there). It offers a different experience altogether to the city destination in the previous ISN trip; the high-rise, concrete jungle landscape of Rotterdam can be contrasted with the more placid, traditional aura that emanates from the architecture and streets of Maastricht.

I took part in this ISN trip to Maastricht with fellow UvA international students, with all of us sharing a wanderlust to step out of Amsterdam and discover new Dutch cities, cuisines and regional quirks. We rendezvoused in the early hours of a Sunday outside the Victoria Hotel in Damrak (near Centraal Station), where we became acquainted with one another before embarking on our journey through the core of the Netherlands to Maastricht. The length of the journey to Maastricht was two and a half hours and saw us pass other major cities such as Utrecht and Eindhoven. The long length of the journey there and back was alleviated by the almost school field trip-like ambiance of the coach journey to our destination; it became the perfect time to familiarise ourselves with each other’s backgrounds, exchange musical tastes, and learn (ostensibly profanity-laced) words in a new language!

As we left our coach and walked towards the city centre, it was clear that (as expected) Maastricht was much smaller than Amsterdam in size, yet I had the feeling that there was more space to breathe in Maastricht. There are fewer narrow streets, bicycles and people – meaning that you can enjoy the beauty of the city architecture in the daytime without the hustle and bustle that characterises life in Amsterdam during the day.

Willem, an ISN team member, and our resident tour guide for the day took us around the city to see the major landmarks. White and brown houses and buildings are commonplace; hence, the colour palette used to paint this city is very plain in comparison to Amsterdam. The most conspicuous and captivating exception is Sint-Janskerk (St. John’s Church) – a picturesque church tower painted with a reddish hue that allows it to stand out from the surrounding buildings. Next we saw the Town Hall, which has the centre-most location of all the major landmarks, given that it is located right in the middle of the main square. It is surrounded by hotels, souvenir shops, ethnic street foods and commercial fast food eateries that served food at a much cheaper rate compared to Amsterdam. Many of the landmarks were dated from before the 17th Century, making it a much older city than Amsterdam. Quite fascinatingly, the Maastricht city walls have been left surprisingly intact, despite the city being located in the historically strategically located province of Limburg. Maastricht definitely lived up to its reputation of being a city rich in history and proud of its academia.

We were given free chips with Frites sauce (as is tradition in the Netherlands) for lunch and free time to explore the city ourselves. Nonetheless, as the clock struck 5pm we had to get back to our coach to Amsterdam after a tiring, albeit satisfying day of exploring the different corners of Maastricht. The lack of vibrancy and choice relative to cities such as Amsterdam means that Maastricht is a city I would not want to necessarily live in - but that does not negate from its history, beauty and tranquillity. It is most certainly a city worth visiting again.
When I came to Amsterdam for my exchange, I was just few hours late to be able to participate in the introduction week. And here I was, all by myself, having two free weeks in this amazing city. At first, I enjoyed being alone a lot, not having many relatives nor colleagues around me. But then, after a couple of days, I realized that we are just not made to be alone and the creation of connections with people around us is one of the best thing in our lives.

But how do we make contacts at a new place, when we don’t know anybody and don’t speak the language?

That’s when our mobile apps come to the rescue.
Couchsurfing is for me the best way to meet strangers, because it is a community of open-minded people who joined the site to get to know different individuals and cultures. Furthermore, it can be used in many different ways - besides surfing a foreign couch or sheltering strangers, many people are on CouchSurfing just to make new friends in their city.

Every city’s page on the site (Couchsurfing.com) has events that are coming up soon. Almost every big city has weekly gatherings where you can meet interesting people of all nationalities and get support from local people. In cities where there is a strong community, there are other events besides the gatherings - salsa parties, pillow fights and many more.

Recently for the mobile app users, CouchSurfing added a Hangout feature where you can write what you want to do (for example, “I want to explore the area”, or “I want to go to festival X”), and people who are available in the moment join the “hangout” and you start writing and making a plan. It’s slightly complicated in the beginning, but it gives a lot of opportunities for spontaneity and adventures.

I have used CouchSurfing to meet new people in Sofia, Brussels, Istanbul, San Francisco, New York and Amsterdam. I usually go to couchsurfers’ meetings or write on the city page that I am looking for company. So far I have not had a bad experience. In Sofia, I met some unique grandmothers-professors-travellers. Through the Hangouts in Amsterdam I organized a one-day bicycle trip to the nearby city Zaandam with a young Russian and it was one of the best days of my exchange.

LinkedIn is a great way to know people who are acquaintances of acquaintances in an unknown place! LinkedIn offers very good search opportunities - you can search for people by city, company, school - very useful when you want to meet people who have studied / worked at the place you are going to. It is also very handy when you go to study somewhere to see what people who attended your school did after it. It’s easy to interact with new people on LinkedIn, although not all check their LinkedIn account frequently.

