

## **It is a new story time! This time Jesica will tell us about her Erasmus+ experience in Athens!**

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

Hello everyone! My name is Jesica, I am 24 years old and I am from Poland. I studied sociology at the University of Opole for 5 years. Last year I did a Master Degree. Studying was a great time for me, because it gave me the opportunity to develop and studying at foreign universities. During my studies, I took part in the Erasmus+ program two times. My first mobility I spent in Valencia (University of Valencia, 2017/2018) and the second one in Athens (Panteion University, 2020/2021). Both mobilities were great adventures, that I will never forget. I like traveling and learning about new cultures. I am also a huge fan of good food.

Currently I am doing my third Erasmus mobility - an internship in Athens.

**Could you tell us more about your experience in Athens? What did you hear about this city before and what you were excited about?**

As my Erasmus destination I have choosen Athens in Greece. I attended Panteion University.

Before I went there, I heard that the people there are very nice and helpful, the sun is shining most of the time and there are fabulous views at the seaside. It all turned out to be true! When I left to Greece, I was very happy about being in a country where the average temperature in December is 15-19 degrees Celsius. I liked this vision of winter very much. My feelings were very positive from the beginning. At the airport, I was greeted by a woman who rented me an apartment. She drove me to the apartment and on the way she was talking about the city and answering all my questions. We have contact until now and I can say that we are good friends. I devoted my first days in Athens to sightseeing and I immediately fell in love with the beautiful views. They cannot be described. I just have to show you some of my photos later!

**Why have you decided to choose Athens as your Erasmus+ destination?**

I wanted to visit Greece for a long time, but there was always something that was stopping me from doing this. My friends who were already in Greece for holidays were delighted with this country, its climate and beautiful views. Therefore, when I decided to take part in

the Erasmus+ program, the destination was obvious to me. While browsing the offers available for my field of study, I found Athens in Greece and I immediately filled out the application form. I did not hesitate for a moment.

**Did you think long time whether you should do it? What ultimately convinced you?**

After my first Erasmus mobility, I was sure that I would go again on Erasmus during my Master's Degree. I was just wondering about the place. But the decision had been made for a long time.

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

Application process is not easy but I think that all steps of the process are clearly explained on the website of University of Opole. All downloadable documents and instructions are there. And of course we always can contact the Erasmus Office, the people there are very helpful. My only suggestion is to visit the "*Erasmus*" tab on the website of University of Opole and respect the deadlines. There is also a department coordinator who should answer all questions and help during the application process.

**Why do you think it's a good idea to study in a different country? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this decision?**

Study in a different country is a great opportunity to get to know new cultures, languages and people. Students can see how other universities are functioning and what rules apply there. It is completely different in Greece comparing to Poland. There are different relations with professors (very unofficial), there is a different grading system and other requirements. For me, such a decision has only advantages.

**Are classes at the University hard? Is it hard to pass exams?**

It probably all depends on the courses and the teachers. The courses I chose were pleasant and interesting. The teachers were nice, helpful and they clearly defined their requirements. The exams were held in English. Personally, I had no problems with passing the courses.

**What do you like the most about this city?**

The thing I liked the most about Athens that it is located on the seaside. At any time you

can get on the bus and go to the beaches to swim in the sea, sunbath or just take a walk along the promenade.

I also liked the fact that Athens has very well developed public transport: buses, metro, trams and trolleybuses.

### **What surprised you the most when you started living there?**

What surprised me the most was a fact that people don't respect the rules on the road, for example people crossing the street on red lights or car drivers who do not respect the traffic signs. Sometimes it is very dangerous.

I was also surprised that there are so many emigrants and refugees living in Athens. Many people live on the street.

### **What do you recommend to do in Athens? How can you spend your free time there?**

Athens is a city where it is impossible to get bored. There are many viewpoints where entry is free (eg. Mount Lycabettus or Filopappou Hill).

From these places you can admire the view on the entire city. There is also a beautiful view on the city from the Acropolis hill, where you have to pay for the entrance. The exception are people up to 25 years of age (the entrance is for free).

There are also many museums in the city where admission is free only for students with a Greek student card (including Erasmus students).

The city is divided into districts, in my opinion the most interesting are:

- Plaka - the heart of the city. The most touristic district of the city, with souvenir shops, restaurants, entrance to the Acropolis, monuments.
- Psyri - a district where you can admire graffiti on buildings, some are real masterpieces.
- Monastiraki - a district with many monuments, on the street you can listen to beautiful live music and you can buy almost everything because the streets are full of stalls.

