

## My Year Abroad Experience



France definitely wasn't on my top choices of countries to do my mandatory exchange semester because it's so close to home for me. When the choice I wanted didn't pan out I said to myself to try the double degree bachelor in France. It can't hurt to have a diploma from two universities. So, I just went for it and don't regret it one bit in hindsight.

Before I give you more about my experience of the school I will mention a few tips and observations about the French lifestyle.



In the beginning of your year abroad in Nancy it's important that you figure out your living situation as soon as possible as there is a high change there will be a complication with electricity, payment of rent... This leads to my second point in student residences electricity is not always included so make sure you have the information beforehand. (I had a friend that struggled for 1 week). These points also relate to my third point I would take ICN up on their French bank account offer, even it takes them forever to get it sorted out you will need it for rent, electricity, gym and CAF. The same goes for a French phone number as most pre-made forms only take the French number, I recommend the provider "Free" it's 20€ and 100GB per month. I also recommend having a basic knowledge of French before arriving there as most French people are reluctant to speak English or have never learned it.

My personal experience with the living abroad was different than most as I did it on my own and rented privately. While creating my bank account, the French stereotype became reality that they have tons of administration, so prepare yourself that they in the beginning constantly need another document. As for my apartment I did mine last minute and private not a student residence. I had the advantage I could visit them beforehand as my "real" home is only an hour away. To give you a idea with rent prices my one room apartment was 20m<sup>2</sup> for 400€/month without utilities and not furnished.

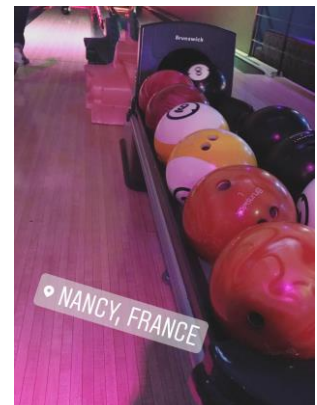
For living areas there are two options near school or near the city, as the campus moved out of the center. My apartment was near school, I only had a 10 min walk, I really loved it every morning not having to use the packed public transport but at night when everyone went out it was not ideal, my place was a 50 min walk from town as the last public transport is at a bit before 12pm. There are a lot of nights everyone went out where I didn't join just because didn't want to walk back and didn't see it worth to go only till 12.

For public transport there is a tram that connects directly the center and school (Stop: Blandan). There a student cards for transport one where you go in every month a renew it and one where they automatically deduct it form your (French) account which is cheaper. As I didn't use the public transport that often it was for me personally cheaper to get the 10 pass twice a month. If you have a car there are a few spots with free parking but at night the parking at Place Carnot is pretty cheap and an easy walk to most clubs and bars. Another detail with public transport in France they go regularly on strike so bus, train and tram may not run as frequently. There are also public bikes for 2€ a day they put a deposit on your card but when you dock it a station only the rental fee is deducted.

Moving on to the school itself, the program and the experience.

The school is a private "Grande École" in Nancy with more campuses. In Nancy my year was the first one in there new building "Artem" where they share it with other schools. As I was the first year they used the building there are a few issues. Not every room had Wi-Fi, the laptop connectors didn't always work for presentations, the cafeteria only opened the second semester. But as it was a new campus it was still clean. For more information the school library is only open till 6 and not on the weekends and bring a fully charged laptop to class as there are only 1 or 2 plugs max in the classroom.

The year abroad started with an integration week. It may not be the cheapest, but it was totally worth it. It began by presenting the school and city. In the evenings they had events planned for example to see the beautiful light show at the Place Stanislas or a bowling evening. We also did day trips, Metz and Europa Park with an overnight stay in Strasbourg. During this time, I also made already so much contact with people, I never thought it would happen so fast as I am not the most extrovert person.



In the beginning of the second semester we had an optional trip to go to Morzine also not the most affordable trip but also in my opinion worth it. It could be classified as a integration week for the new people. It might be more worth it if you know how to ski/ snowboard but was also worth it just to have tried it and realize it's harder than expected but the views from the mountain where breath taking and worth the bruises.

The way school is held there reminded me a lot of high school. You have class from 9 to 12 or from 2 to 5 or both and all classes have mandatory attendance with signature. Once a week there is a French class from 5 till 7. All the students from your course are divided into 2 groups,



so if you have for example French economy in the morning the other group has it in the afternoon. So, if you made a few friends in the other group it is difficult to plan trips together and the groups stay the same for the whole year. All the courses have a in class evaluation in form of presentations in every lesson or a big presentation or paper for the end of the semester or in class examination (bring laptop as some are done online). In general, be prepared for a lot more work especially in groups ranging from 4 to 12 people depending on subject, google docs will be your new best friend. This continued also the second semester. The thesis is also written in groups, in the beginning they made preorganized groups of 4 but changed it after complaints to let us choose our partners, I stayed with my assigned group but I would recommend

making a group with friends where you are familiar with their work ethic. You will have to prepare a draft the first semester and finish it the second. One tip I can pass on is as soon you get feedback from the first semester meet up with your group and supervisor the figure out was has to be done (interview, survey...) as the second semester is shorter than the first. The exams were mostly multiple choice, maybe one or 2 where open-ended questions. The grades are from 20 and most of the time it's 50% exams and 50% participation + in-class assessment.

A school organization "Globe and Co", helps students as best as they can but they are also students and sometimes their English knowledge is not the best so there is a high chance for language barrier. They also organize weekend trips, I went with them to Florence and Amsterdam. Trips like these leave Friday evening and return Monday morning, they were worth the money but don't expect the best organization and that you have to ask for a more in dept English translation. As for other things to do there is a cinema in town on the tramline that show movies in the original version (English), there is shopping area, there are sports clubs you can join.



Even though the classes were sometimes frustrating, I really enjoyed my year at ICN as your classmates are also from all over the world there are always nice conversations about differences coming up. During my time there I made friends for life and I know that's a stereotype, but I met the most amazing people there and would do it all over again.

I hope my experience helped you for further questions feel free to contact me, the international office can give you my contact.