Before and soon after coming to UvA, I spoke with several Bulgarians who I found studied at the UvA or worked in companies in Amsterdam I am interested in. At university, I met one of the students I approached and maybe this is the start of a new friendship.

Tinder is definitely the most entertaining way of meeting new people - you go in and browse pictures of the local youth, you like them or you do not like them and if you like each other the seduction begins. Although it’s fun, I would not recommend using Tinder to build friendships, since there is a high chance that the other person is hoping for more than that. Nevertheless, if you are looking for something more, this is definitely the place.

I once went out with a very pleasant guy with whom I had a nice date, although I was pretty worried. However, it is a good idea to explain the reason why you are on the app before meeting somebody in person.

And finally, Facebook - However obvious it might be, I have rarely seen someone write “Let’s grab beers” in the dorm’s or the university programme’s group, yet this is a good way to meet people around you and can be of great benefit for both sides. I have met some of my best friends in university through posts on Facebook groups, so I believe that social media can be used not only for connecting with your existing network (or watching cats videos), but also for creating new meaningful social contacts.

Social media can help us a lot in building new contacts, but they cannot do it all for us. It is us who should be open to the new and friendly and be initiative. Never forget to smile and to try to find things in the other person that you like and give compliments on them - these things are appreciated all over the globe.

Prepare your phone with enough battery and mobile data. This is a really important one. It’s not that apps can replace the casual introduction in front of the dorm or of the bus stop, but when we are among strangers we sometimes simply do not know what to say. When the embarrassment gets to us so badly that we just cannot say “Hi,” apps are here to help us.
TESTIMONIALS
by Selin Yilmaz
Michael Kacarevic, Anglo-American University, Czech Republic
“They had a lot of courses in English and Dutch people speak English very well. Amsterdam is a very multicultural city. I am delighted, it’s so satisfying. I have 2 classes; there is a lot reading regarding European Law. Other’s like most interviews, researches etc. There are lots of new faces and international friends. I also have a couple of Dutch friends that are very accepting. I am also taking a French class and they made the class’ main language English just for me: It was actually for Dutch people but I was the only one who could not speak Dutch but the teacher was kind enough to change the main language of the course to English so that I could follow as well.”

Beatrice Santelli, University of Siena, Italy
“I chose UvA because its full range of courses offers me the possibility to build the best and most suitable university education. Moreover, I have heard a lot of good things about the University. However, didn’t expect to find so many international students and such modern facilities. At UvA, you really feel that an investment is being made in your education and for that reason a student is motivated to do his/her best. Amsterdam is the most lively town where I have ever lived. It shows a tendency to look at the future. This is the big difference comparing to Italy.”

Dardane Raci, 26, University of Zurich, Switzerland
“UvA caught my attention because of its investment in research and innovation. With one of the research institutes specializing in Information law, attending UvA created a great opportunity to widen my skills of critical analysis, gain insight into different interpretations of this area of law and its role in a diverse society. I would like to work in a field of law that combines technology, culture and its legal aspects. Completing my Master’s degree with a semester at the UvA will greatly help me pursuing my goals. I was excited to come here, but the closer the date came the more anxious I got. However, everyone around me told me I was going to love it, and now after spending almost three months here I have to admit it, I am in love with Amsterdam. What I like about Amsterdam are the canals and that everything seems so charming and that it is small but full of life. Amsterdam is not very different from Zurich, I think that is why I feel so home and comfortable here even though it has its own charm but I can’t explain what it is, there’s just something about this city.”
TIMEOUT

A LOCAL'S GUIDE TO
AMSTERDAM'S HIDDEN GEMS

Picture by Alec Egurrola, 2nd prize for the Inbound Global Photo Contest (the bike's name is Belinda)
1.  **SLA @Utrechtsstraat 10HS**

Located in a very central location, this is the one for those who are the “hungriest” but want to feel and eat healthy. You’ll go there with no expectations but you’ll probably end up taking take-away with you. With a catchy name and a trendy and cosy (pet allowed) environment, SLA is a very healthy salad bar that deserves the highest of ratings.

2.  **HUTSPOT @Van Woustraat 4**

This is where you can check your pulse on the level of “hipsterism” (if that is still a thing). Hutspot has all the qualities that a hipster needs. On their two floors, they offer an old school photo booth from the 90’s, as well as a barber shop (the barber obviously has a moustache) and a clothing shop which is so awesome that you must go through it! On the second floor they have this delicious menu, which is easy to read even for people with the attention span of a goldfish! With a quick fix of an espresso and an avocado sandwich, I thought to myself, this place is doing it right, but there was yet another thing that would top it: an old corgi dog who came up to me to chill and sleep!

