



My Erasmus+ experience In Palermo, Sicily



**Medicine 5th Academic Year 2017/18
Anne-Marie Conrad**

Content

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. About me**
- 3. My decision on choosing Università degli Studi Palermo**
- 4. The Application**
- 5. Studying Medicine at Università degli studi Palermo**
- 6. Accommodation**
- 7. Erasmus life in Palermo and the Sicilian culture**
- 8. Conclusion**



Introduction

An exchange year in Sicily is an extraordinary possibility to experience a mix of different cultures located in one place. Who wants to get international experience and also wants to try the so called lifestyle „la vita e bella“ should definitely do a Semester or two in Palermo. But who expects little university effort is definitely at the wrong place. Besides organisational problems, that also needed a bit more extra effort, I wouldn't miss this opportunity.

About me

My name is Anne-Marie Conrad and I am a medical student from the University Victor Babes Medicine and Pharmacy Timisoara (UMFT).

I am 24 years old. I was born and raised in Germany, but I moved for my studies to Timisoara, Romania.

For my exchange year I chose my 5th academic year of study (9th and 10th Semester) in 2017/2018.

I chose the University of Palermo for my Erasmus+ originally only for one semester, but extended the period to one full academic year



My decision on choosing Università degli Studi Palermo

I applied for an exchange semester because I thought it would give me new sights in living in another different country and also gather experiences that would affect me later in life. Erasmus + students from previous years and fellow colleagues helped me in the decision process to choose Università degli Studi Palermo. Besides knowing about the high academic quality of the University and the hope to get in touch with different learning and teaching practices an additional motivational factor was definitely the position of the city Palermo which is located on the big autonomous island Sicily.

The application

For my 5th academic year I had the possibility to do all the necessary courses. The course offer was displayed on the University website and I could write my Learning Agreement according to the study plan. The application to the Università degli Studi is done online.

At your arrival you have to deal with the Coordinator of Medical Erasmus Students, Valentino Biagio, which will be extremely difficult to reach and also extremely difficult to convince that your Learning Agreement is right.

Studying Medicine at Università degli studi Palermo

The quality of content of courses was very high. All the lectures were in Italian language, specifically in the Sicilian dialect. At the beginning it seemed impossible to understand, but after some time it is getting easier. Lectures are from 2pm-6pm. The morning hours are for the hospital practice.

The daily practice in the hospital, called tironcino, is similar to how I know them from my University UMFT. You accompany the doctors and visit the patients. The doctors taught us a lot, were helpful and also offered English explanations in case of not understanding. Besides not having the subject Orthopedics in my academic year, I was able to do an additional tironcino in the Orthopedic Surgery department where I helped in the operation room.

The University offers Italian lessons for Erasmus students, which will be helpful especially for the exam period. The exams are oral and in Italian language. You definitely have to study to pass.

Accommodation

Through some Facebook groups (called „Affitto appartamento Palermo“ or „Affitarsi Palermo“) I was able to find an accommodation beforehand my arrival. I lived together with Italians my age. The price for one room are around 200-250€. It is also possible to reach out to the „Palermo ErasmusLife“ via their website, they offer help in finding you an accommodation if necessary. In this case you will have the opportunity to live with other Erasmus students.

The apartments are usually in a good condition, besides the fact that the old buildings do not have a heating source. You might think that this isn't necessary in the mild winter months, but when it's 10 °C outside, it's also 10°C inside the apartment. Some landlords offer small heaters that will majorly affect your electricity bill.



*My Sicilian cat in my Apartment.
Balconies are usually present*

Erasmus life in Palermo and the Sicilian culture

When I think back of the wonderful city Palermo, I have to smile. Beautiful architecture, Italian lifestyle and the mix between the different cultures make Palermo one of a kind special. I have to think of the saying „When you arrive in Sicily you will cry two times: Once at your arrival and the second time when you have to leave“, which fits perfectly. As soon as you arrive, the chaos on the streets and the heat might overwhelm you a bit. But after some days you will dive in this beautiful city. The chaos consists of people of all nationalities shouting (especially in the Ballarò market area), loud and chaotic traffic, different kinds of smells (pleasant and unpleasant) and large tourist groups migrating through the city and blocking your way (which is especially annoying when you ride your bicycle).

