

Report ERASMUS+ in CSMVigo September 2022 through May 2023

1. Preparation

In order to fully enjoy the ERASMUS+ experience at a foreign university, an experience that I highly recommend, it is first necessary to prepare in good time and communicate with both the host university and the International Office of your own university to get in touch.

As far as my experience is concerned, I was fortunate to meet helpful people both at my university, the HfK Bremen, and at my host institution, the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Vigo. In both cases, I dealt with people who responded quickly to doubts and questions and were ready to give useful advice.

In any case, it is first necessary to keep an eye on the internal deadline of the home university for submitting the ERASMUS application (in my case, November 15th, 2021) and the deadline for submitting all documents to the host university (in my case, April 30th, 2022). When it comes to looking for information about the host university, I recommend, in addition to consulting the university's website, also contacting future professors to get advice on choosing courses according to your own needs. If you have contacts with students who are studying or have studied at the host university (or have completed ERASMUS studies there in the past), I warmly recommend contacting and asking them any questions you may have. For me, this proved to be extremely useful.

2. Formalities

As a citizen of the European Union, I had no difficulties with the documents for staying in Spain: it was enough to present my identity card as an Italian citizen, my European health insurance card and my German checking account. I did not need any kind of residence permit and since it was a temporary study stay, I was able to keep my residence in Bremen.

3. General information about the partner university

The Conservatorio Superior de Música de Vigo is located at the highest point in the city, in the middle of the O Castro Park and with a panoramic view of the Ria de Vigo and the Cíes Islands. The Conservatory can be reached on foot from the centre via a pleasant walk in the park, otherwise it is possible to use the bus lines that stop a 5-minute walk from the Conservatorio.

The CSM de Vigo has a cafeteria where you can have lunch from Monday to Friday. It is a very pleasant place and the food is varied and tasty. The University also has a small library and good internet connection in all parts of the building. No ID is required for the cafeteria and library.

The CSM de Vigo offers a wide range of concerts and master classes throughout the academic year.

The orientation week at the beginning of the academic year was very informative and useful and a good opportunity to network with professors and students.

4. Academic life

The information activities for ERASMUS students as well as the enrolment took place in the first two weeks of September, although the ERASMUS coordinator of the Conservatory was available throughout the year to clarify any kind of doubts or complications.

There are no restrictions on taking part in their study programmes, although the courses and exams are held in Spanish and not all teachers have sufficient knowledge of English.

The educational offerings at CSM de Vigo are broad and interesting. The courses I attended were well organised and very informative. The workload is generally rather challenging and that motivated me a lot.

5. Accommodation

When looking for accommodation, you can either contact the ERASMUS coordinator or search individually on platforms such as idealista.com. There is no student dormitory in Vigo, but there are many options to find a room in a student or worker shared apartment. In general, the cost of living in Vigo is lower than in Bremen, and this also applies to room rent: prices range on average between 180 and 300 euros per month (including additional costs).

I was able to find a room in Vigo from Bremen, so I didn't need temporary accommodation: the landlord agreed to making a video call to get to know him and take a virtual tour of the apartment.

6. Public transportation

Vigo has two train stations, a small airport and an urban and intercity bus system. There is no subway or tram and it is not practical to ride a bike as the streets are very steep. There is otherwise a fairly affordable and wide ranging taxi service. The city is definitely small enough to easily get around on foot, at least in the centre. There are no discounts on public transport for conservatory students.

7. Student jobs

My impression is that finding work in Vigo is more difficult than in Bremen and the minimum hourly wage is still much lower (around 9 euros per hour). In my case, I preferred to keep my online job as an Italian teacher for foreigners and started giving private viola da gamba lessons here in Vigo. The price of a music lesson offered by students in Vigo is between €20 and €25. Through my professor I got in touch with students who were interested in the viola da gamba, and I am very grateful for that: it was a useful and interesting experience and an excellent opportunity to improve my Spanish and learn the necessary vocabulary.

8. After returning

I can't say anything about the recognition of my academic achievements at this point, as my grades from this semester will only be available from next week. However, I can say that completing the Learning Agreement at the beginning of my year here was not complicated as there was a very wide range of courses in the Early Music Department and I had no problems finding equivalent courses to the ones I would have attended in Bremen.

9. Problems/suggestions/other/personal recommendations/safety tips

Studying at another university and especially in another country is very fascinating and inspiring, but you should still plan in the time you need to settle in. One should not underestimate the amount of time needed to find your way around a different study environment.

As for me, I am very happy with the decision to spend two semesters abroad instead of just one, and I can safely say that I benefited a lot from my second semester, after I had overcome the language difficulties and cultural differences and found time to make professional and personal contacts for the future.

I therefore recommend, if possible, completing an ERASMUS course for two semesters and/or traveling to the exchange country before starting your studies.

10. Special experiences in the host country

One of the most beautiful experiences that I can share here is certainly the project with the Consort de Salamanca, with whom I had the pleasure of playing last December under the direction of my professor, Sara Ruiz; the work with the Baroque Orchestra of the CSM de Vigo under the direction of professors Pavel Amilcar and Rafael Muñoz and my experience as a viola da gamba teacher for children as part of the "Son das Flores" project.

11. Conclusion

The experience in Vigo was fundamental for my personal and professional development. Getting to know new colleagues and professors was very stimulating, as was learning and working in a new environment. New horizons have also opened up for me when it comes to the repertoire and musical interpretation.

I decided to study at the CSM de Vigo because I met the conservatory's viola da gamba professor, Sara Ruiz, in a master class the year before. Her way of playing and passing on her knowledge fascinated me straight away. That's why I decided to study with her for a while. Now I can confirm that it was a good choice: it was an extremely productive and inspiring year.

I believe that getting to know the professor teaching your major beforehand is a good parameter when choosing a host university.

For me, this experience was very positive and I intend to continue studying here with Sara Ruiz for a while and to organise and intensify my work with my colleagues in Vigo. For this reason, as soon as I have completed my bachelor's degree in Bremen, I plan to apply for a master's degree here at the CSM de Vigo.