

# The Netherlands

Studying abroad has revolutionized my perspective of the world and my life. Studying in The Netherlands has been a life changing experience, which makes a person mature and realize that the world is bigger than you expected it. I am now more aware of worldly affairs of which I would have previously not considered. I am more open minded regarding religion, cultures, and especially ethnic food.

European lifestyle is much different than that of the US, but there are similarities. Students need to be aware of the negative judgment that is associated with Americans. Especially studying here during the war in Iraq, I have been asked numerous questions of my political beliefs. I tend to be neutral most of the time by avoiding problematic situations where some people feel strong about American actions. The best thing to do is to make them realize that “you” are an individual and that they can not stereotype, categorize, or assume the type of person you are. However, conversations will get interesting, to say the least, and you will realize a different perspective to European views on America and Americans in particular. My favorite, “Stupid American” has been the ever so popular one. However, I tend to educate them that we are not all like MTV and have individualistic characteristics and qualities.

When I first arrived in Holland I did not know what to expect. I was very anxious to partake in the best year of my life. I arrived at Schiphol airport and I had way too much stuff to carry. I had about 150 lbs of luggage and I should have followed OIP’s advice to pack light, but it turned out ok. I arrived at Arnhem and was greeted by a group of students from Arnhem Business School ABS, part of HAN University. I soon got the keys to my apartment and the welcome committee of ABS took all the students to their flat to get situated. I soon met my roommates and began my semester at ABS. The transition from US to The Netherlands is very quick, yet shocking at the time. Be prepared to be on top of things for the first few weeks to get orientated to the new surroundings. Organization is a great life tool and be prepared to use this life changing tool here in Holland. I believe organization and a sense of adventure are two of the most important aspects for an International student!

## 1 HAN University

School ABS has both positive and negative qualities. At first, my impression of the school was that it was going to be a challenging semester due to the high level of Dutch education. The administration at ABS is pretty busy and doesn’t have the time to hold your hand in every aspect of your studies. The Dutch tend to do their job and if have to go out of their way to help you, the chances are that they will help you. The teachers at

ABS are very different from SFSU, and like SFSU you have ones that are good and ones that are not as great. Teachers tend to not lecture and do more group activities, depending which course you are following.

The exams are not hard if you study and practice during the period. There are two periods per semester and each period you have exams or turn in a report. After short sighted opinions of the education system of ABS, I have realized that the education system of ABS is good, it just takes a little while to get adjusted to the different system of education here.

The overall opinion of the Dutch education system is great. Too bad we are only doing it for a year or semester. There is the opportunity to do your masters in only 1 year, but I heard it is challenging, yet rewarding. **You will pass your modules if you study for the exams and not waste time parting too much, as I have seen many students fail due to their extracurricular activities.**

## 2 City of Arnhem

Arnhem is a very nice city filled with war history. It has hardly any old buildings due to bombings and is fairly newly constructed since the 50's. Some buildings remain from the war and are very nice to see. When you pay the 430 euro fee for the residents permit, which I think is ridiculous to pay that much, you will receive information about the city and get some discounts to attractions and museums in Arnhem. Arnhem has a very international feel due to the student population. There are many students represented throughout the world and most from Europe. There is a strong presence of Asian culture in the rise at Arnhem due to future impact of the rapidly increasing Asian business in Europe.

As a city, Arnhem has a lot to offer to various people. Whatever your thing is, you will find it in Arnhem. Being one of the Moderate size city in Netherlands, Arnhem has a full array of transportation to get you from point A to point B and if you like C (International)! The buses and trains run like clockwork and are very nice. The fee for the bus is one euro after 9am; before nine its 1.60. I suggest purchasing a strippenkaart to save some money, and with this card you are allowed to transfer or reuse it for a period of an hour and a half (This might change so please check for future reference). The trains vary in price and destinations are unlimited. However, the train is quite expensive but an effective way of traveling since most of the train stations are located in the center of cities in Europe. Amsterdam will cost you about 16 euros for a round trip (that's all the way across the entire country). I suggest purchasing a korting kaart, as it allows you to get a 40% discount to travel on trains. The cost is 50 euros per card and it allows you to bring 3 other friends allow with you for the same discount. (I highly suggest purchasing it...it saved me hundreds of euros).

I also suggest purchasing a bicycle, as it is the most efficient means of transportation. Do not pay more than 40 euros for a used bike from the streets. From a store it may cost a bit more around 80 to 150 euros. Holland is a bike country and bikers have their own bike paths which run all over the country! I had my bikes stolen 3 times and I highly suggest

to purchase a big lock, does not need to be expensive but you can purchase one on the Friday or Saturday market for about 5-10 euros. It is very nice to get around the bike and is much faster than cars when you are down town. You can also save 2 euros every time you take your bike to the center instead of paying for the bus.