3.  **The Lebanese Sajeria. @Wijde Heisteeg 1**

A little bit outside of the centre but yet really close, The Lebanese Sajeria is one of my favourite places to eat since I came to Amsterdam. It is a small cramped place but on two floors and has this special cosy vibe with the friendliest staff I’ve met in the city. They hand make everything from the flatbread in front of the place to attract visitors to the delicious sauces! They provide everything for a quick lunch and usually take no time to make your meal and they add a little touch to the wrap with haloumi cheese and some mint as an extra taste. The staff usually offers you “the soup”, I recommend you to say yes, the soup is their specialty and its delicious as an appetizer and is also very good when it gets cold here in Amsterdam (especially on rainy days).
Amsterdam is well known for its aptitude for “gezellige” bars and cafes. Grab some “bitterballen” and try the local brewers in one of the many bars, here are a few tips!

**Hannekes Boom** is a lovely waterfront café. They offer a huge terrace overlooking the Nemo maritime museum and in the winter you can find a spot by the crackling fireplace. Keep an eye out for their live music and DJ nights.  
Price: $$

**Roest** is another bar suited for students. Its industrial buildings with live music and outside tables is a perfect spot to crack a cold one after a long day of studying. The sandy playground of Roest is the place to go on a hot summer day (although these might be rare). The weekends you will find DJs in the mix of funk or dance. Price: $$$

**Café Gollem Amstelstraat** is an ideal place for beer lovers. It offers over 30 types of tap beer and over 250 bottled beers. Moreover, it is located in the heart of the city, next to Rembrandtplein, allowing you to grasp not only the city vibe but also to meet lots of expats from different parts of the world.  
Price: $$

Amsterdam is well known for its aptitude for “gezellige” bars and cafes. Grab some “bitterballen” and try the local brewers in one of the many bars, here are a few tips!
A’DAM Lookout

Be careful, this one is not for the fainthearted. Take the short ferry from Central Station to Buiksloterweg and dare to swing above Amsterdam. Built in 2011, the A’DAM lookout swings are the highest in Europe and will give you an unrivaled adrenaline-fueled view of the city. Nonetheless, be careful whilst choosing the time and the day you visit them, because the line can be brutal during the rare sunny Amsterdam sunsets. Price: $$

Plastic Cruise

Amsterdam’s beautiful canals seem to have been plagued by the same curse as many other beautiful natural sights: pollution. Why not contribute to help make the capital’s canals plastic-free by going on a two-hour outing, where you’ll see the highlights of the beautiful canals in a recycled plastic boat, whilst making Amsterdam a cleaner place and having fun with your friends along the way? Be aware, Plastic Whale even has a prize for the most original object pulled from the canals. Price: $$

Original Activities

José Paz Ferreira

Amsterdam Bungee

Open every Saturday between 12 and 14 from April to October, Amsterdam Bungee really is one of the most uniques experiences in Amsterdam. Located in the NDSM Tower, you will get the opportunity to jump from a 50 meter tall crane - facing Central Station - into abyss. The hotel crane - once a landmark in the NDSM Wharf - is now one of the area’s main attractions and will be an experience to remember for all thrill seekers. Price: $$$
The library locations and study centres offer over 2600 various study spots all around Amsterdam. The Singel library, which is located just opposite the Flower market (Bloemenmarkt), has the longest opening hours. In addition, every study location has a wireless internet connection.

For those who would rather study in a less academic environment, Kriterion, which is a few steps away from the Roeterseiland campus, offers relaxed ambiance with an unconventional movie theatre to mellow down after studying.

Price: $$

Coffee Company - a coffee shop franchise with multiple locations scattered around Amsterdam - is an ideal place for group meetings and project discussions.
Price: $$

Coffee Bru is an artsy coffee place with chill music and sidewalk seating. It is located nearby Oosterpark and is a good spot for a noon get together. Is this the best coffee of Amsterdam?
Price: $$
Cultural Activities

Simone Krop

Museumplein, home to a few of the most famous museums in Amsterdam, is a convenient place if you are looking for cultural activities. You can find the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum and the Stedelijk Museum of Modern Art here. The queues for the museums can be long and it is advised to either book your ticket online or get a museumcard for easy access. The square has recently been renovated according to the needs of its users and is now a green area where you can see the museums and have a nice picnic. Moreover, there are open-air exhibitions, markets and a large paddling pool to dip your toes into on warmer days. In winter, the pool is transformed into an outdoor ice rink to enjoy the national sport: ice-skating.

Price: $$

What some people don’t know, is that Amsterdam has been known for its diamonds production for 400 years. The company Gassan Diamonds settled in an old diamond factory that used to work on steam power. What is amazing is that they now offer free guided tours. You can see how diamonds are cut and how they did it in the old days. The guided tours are given in more than 27 languages and are every day between 9-5. When the tour is over and if you are loaded enough, you can also buy a few shiny objects.