When I had free time in Athens, I took the metro and got off at a random station, so I could always discover new and charming places. In addition, I enjoyed walking through the narrow streets of Athens and observing the way of life of the Greeks.

### **Your favourite places in Athens and close to this city. What are the best places to visit? Did you visit any other places in Greece?**

My favorite place in Athens is the Acropolis hill. I have been there several times and I was delighted every time. You can feel a truly ancient atmosphere there and admire the entire

city.

My second favorite place is Anafiotika (part of the Plaka district). It is called an island in the city center because it looks like an island - small and white houses, narrow streets, colorful stairs and shutters. It is situated in the bottom of the Acropolis hill and it is a great place for photoshoots.

Also the Temple of Poseidon, which is located in Cape Sounion, made a huge impression on me. It is about 1 hour from the center of Athens. The temple is situated on the seashore with a beautiful view on the sea. The sunsets are magical there.

In addition to Athens, in Greece I visited the following cities: Thessaloniki, Delfi, Meteora and the following islands: Aegina, Agistri, Hydra, Santorini, Rhodes, Symi, Mykonos, Kos and Crete.

### **How about the transport in Greece? Is it hard to find buses / trains / flights to other places? Is it expensive / cheap?**

Athens has a very well-developed public transport. As I already mentioned, you can move around by buses, trams, metro and trolleybuses. A monthly ticket for all means of transport with a 50% discount costs 13€ !!! Also connections to other places are a very simple matter. The 50% student discount also applies to ferries, trains and buses. You can get to the Greek islands at a low price. Ferries to other islands depart from the port of Piraeus, where you can go by metro (green line).

Athens airport is about 1 hour from the center (depending on traffic jams). You can get there by bus or metro. The airport is also served by cheap airlines such as Ryanair and Wizzair. Erasmus students can get an ESN card, thanks to which they will receive a 10% discount and the possibility of carrying 20 kg of luggage free of charge on 4 single flights in Ryanair.

### **Can you describe Greeks people? What are they like?**

The Greeks are very nice, helpful, they are almost always in a good mood. And the most important, the vast majority of Greek people speak English! The elderly people are often sitting in cafes or parks and playing various board games or cards.

### **Is it difficult to communicate with them in English? Do they know English or foreigners should know at least a little bit of Greek?**

In the whole country (I don't know how it is in small villages) you can communicate in English without any problems. From what I have experienced I can say that young and old people know English. Greeks claim that they know English well because of tourists. However, it is nice for them when tourists know and use at least basic Greek words. I noticed that very fashionable are schools, where children have their education in English.

### **Is Greece an expensive country?**

I think that the word "expensive" is very relative term. I can provide sample prices.

Price for renting a single room in a shared apartment is around 300-350€ (with bills).

Studio flat costs between 400-500€ (with bills). Monthly ticket for a public transport costs 13€

Weekly shopping at the supermarket: 30-50€. Coffee in a cafe costs around 2-3€.

You can save by buying food at marketplaces. There is a market once a week in each district. Not everyone knows that in Greece there are free meals (3 times a day) for students. Each University has its own canteen, where, by showing the student's ID card, student receives a meal (to be chosen from the list). It is also a good opportunity to try traditional Greek dishes.

Personally, I don't think Greece is expensive, but certainly (apart from the Erasmus grant) you need to have your savings.

### **Your favourite Greek food! What can you recommend to non-Greek people?**

The most popular Greek food is: souvlaki (pork or chicken meat stuffed on a skewer), moussaka (eggplant dish with ground meat, potatoes and bechamel sauce), tzatziki sauce (sauce based on Greek yogurt, cucumber, garlic and spices), dolmades (Polish stuffed cabbage) meat stuffing with rice wrapped in grape leaves, which makes dolmades smaller than Polish stuffed cabbage, Greek salad (tomato, cucumber, feta cheese, red onion, black olives), baklava (sweet, baked dessert consisting of filo pastry, walnuts, honey), filo pastry with all kinds of filling (cheese, spinach), seafood, filo pastry, feta cheese and gyro meat.

I would definitely recommend to try everything!

Overall, Greek food is greasy so I didn't like it. My favorite dish is the Greek Salad! :D

**Would you recommend others to go there or in general take part in Erasmus+ program?**

YES, YES, YES! Definitely yes :)

Both my mobilities - in Spain and in Greece changed my perception of the world, broadened my worldview and taught me a lot. Greece charmed me so much that I am currently doing an internship in Athens. I couldn't wait to come back here.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to share my Erasmus story, which is still going on thanks to the internship!

I would like to invite you to follow my stories on Instagram - [jesica.warzecha](#) and to contact me, I would be happy to answer your questions about Erasmus and Greece :)