The Friday and Saturday market is a great place to purchase essentials. Fresh produce is always a great thing and is much cheaper than at the grocery stores. You can also buy scarves, gloves, and other clothing you may have not wanted to bring for a decent price.

Nearby Arnhem, the city of Nijmegen is there for you to enjoy which is only 10 min by train and is 3 euros both ways. It is a great city and is a little smaller than Arnhem but has a much bigger college student influence. It has a different vibe from Arnhem and is a good weekend getaway from Arnhem for the day.

### 3 Night life

The night life in Arnhem is great! I had many nights with students from the International Student Association which makes every Thursday a student night; cheap drinks and free entrance to many places. I suggest bringing your bike when going out because the bus stops running at 12:06 exactly! There is a late bus but it costs 5 euros and the taxi ride back to the area around school is about 12-15 euros. So the bike does come in handy! There are many bars which play music in the area of the Korenmarkt, which is the area where all the nightlife originates. The bars let out at 2am and the clubs open between 12am to 5 or 6 in the morning. You can find almost every kind of music here, but most is house, rock, pop, and some R&B. The students from the residential building called Honinkamp are a wild bunch and love to go out and party. So if that's your thing I suggest hanging out at Honinkamp and make some friends there. There are also many parties at Honinkamp filled with dancing and theme nights. Other cities such as Nijmegen, Utrecht, and Amsterdam are really nice and have huge parties, especially Amsterdam.

### 4 Culture

**The Undutchables**, is a book I highly suggest to purchase, ISBN #1888580-22-4, and will give you a very clear indication of what to expect from Dutch culture and society. It has helped me in understanding the culture in a humorous manner and will enlighten some viewpoints commonly shared amongst the Dutch. For the most part, the Dutch are very nice people who are willing to help. They are very honest people and care for the environment very much. They are very direct and you should not feel offended if you feel as though being direct is a negative thing. It is just the way they are...it was hard for me to come to terms with this aspect, but I soon realized it's a very good characteristic to have. The Dutch food consists mostly of fried food and did I mention that they love fries here! The typical Dutch food is rarely eaten by foreign students because of the lack of money or that they don't know any locals who are willing to cook a home made meal. Stay away from the fried food if you are not used to it and try to eat healthy while in

Holland. Holland is also a dog country. Almost every person in Holland owns a dog and you will soon come to realize it when you step into a pile of poop! The Dutch as law abiding citizens, don't clean up after their dogs...I can't generalize this but I have never seen an owner pick up there dog poop once during the year I have been there; I see dogs at a rate of 15 per hour while walking or biking. The uses of soft drugs are allowed in Holland up to 5 grams. You are also allowed to grow plants if you like. These are very touchy subjects for foreign student thinking that they could use and abuse drugs. The funny part is that hardly any Dutch people use drugs and its mostly foreigners who use the drugs. I highly advice you to be careful with drugs in this country due to future health implications.

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studies. However, they are not completely useless. Some administration personal do try to help you, but that is a rare quality. The Dutch tend to do their job and if have to go out of their way to help you, the chances are that they will not help you and send you somewhere else. The teachers at ABS are very different form SFSU, and like SFSU you have ones that are good and ones that are not. Teachers tend to not lecture and do more group activities, depending which course you are following. My overall experience with teachers was that they really did not know the subject that they were teaching and asked the students to read the book and they assigned exams, which were generated by the textbooks. The exams are not hard if you study and practice during the period. There are two periods per semester and each period you have exams or turn in a report. After short sighted opinions of the education system of ABS, I have realized that the education system of ABS is good, but the program for International students needs improvement and especially in organization and structure. The overall opinion of the Dutch education system is great. Too bad we are only doing it for a year or semester. There is the opportunity to do your masters in only 1 year, but I heard it is challenging, yet rewarding. You will pass your modules if you study for the exams and not waste time parting too much, as I seen many students fail due to their extracurricular activities.

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## 9 Recommendations

Traveling Destinations:

Prague, Berlin, Maastricht (oldest city in Holland), Utrecht (my favorite city in Holland), Amsterdam, Barcelona (my favorite city in Europe as of now), Paris, London, Copenhagen, Malmo, Gent, Brugge, Antwerp, and Brussels.

These are just a few recommendations of the cities that I traveled to. There are also many other cool cities in Europe. I also suggest to travel accordingly to the weather. If you are there for a year, you should hit the north in the winter and the south in the summer and spring.

Websites:

Ryan Air, Easy Jet, Transavia

Feel free to give me a call any time you like for further details or just questions about the school or program!

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