Price: Free

Alternative Museums

If you are not fond of the crowds at the famous museums at Museumplein and don’t feel like buying the expensive museumcard, you can always check out some of the lesser known museums. You could go to, for example, the FOAM photography museum. The Tropenmuseum would be a good idea if you are interested in how material objects can tell stories about people and cultural diversity. In the Willet-Holthuysen you can explore the preserved home of a Golden Age family and at the same time have a look in one of the great buildings on the canals.
BEST UNDER THE RADAR
EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS

PICTURE BY ROMY ROOMANS - 2ND PLACE OF THE ERASMUS STUDY ABROAD PHOTO CONTEST
You want to see archaeological ruins? You want to party like it is your last time? You want to hike a mountain or go skiing? And you don’t wanna spend much money on it? Sofia is the right place!

Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, traces its history back to the Roman times, when it was a Roman city, named Serdika. Now Sofia is the flourishing capital of Bulgaria, home of around 2 million people. While building the underground of the city, builders surprisingly found the ruins of the Roman city and that is why nowadays Sofia’s city centre resembles an archeological resort.

There are numerous historical places in the city centre to visit as well as many parks, shops, cafes and nice restaurants. All are mostly located near Vitosha street. During the night, the city is very lively, but if you are ready for a change in scenery, go to Studentski grad. Students in Sofia have their own neighborhood, called Student’s town (Studentski grad), and Student’s town never sleeps. Go there in the evening, relax in one of the many Shisha bars and try all kinds of street food. After midnight, it is time to party! Do not miss going to one of the discos that have put Bulgarian/Balkan music called chalga (or popfolk) on the map. At first you may be a little shocked, but fun is guaranteed.

Sofia is built on the foot of Vitosha mountain, which you can see from almost everywhere in the city. Vitosha is easily accessible by public transport and there are plenty of routes you can take to climb its highest peak, Cherni Vrah (“Black peak”, 2,290) or to take a walk through the forest. Vitosha is great for skiing as well. If you feel adventurous, we recommend you to stay for the night in one of the huts on the mountain. In the mountain huts you can experience the Bulgarian hospitality and togetherness while breathing fresh air, drinking rakia, eating warm local food, and sharing your stories with the other travellers in the hut.

A beer in Sofia is 1-2 euros, eating in a fast food restaurant is 2-4 euros, and a bed in a hostel or hut is 6 - 10 euros.

By Melania Berbatova
Lisbon is now the furthest thing away from being one of Europe’s hidden jewels, which it used to be until a tourist boom invaded the city, which, nonetheless, didn’t lose its charm and natural beauty. In fact, Europe’s warmest capital keeps growing alongside the headlines that call it “the coolest city” or the prizes for “best destination” and still is a can’t miss getaway (or even more).

In Lisbon, you will find one of the cheapest living costs of Western Europe (a pint could cost you as little as one euro in Bairro Alto and a full meal could be around five euros) but also a city that seems to never sleep. Start your day by going to nearby Cascais (around 30 mins by public transportation) where you can dive into the cold Atlantic before trying one of Santini’s mythical ice creams.

Head back to the city and explore Principe Real, one of the city’s trendiest locations where you’ll find all kinds of shops by Portuguese influencers and trend-setters. Continue by heading down Baixa and Chiado, two of the city’s most historical neighbourhoods - that were destroyed by an earthquake over 200 years ago – with its unique streets and hills that remind you of past times.

When you get to Terreiro do Paço the capital’s majestic square by the Tagus river move on to visiting Belém, where you’ll find many riverside monuments to the Portuguese navigators, but also the Jerónimos Monastery and the mythical Pastéis de Belém, one of the most iconic Portuguese delicacies (local tip: go to A Manteigaria instead, they are better and the line won’t take you an hour).

Finally, end your day in beauty by visiting LX Factory, a zone of abandoned factories that has been converted into one of the city’s most dynamic creative hubs and where you’ll be able to overlook the sunset from Rio Maravilha’s breath-taking rooftop. But no day in Lisbon is complete without a night in Lisbon. Head to Bairro Alto where you’ll see the Portuguese movida with people crowding the streets drinking until 3AM before heading to Cais do Sodré where you’ll find some of the city’s best clubs.

By José Paz Ferreira
Iceland is home to a progressive and peaceful nation that has formed a modern society where freedom and equality are the most important qualities. Iceland continuously ranks near the top of measurements for life quality. Iceland is one of the highest ranked countries in the world in terms of health care, education and internet availability. But Iceland is also know as the land of Fire and Ice and is home to one of the largest glaciers in Europe, which also happens to be one of Europe’s smallest population ranging to just about 340 thousand people. Iceland has it all: long summer days with 24 hours of sunshine (but temperatures around 18 degrees), but also short winter days with only a couple of hours of daylight, where you will probably see the Northern lights on your way home. With a very strong literary tradition, it’s easy to say that the language is a cornerstone of the Icelandic culture. If you are considering to study in Iceland or just want to visit you may need to consider having some tips since the country is like no other in Europe. It’s different for many reasons that may seem obvious, for instance, it is a huge island in the middle of the North Atlantic sea and its closest neighbour is Greenland.

