

My Mobility

Students from Ca' Foscari Recount their Learning Experiences Abroad

New eyes for a new journey

Elisa Savietto

LT Commercio Estero

Destination: MCI Management Center Innsbruck, Austria

Elisa Savietto describes the sense of freedom she feels on mobility in Innsbruck.

I didn't want to finish my university career without living an experience abroad. I wondered what it would be like to leave everything, immersed in another culture, relate to foreign people and learn a new style of life. After being accepted at MCI in Innsbruck, I spent 5 months, from March till the end of June, in the capital of the Tyrol. I wanted to test myself and figure out if I could do it alone.

When I arrived, the city was framed by a generous quantity of snow which covered the top of the mountain. It would have taken a long while to melt due to the climate.

I'd be lying if I said that everything was easy right away. I found myself experiencing feelings similar to excitement and fear at the same time. I remember what I felt when my buddy-student greeted me and then left me in my room. I was overcome by a sense of emptiness never felt before. My roommate had not arrived yet, I didn't know her but she was certainly someone with whom I would be living for four months and this thought gave me a kind tranquility.

The first weeks were not easy: a new culture, new people with a different mentality, new classmates, a new language, a new routine. Speaking in another language was not simple at first. In addition, I had to get used to new rhythms of study: no set study periods, no exam sessions. It was a bit like going back to Italian elementary school: lessons that lasted from 8 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon but only for two days a week - they used to concentrate more hours of lessons on the same day - and then, a few weeks after the end of the course, there was the exam. There was enough time to dedicate to studying, and study areas were in abundance: huge libraries open until late evening, large classrooms and lots of cafes for working on team projects. At the university the climate was 'relaxed', most of the lessons were with other international students. The most surprising thing from the first day at university was the courtesy of the teachers. No barriers, no formalities, but lots of respect for towards all students.

It was normal to meet professors on the street and stopping to have a chat with them.

It didn't take a lot to make new friends: Mexico had never been so close and New Zealand seemed like a curious place; all prejudices were overturned and I realized how similar we are to each other. After about a month and a half, we created a wonderful group of friends. In the evening we often met in a dormitory kitchen or in one of the pubs to have a drink or in some clubs to dance a bit. We cooked the typical dishes of each nationality, we talked about our countries and how we spent our holidays, which cities were the most beautiful and what we were used to do during the weekend.

I found myself surrounded by people from all over the world, I touched diversity and understood treasures hidden in everyone.

I found fantastic people, a family of friends and I knew that although I was far away from home I could count on them as I knew them: the way Erasmus opens your heart is something unique.

Erasmus is having nothing planned and doing whatever you want to do, it is going to sleep knowing that the next day will be different from the previous one, it's the snow of the mountains that little by little melts and with it all your fears and worries melt too giving you an extraordinary strength. You become aware of who you are and realize the beauty of living every single moment: every instant should be lived to the maximum because it will never return - the going-home date is the 'nightmare' of all Erasmus students.

An Italian singer, Fabrizio De Andre, wrote: 'Loneliness can lead to extraordinary forms of freedom'. Erasmus is proof of this. You understand you can get by yourself but at the same time you realize that it is much better to be surrounded by people.

Erasmus is courage and it changes the way you react to everything that happens. It's an inner journey to discover who you are and it shows you the world with new eyes. As a famous quote says: 'life begins when your comfort zone ends'. So, don't be afraid of change, of what seems strange or different but experience life, travel and be curious.