The Italian, or better Sicilian lifestyle is exactly „la vita è bella“. During the hot day you won't find locals on the street, only as soon as the sun sets and it's a bit colder, they will go outside the house usually to eat „Aperitivo“ (combination of a dinner with an included drink, eaten around 9pm).

After having the most important meal the night is long. Streets are filled with people, beautiful lights everywhere and street musicians sweeten the night. The „Piazza Sant'Anna“ is a famous spot in the late evening to meet your friends. You will find a big crowd of locals there, gathering to meet for a glass of wine or two. If you want to continue the night, often there will be special Erasmus parties offered by the „Erasmus Social Network“ (ESN) group. Besides that daily available is the famous „vucceria“, a specific area of the city full of bars and music. „Vucceria“ is a Sicilian word, meaning „chaos“, and it's nothing else than that. During the daytime a fish market, it transforms into a party area as soon as the sun sets. Take care of your bags when you will go in this area, some contents like your wallet might disappear.

But Palermo has more to offer than a great nightlife. During the day you can visit all the beautiful monuments like the „Teatro Massimo“ (3rd biggest Opera of Europe),



Teatro Massimo at night



Eremiti Garden with the column court

the Garden of Eremiti or the beautiful church „chiesa della Jesu“ (which is definitely worth a visit), stroll around the beautiful streets and piazzas and enjoy the local streetfood (tasty Arancina, which are fried and filled riceballs; or Pane con Meusa, yes, it's with spleen) or eat a briosc (which is a big gelato in a soft sweet bread). Fresh local fruits, vegetables and fish are offered at the big markets „Ballaro“ and „Capo“ from early in the morning till 6pm. Small shops offer indian or arabic food.

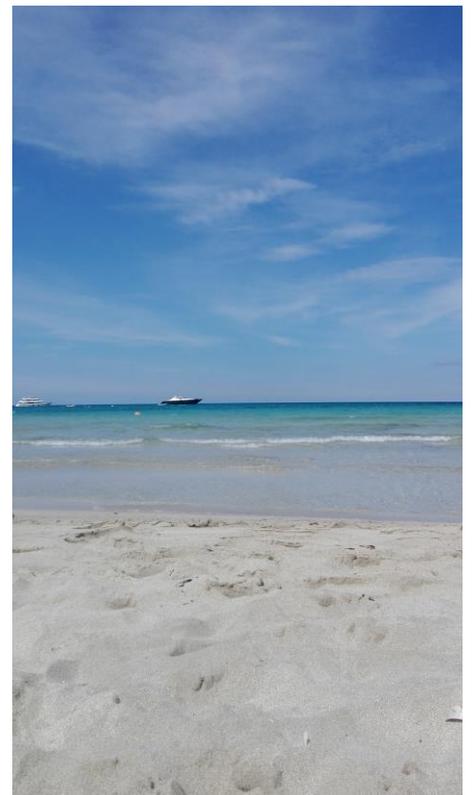
The sea is only a 5 minutes walk from the center, you can walk alongside the sea beginning from „Cala“, the small harbour and reach the beautiful promenade „Foro italico“.

The beach is a 45min ride away with the bus 806, in beautiful Mondello. Mondello is a large bay between the big mountains „Monte Pellegrino“ and „Capo Gallo“. Here the sand is of a white color and the water is gelaming blue.

Conclusion

I wouldn't miss the opportunity to do Erasmus+ in Palermo. The Italian citizens are especially friendly and helpful. The group „Erasmus social Network“(ESN) offers support by giving you a „buddy“ (a fellow student), who helps you get along the city in the first weeks. By having a great buddy called Vincenzo, who was also an Erasmus student here in Timisoara, I already had my first friend when I arrived.

All in all, I honestly have to admit, I lost my heart to Palermo.



Mondello Beach