The western part of Iceland’s capital, Reykjavik, lures the University of Iceland with a convenient campus-village with daycare, shops and restaurant Studentakjallarinn/ (Student cellar) which is in the school’s main hall. Be prepared before coming to Iceland, since it is important to have in mind that the living expenses can be rather high in comparison to other countries regarding food, drinks and transportation. Usually, having an apartment on campus would help but if you don’t have that, it is really easy to circle the whole city within an hour with bus transportation, whereas the rest of the country is mostly - I’m afraid - covered by lava fields. Therefore, it is impossible to have trams or trains. Fear not, since it is quite amazing to wake up in the wilderness - as if Game of Thrones was taking place in your backyard - and the majestic mountain area surrounding the capital will make you forget about the cold weather.

In Iceland we have a wide range of weird food to eat and our traditional cuisine can mostly find its roots in the western part of Iceland. My favorite recommendations to all newcomers is Hangikjöt or Smoked hanging ham: it is used in salads and goes especially well with a traditional bread called flatbrauð or flatbread. “Family dinners” usually consist of rice-pudding with raisins and a side of fried lamb liver, which may sound harsh at first but coming home from the cold for a hot meal never seems to disappoint anyone in Iceland. Also, if you are visiting around Christmas time we have a traditional meal called Skatan which is a kind of boiled fish with rye bread and hot fat (really delicious!), but should only be eaten once a year during Þórláksmessa (St. Thorlaksmess), the 23rd of December. All of these cuisines are served in the cafeteria at the University, but of course there are vegan options too!

By Húbert Óðinn Huntingdon-Williams
If you are looking for a cheap and fun weekend getaway, why not try the Romanian capital for a starter? Bucharest is the 6th city in Europe by population, so the metropolis has earned its “city that never sleeps” reputation quite easily. Nicknamed “Little Paris” between the two World Wars, Bucharest has developed into a city full of a mixture of styles and tastes, where you can find both culture and lively parties.

But let’s start our adventure through the city. Why not start with the town’s largest park (and the locals’ favourite spot to spend a sunny day), Herăstrău? You could get lost on the numerous alleys, have a drink in the quiet cafes and restaurants or even rent a boat to stroll down the lakes of the park. Right outside the gardens you can see the Arch of Triumph, which was built after the first World War and which very much resembles the one in Paris, being one of the reasons for the city aforementioned nickname. If you go down the road, you will reach Piața Victoriei (Victory Square), the busiest crossroad in the city. Here you can visit the Antipa Museum, which is the Natural Sciences Museum, and pass by the Government’s building. This is also where Calea Victoriei (Victory Avenue), or better called, the shopping street, starts.

Walking down this road, you will understand why Bucharest is said to be a mixture of styles. Late 19th century style buildings alongside concrete blocks, nice little cafes and graffiti walls, grand, luxurious palaces who used to be owned by Romanian upper class in the 20th century, Calea Victoriei has it all. Make sure you make a stop at the Romanian Athenaeum, a splendid concert hall that was built in the late 19th century with money raised through a public subscription and which houses the annual George Enescu music festival. Continuing down Calea Victoriei, you reach Centrul Vechi (Old Town), the heart of the city and perfect place for cheap partying and great music. If you are into a fancy dinner, you may try one of the many rooftops in the area or getting a table at Caru’ cu Bere, a restaurant that has been open for 140 years and which is said to be the birth place of a Romanian speciality, mici (translated from Romanian, the dish is called “little”, because it is composed of small chunks of grilled minced meat).

Near the Old Town you will see the Parliament’s palace, the second largest administrative building in the world after the Pentagon. The ex communist leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, designed the building to fit all of his administrative crew and to be his meeting point for encounters with foreign politicians, so he did not spare any penny in creating a lavish construction. 700 architects worked for the 1100 rooms where nowadays the Romanian Parliament operates. Tours here have to be booked in advance, but the interiors and the view from the balcony are totally worth it.

Bucharest is perfectly located between the Romanian mountains and the seaside, so, if you ever get bored in the city, you could take a quick ride to see the Black Sea or visit the famous Dracula castle, in the Bucegi Mountains.

By Andreea Bajenaru
If you want to see what the world would look like if all nations and cultures were mixed, Istanbul is the right destination. You can find any kind of culture or people in the crowded streets of Istanbul. You can watch the sea in the middle of the city. It’s always nice to eat your fish, drinking the Turkish traditional alcohol Rakı, smelling the salty smell of the sea and watch the other continent which is connected by two bridges. You can take the ferry to another continent while you are drinking your tea which is served on all ferries.

Furthermore, if you are into food, you can find an amazing variety of foods in the Turkish cuisine, which is not just kebabs but also hundreds of other dishes belonging to cities of Turkey. As for the night life, you will face one of the best scenes in the world with good music and cheap alcohol.

