

Our today's guest is Dominik who went on Erasmus to Santander in Spain! Let's listen to his stories :)

Hey! Please introduce yourself and tell us about your hobbies! :)

Hello everyone! I'm Dominik and I study Finance and Accounting at the University of Opole. My friends say I'm a quiet and introverted person but inside I'm full of positive emotions, plans, dreams, and new ideas for self-development but I can be also crazy, in a smoother meaning.

My hobbies? First of all, I'm addicted to running, even though I'm not a professional runner I just love it because it makes me feel not only healthy but also happy! Secondly, I've become a travel lover, but you'll read about it probably somewhere below.

My biggest dream is to work internationally; have one temporary job and just use my life as much as I can.

The best words that can describe me are:

“If you believe in something,

Don't give up on it”

~Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament

Could you tell us what place you decided to choose as your Erasmus destination? What was your first feeling when you arrived there?

The place I chose was Santander- a cosy place in the northern part of Spain in the autonomous region named Cantabria.

When I arrived there the first thing I did was say to myself “You did it”. Unforgettable feeling of being there, standing at the airport and staring at the huge sign “Santander Airport”. Later, when I started exploring the city, I couldn't believe it was real – long beaches, peninsulas, bays and the clear sea; it all was breathtaking.

Before I arrived there I had heard the city was a safe place with polite residents, ready and eager to help you whenever you need it. And I surely agree with it (I remember an elder man who was helping me to choose a tomato sauce in a grocery, and he was right, the sauce was delicious).

The other thing I was excited about was living in a city which is a peninsula, precisely living with access to the sea. That's something I wouldn't have expected before I arrived there.

Why did you decide to choose Santander as your Erasmus+ destination?

I chose Santander due to its access to the sea; while I was searching for possible destinations,

I took into consideration only places close to the sea and...here I am! I just wanted to see how it's to live next to the sea and look at it every day after waking up! Moreover, good weather was also one of the reasons. Even though there's sometimes rainy, I'm in love with this city.

Tell us a little bit more about the application process. Do you have any suggestions for students who want to take part in the Erasmus+ program as well?

The application process is not just simple, it's easy (haha)! As in every application process, there are stages you need to follow precisely and meet the deadlines. The biggest surprise was a cover letter (as I didn't know this document was needed for the Erasmus application) but at the same time that was a perfect way to think over why I wanted to go on Erasmus and try to convince my university I'm the right person to choose. The ladies who work at the Erasmus Office in Opole are very helpful, always answered all of my questions. The only suggestion for students who want to take part in the Erasmus+ program is not to be scared and never overthink the decision you are supposed to make, just make it because you're the best version of yourself; I can assure you you won't regret it.

Did it take you long to decide whether you should do it? What did ultimately convince you?

This is the perfect question. I had been thinking for over 5 months before I made my final decision. I always made excuses for not having done this, thinking if I was capable and mature enough to face our small, big world. What finally convinced me, actually the one who finally convinced me was a close friend of mine who told me I was the most appropriate person he knew who should do it!

During that time my family supported me and made me feel ready for my Erasmus+ adventure, these are the people who knew my decision before I made it.

Why do you think it's a good idea to study in a different country?

Getting into a new culture, meeting amazing people, making international friends, tasting delicious dishes, learning a foreign language on a daily basis, being independent...do I have to say anything more? Regarding advantages, I think I've listed most of them above. Disadvantages, from the beginning

it's hard to get used to a new culture when you've been raised in a different environment, but after some time you get used to it and you start absorbing the foreign culture you began to live in.

Are classes at this university hard?

The teachers and the classes at the university are very demanding, I think more than in Poland, but what is different is the way of working and sometimes the requirements are unpredictable, e.g. we needed to do a Cash Flow for an investment which was going to be undertaken in real life because our teacher was a CFO of some company, and yes, they really took an investment we worked on.

What do you like the most about this city?

The best thing, as I said previously, is the access to the sea, anywhere I go, I always see it because the city is located on a hill. Also, a nightlife is impressive and the parks, which are nice place to study during warm days.