If you are into history, Istanbul offers you the opportunity to discover the history of the Eastern Roman Empire (Constantinople), the Ottoman Empire (Payitaht) and Modern Turkey (Istanbul). Istanbul is a big city which has different rituals and cultures in every single district. Christian Louboutin once said: “It was in Cihangir that I first learned Istanbul was not an anonymous multitude of walled-in lives - a jungle of apartments where no one knew who was dead or who was celebrating what - but an archipelago of neighbourhoods in which everyone knew each other.”

Or, in Roger Waters’ words, “Istanbul is inspiring because it has its own code of architecture, literature, poetry, music.” In fact, life never stops in Istanbul, since everything is open until very late which gives you the amazing opportunity to eat and drink at any time of the day. As the great French emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, put it: “All other cities are doomed, but I imagine that as long as people exist, Constantinople will exist.”

On the other hand, if you are into skiing, if you are into swimming, if you are into climbing, if you are into discovering caves; you can do all of those in different places in Turkey to which you can find very cheap tickets from Istanbul’s airports. Especially, if you are into football, you can find the amazing chance to watch matches with the best supporters. Be careful of your ears, Turkish football supporters hold the record for the loudest sound in a football match!

By Selin Yilmaz
Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia, is the country’s biggest city serving as a cultural, economic and political center. Located in central Europe at the crossroads of main European cultural and trade routes, it combines beautiful nature with nice people and a rich history. The origins of the city have never been clear, since some legends say it was built by the Argonauts, but the Romans founded the city under the name of Emona and a lot of archaeological excavation can be seen all over the city center. The heart of the city is the Ljubljana castle standing on Castle Hill, originally a medieval fortress. It is still in use for concerts, events and offers a beautiful view of the whole city. Under the Castle, there is a river called Ljubljanica which you can cross with the Triple Bridge and use to enter Ljubljana’s Old Town, a place full of riverside bars where people enjoy the weather and city vibe. There are also a lot of parks in the city where you can just sit, have a drink or make a picnic. It is always nice to discover Ljubljana through museums, galleries, and cathedrals, all full of cultural legacy. Going around the city is easy by cheap public transport and if you need help you can always find nice social people who will help you and show you the way.

Student life in Ljubljana is unique because life is peaceful, full of social drinks with your friends in nice bars with affordable prices (beer around 2.5 EUR) which always lead to great parties. Slovenia’s beautiful people are also very connected through sport. Slovenia is European Champion in basketball which makes such a small country very proud and shows how great Slovenian athletes are (Goran Dragić, Luka Dončić,…). The diversity of sport you can do in Slovenia is just amazing: from hiking in beautiful mountains to diving in the sea and skiing on the ski slopes. Discovering the country by bike or just taking a nice walk around the romantic Bled lake makes you think that everything can be possible because the most distant point of the country is just two hours away from the capital. That means you can enjoy your coffee on the sea coast and on that same day hike on one of the mountains.

By Ziga Jarm
Tom and Simone both went on exchanges. Simone, a UvA student, went to the University of Manchester during the second semester of the 2016-2017 year. Tom, a student at the University of Manchester is at the UvA during the first semester of the 2017-2018 year. They met in Amsterdam and discussed the main points in common and differences of their exchanges.

What are main differences that you feel between studying in Manchester and Amsterdam?

Simone: Well, for starters, I was in student living in Manchester so I had the whole campus experience there and that’s very different, but also the way they teach. Whereas we have a 8-8-4 week semester, there the whole semester you just have three courses and that’s it.

Tom: Yeah, British students really don’t work hard in comparison to European students, we really don’t. I have twelve week semesters in the UK and two of those weeks I usually have off as readings weeks. That being said, on the other hand, the accommodation in Amsterdam (even though I know it’s kind of unique to the city) really annoys me.

Academically wise, besides the actual amount of classes, which system did you find more challenging?

S: I think here you have to work harder in a short amount of time, but there you talk about big broad questions and you get to analyze details, which I find very interesting. Whatever fits you best.

T: I felt like they gave more emphasis to more historical texts here, which was challenging and involved more consistent work than Manchester. There, you could have months without doing anything and then having a very intense week and a half or two. Here, you actually have to be able to work in a consistent manner.

What was (or is in Tom’s case) your favorite part of your exchange experience?

S: Meeting new people, I guess.

T: Yeah, everyone was super friendly. International student intro week is pretty good here. So definitely meeting new people.

S: Different perspectives, learning new things…

T: New cultures.

« DO YOU WANT TO GO THERE BECAUSE YOU WANT A NEW EXPERIENCE? BECAUSE YOU WANT TO LEARN SOMETHING? BECAUSE YOU WANT TO GO TO A SPECIFIC CITY? YOU CAN HAVE ALL KINDS OF REASONS »

Curious how you’re just both stating you had to go to each other’s city to discover new cultures, why couldn’t you just do it in your home city considering this other person has done it?

S: You stay in your bubble. When you’re an international student and you don’t know anyone, you force yourself to do something about it.

T: International students are all in the same boat, we’re all outside of our bubble. In Manchester, I had the same routines and they wouldn’t make me meet new people.

So you felt it was hard to make connections with international students in your home universities?

T: To some extent, there is a bit of a divide.

S: I think considering international students usually only stay for a semester you somehow feel like it’s just not worth it.

None of you guys went to a very exotic destination: some people consider you have to do your exchanges faraway for them to be fruitful, why would you recommend to someone to go on an exchange through the Erasmus program?

S: It’s already an experience that you’re on your own somewhere different and that you have to learn all kinds of new things.

T: It completely depends on what your situation is. I was going to America, but then I changed my mind. It doesn’t have anything to do with distance, just your personal preferences.

S: It also depends on what you want to do: do you want to go there because you want a new experience? Because you want to learn something? Because you want to go to a specific city? You can have all kinds of reasons.

So after this experience, what is the conclusion: Amsterdam or Manchester?

T: I prefer Manchester. Love Amsterdam but in hindsight Manchester.

S: If I had a lot of money, Manchester. Since I don’t, definitely Amsterdam.
OVERRATED OR UNDERRATED?

OUR CREW PREPARED AND DISTRIBUTED A SURVEY ABOUT THE MAIN DEBATES IN A NETHERLANDS’ STUDENT LIFE. THESE ARE THE RESULTS PREPARED BY SELIN YILMAZ.

BIKING

“Such an enjoyable experience!”
- James (Netherlands)

CANAL CRUISES

“Too mainstream”
- Melania (Bulgaria)

AMSTERDAM NIGHTLIFE

“One word: Coco’s”
- Aana (India)

DUTCH LEARNING SYSTEM

“Harder than I thought”
- Ross (USA)

DUTCH CHEESE

“How can cheese be overrated?”
- Sophia (Germany)

DUTCH BEER

“Too much “hipster””
- Hubert (Iceland)
LOST?
MAYBE THE NEXT PAGE WILL HELP YOU.
Picture by Thirza Thiel
2nd place in the Global Outbound Contest
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
<th>SPANISH</th>
<th>FRENCH</th>
<th>GERMAN</th>
<th>DUTCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello!</td>
<td>¡Hola!</td>
<td>Salut!</td>
<td>Hallo!</td>
<td>Hallo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you?</td>
<td>¿Cómo estás?</td>
<td>Comment allez-vous?</td>
<td>Wie geht es dir?</td>
<td>Hoe gaat het (met je)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much is it?</td>
<td>¿Cuánto cuesta?</td>
<td>Combien ça coûte?</td>
<td>Wie viel kostet das?</td>
<td>Hoeveel is het?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could I get a beer please?</td>
<td>¿Podría tomar una cerveza, por favor?</td>
<td>Pourrais-je avoir une bière s'il-vous-plait?</td>
<td>Könnte ich bitte ein Bier bekommen?</td>
<td>Mag ik een biertje, alsjeblieft?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where's the nearest supermarket?</td>
<td>¿Dónde está el supermercado más cercano?</td>
<td>Où est le supermarché le plus proche?</td>
<td>Wo ist der nächste Supermarkt?</td>
<td>Waar is de dichtstbijzijnde supermarket?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I get to Centraal Station?</td>
<td>¿Cómo puedo llegar a la estación central?</td>
<td>Comment puis-je me rendre à la gare centrale?</td>
<td>Wie komme ich zur Central Station?</td>
<td>Hoe kom ik bij het Centraal Station?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partying/Nightlife: What To Know About Drugs In Amsterdam by Samy Du

Before I went on exchange, whenever I told people that I was going to study abroad in Amsterdam, I always got responses like: “Cool! Weed is legal there, right?”/“I heard that Amsterdam is like a magical drug wonderland!”/“Yo you’re gonna do so many drugs while you’re there!” So clearly, Amsterdam has a reputation as a place to do drugs. While plenty of people do visit the city for hedonistic purposes, it is important to consider a few things before deciding to do or to not do drugs in The Netherlands.

Marijuana
- Dutch laws regarding soft drugs, most commonly weed, can be confusing. Marijuana is legal to possess, up to 5 grams, and you can get it at one of over 200 coffeeshops in Amsterdam. However, buying weed is technically illegal. Smoking marijuana in public won’t be prosecuted but it is important to check that you’re not smoking in an area where it is designated as not allowed.
- Weed is only sold in official “coffeeshops”. All of the cannabis labeled products sold in other places (cookies, candies, etc.) won’t do anything for your except take your money and turn your tongue green.
- If you do choose to smoke marijuana, don’t drink alcohol at the same time. To avoid getting ill, be conscious and conservative with your dosage.