What surprised you the most when you started living there?

When I started living there the biggest surprise was a 'siesta', which I didn't expect in the northern part of Spain, because it's not as hot there as it is in the south of Spain, so doing shopping between 2 p.m and 6 p.m is nearly impossible.

What do you recommend to do in Santander ? How can you spend your free time there?

Going out with friends is the best idea to spend free time in Santander. It has many parks where you can sit, talk and just rest, while having a perfect sea view and enjoying the sun.

Considering Santander is a hilly city it has a lot of paths which go along the coastline, so hiking and going for a walk are the two things that are nice to do as well.

The opposite side of the bay is a good place for surf lovers. I've been surfing many times during my stay there, even though I'm not good at it and it's hard - it gives me a lot of fun.

Your favorite places in Santander and close to this city. Did you visit any other places in

Spain?

My favorite place in Santander is located at the Magdalena's Peninsula (span. Peninsula de la Magdalena), which is a hill with a huge park around it; at the top of the hill we can see the Magdalena's Palace with a beautiful view at the opposite side of the bay. Another place worth visiting is far away from the city but when you drive a car it takes 2h to get there, namely I mean *Picos tres mares*, so the mountains of three seas. Breathtaking views during the fall and excellent place for skiing during the winter.

I also visited Asturias Region in Spain, which is usually known for the cider companies, whose products are distributed around the world. Moreover, I visited Basque Country (Bilbao, San Sebastian), which is a region next to Cantabria; what's impressive, there is a language – Euskera, which is used with conjunction with Spanish.

I visited Madrid as well, the capital of Spain which differs a lot from other cities in Spain, it's more modern but pleasant, unfortunately for me it was overcrowded.

How about the transport? Is it hard to find buses / trains / flights to other places?

In Santander I use only buses. It's not so expensive, if you register in a local government, you pay 51 Euro for three months and you can use all the busses unlimitedly.

If you want to move to another popular cities in Spain as Barcelona, Madrid, Malaga etc. it's better to fly there instead of using trains. With Ryanair you usually pay less than 20 euro for one way flight, meanwhile the cost of a train is approximately around 50 euros for one way ticket.

Can you describe Spanish people? What are they like?

Spanish people...hmm, I would say they just are. They're never in a rush, usually, okay, almost always late, but at the same time they are precise, neat and meticulous. What I like is that they really like helping others! The culture differs distinctly from Polish one.

Is it difficult to communicate with them in English? Do they know English or foreigners

should know at least a little bit of Spanish?

I can say if you're going to study in Spain without knowing Spanish, start learning it. Of course, younger people speak English and even French, but they prefer talking in Spanish, it's just the feeling of belonging to the Spanish natives. And as in most countries, older people don't know English.

Is Spain an expensive country?

Definitely not in Santander, compared to Madrid or other big cities, which are more expensive than Santander. The prices in the place where I have studied are comparable to the Polish prices.

Your favourite Spanish food! What can you recommend to non-Spanish people?

I'm in love with *tortilla de patatas*; it's like omelette but with potatoes. Additionally, I would recommend eating seafood, which is especially fresh, easy accessible and delicious in the northern Spain, (e.g. fried squid, crabs or shrimps). Moreover, the most popular snacks in Spain – tapas, small sandwiches with different ingredients, churros, which are hard to describe that's why everyone should taste them with hot chocolate. Spanish flavors are endless and they differ in every region, so it's worth traveling and trying the local dishes.

Would you recommend to take part in the Erasmus+ program?

Erasmus participation is an experience you just need to have! Do I recommend Santander as a place for mobility? Definitely yes! If I didn't convince you yet just text me so we could meet, talk and I'll tell you more about Erasmus since it's a never ending story!

The thing is you need to believe in yourself and as the quote I wrote earlier says "If you believe in something, don't give up on it"

Thank you so much for sharing your experience with us! :)

Thank you for letting me recall this experience once again.