Mushrooms/Truffles
- Due to unfortunate incidents in the past, the sale of hallucinogenic mushrooms has been banned in The Netherlands since 2008.
- “Truffles” are still legal and can be found at smart shops. They are slightly different and less strong than mushrooms but contain the same active ingredient.
- Taking hallucinogens is not recommended as their influence on each individual is unpredictable and can pose serious health risks. If you do decide to take truffles, make sure you do them in a relatively safe and controlled environment.

Hard Drugs:
- Hard drugs (ecstasy, cocaine, LSD, etc.) are illegal in The Netherlands. You can be punished for possession and you will get kicked out of nightclubs if you are caught with any.
- Whatever you do, don’t buy drugs from random people on the street. Not only are these often tourist traps, you can never be sure what exactly is being sold to you. Better safe than sorry!
- Don’t do heroin, ever. Please.

***Remember you’re here in Amsterdam to study. By all means, have fun while you’re here but don’t get too carried away, as it is important to make the most of your exchange experience with a clear mind.***
OUTBOUND EXCHANGE INTERVIEW BY YUKI LAM

Picture by Leon Lan 3rd prize winner in the Global Outbound Contest
Why did you pick Hong Kong as your exchange destination?
I have been travelling extensively in Asia. Singapore, Indonesia, India were some of the Asian countries I had visited before. Therefore, I was searching for an entirely new city to be my exchange destination due to my interest in Asia. China has emerged as a major global economic power in the recent years, thus I would like to explore the social or economical development in this country. Hong Kong is an international metropolis and also a Special Administrative Region of China. Residents enjoy high freedom of speech and press. Staying in this city would be one of the best ways for me to learn more about the Chinese culture and at the same time, I did not need to worry about the language problem.

What were the cultural shocks you experienced after your arrival in Hong Kong?
Everyone experiences cultural shock when adapting to a new culture. I was amazed by the nightlife in Hong Kong. In Amsterdam, the closing time of shops and museums is 6pm. Student will commute back home after class, spending time with their family, having meal together. Yet, Hong Kong and Amsterdam were entirely different from each other. The streets were still crowded with people after 10pm everyday. The city was flooded with the ambient glow of colorful neon light. You could find neon advertising signs everywhere. We could even spend our midnight in Lan Kwai Fong inside the restaurants and bars with friends.

How are lectures different from the Dutch system?
The system in Hong Kong was different from the Dutch system. In HKUST, we were allowed to take courses outside the business field. Since I would like to learn more about the economic growth and cultural development in China, I registered several humanities courses to learn about Chinese philosophy, Capitalism, Confucianism and so on. You had high degree of freedom in course registration in HKUST.

What did you learn from your exchange?
I will never forget my experience as an exchange student since I did learn a lot during my short stay in Hong Kong. Being independent was one of the skills I acquired. This was my first time being away from home for a long period of time. I had to fend for myself and cope with the problems on my own when studying abroad. Besides, I had also learned to adapt to foreign environment. I have to adjust to new conditions as the living habits, cuisine or even the style of communication in Hong Kong was different from that in Amsterdam.
Goodbye exchange & say hello to your reverse culture shock(1)

Ok, you’re home. Stepping out of that might feel like stepping back out of a time machine that has been travelling back in time. Your views of the world has shifted and you’ve changed, yet things at home seem largely the same. How do you pick up and move forward at the same time?

Host an exchange student
Remember when you first stepped off the plane in a new country? Whether you felt a rush of excitement or a touch of loneliness, a local buddy could have enhanced those first days. Now you can connect with international students and show them all great things about Amsterdam. ISN offers the Dutch buddy program, take a look at their website for more info and deadlines: https://isn-amsterdam.nl/become-buddy-1

Go abroad (again)
Make plans to meet up with your new friends from all over the world. Start soon, working on travels plans and ideas will also allow you to stay better connected. Going abroad might have inspired you towards an international career path. Invest time in what your options are because there are plenty! If you are close to graduation, consider Masters abroad. Or maybe you are ready for the next step. Did you know UvA job board is full of international positions? Check it out: http://student.uva.nl/en/content/az/career/internships-and-jobs/uva-job-board-en.html

Become a global ambassador!
- Are you back from your exchange experience and do you miss the international vibe?
- Or are you going on exchange to the UvA and do you want to work with local UvA students and other exchange students?

The UvA offers an award-winning exchange program that gives you the chance on an unique learning experience. As a global ambassador you become an university spokesperson. In a group with local and international students you will complete two assignments. In a range of training programmes you will develop and enhance your intercultural, networking, project planning and professional skills. Keep an eye out for the applications! www.uva.nl/ambassadors

1. Culture shock is an experience a person may have when one moves to a cultural environment which is different from one’s own; it is also the personal disorientation a person may feel when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life due to immigration or a visit to a new country, a move between social environments, or simply transition to another type of life. - wikipedia
READY FOR THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME?

PICTURE BY STAN VAN MANEM
WINNER OF THE 2017 ERASMUS STUDY ABROAD PHOTO CONTEST