

Erasmus experience at the University of Tartu

Have you heard about Tartu? What about the University of Tartu? I guess you haven't. Tartu is a small city of a small country at the northern part of Europe. Tartu is the second biggest city of Estonia with a population of 90 thousand, frequently referred to as the intellectual and cultural center of Estonia.

Tartu is a perfect Erasmus destination if you are looking for intellectual challenges and professional improvement above the travel adventures, international networks and vivid student life. Moreover, you can meet the Baltic culture, the calm and helpful mindset of Nordic people which is usually hidden from the eyes of Central-European people.

Tartu is a small city but full of attraction. There are numerous museums, like the Estonian National Museum, Toy museum, Beer Museum or Art Museum – just naming a few. But you can also have fun in the Upside-down house, explore the interactive Science Center, take a walk in the Botanic Garden, or visit the Theatre, *Vanemuine*. Culture is all around of Tartu; what could be a better proof for it than the fact that Tartu is going to be the European Capital of Culture in 2024? The culture-rich atmosphere of the city is not only sensible by the high number of cultural institutes but the sculptures which are all around in the central part of the city.



1. picture: Sculpture of Oscar Wilde and Eduard Vilde



2. picture: Kissing Students statue at the town hall (source: wikipedia.org)



3. picture: Father and Son

However, as the most important institute of the city is the University, there are numerous events specially targeting students. The whole city is characterized by the vibes of young intellectuals, and open minded people. Cafes are usually full with students working on their

assignments or reading heavy books, the parks are usually full with youngsters. The active student life forms numerous student communities which appear at university events in their uniforms, singing their songs, strengthening the student identity.

The University of Tartu celebrated its hundredth birthday in 2019. The university nowadays attracts people from the broader region, thus many East-European, Russian, Middle-Asian and Central-Asian students arrive here in order to take a high quality education. Thus, if you are not interested only to meet with the mainstream European cultures during your Erasmus program, Tartu is definitely a place to consider.

The reason why University of Tartu is attractive for so many nations, are the competitive programs in social sciences and natural sciences. The University of Tartu doesn't only outperform in the general rankings all the Hungarian Universities, but it is the oldest and highest ranked university of the Baltic region as well.

The high quality of education is palpable during the 16 weeks long education period, when most of the courses requires weekly preparation, intellectual commitment and contribution to the seminar discussions. The courses don't require the memorization of lexical knowledge but thinking and solving challenges which connected to real life problems. This approach provides a much useable knowledge and builds better skills than most of the Hungarian higher education programs do. The lecturers are well prepared and helpful, however they expect a lot from their students.



4. picture: beanbags and scene from Delta building



5. picture: Scene from the terrace of Delta cafe

Speaking about the University, it is also worth to note, that the university just opened a new campus, called Delta, with all the comfort and the technical support what a student can expect. Furthermore, the building has a perfect view to the city's river, Emajõgi, and one can conveniently write their assignments sitting on the beanbag or in a huge armchair when getting inspired by the scene of the river and the city. After finishing the day in Delta, students can just getting out from the building and enjoy the sun and social life at the river bank, right next to the building.

The high level of student services not only apparent in the environment of Delta building, further amazing student services are the recreation room of the library which is free of charge for all the visitors, or the very cheap student access for the gym.



6. picture: Recreation room of the public library

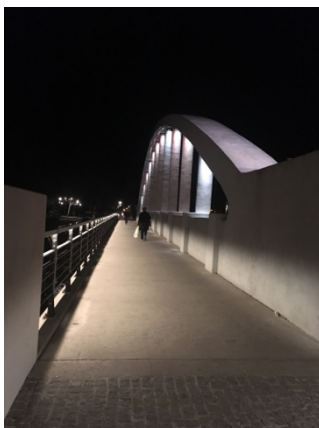


7. picture: The students and citizens enjoy the sun in front of the Delta building

The city's river, Emajõgi shapes Tartu's landscape directly. It crosses the center of the city and inspired numerous bridges, most of which is exclusively for pedestrians. However, Tartu's close relationship with the nature doesn't come only from the relationship with the river, and the way how the citizens use it (for kayaking, swimming, sunbath at the river bank, etc). Tartu is a very green city with numerous parks, and lots of trees.



8. picture: Turusild – Market Bridge



9. picture: Kaarsild- Arc Bridge



10. picture: Bridge close to Delta building



11. picture: Ship on the Emajõgi

Even though, Tartu is full with attractions, one who get used to with bigger cities may find it too small after a while. However, the distances and bus connections between Baltic cities make easily available Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, Helsinki, and even more exotic destinations, like Minsk or Kaliningrad. Thus, if one would like to explore an exotic environment, doesn't need to restrict their interest to this city. Tartu opens the gates to the Baltic cities for every adventurer.

All in all Tartu is a great city to live, study, meet with new people, to face new challenges, and to travel around a region which is not so well known in Central-Europe. I could recommend to taste this Baltic feeling of life with full of my heart.



12. picture: *Sunset in Tartu*



13. picture: *Kayaking on the Emajõgi river*



14. picture: *Main building of the University*



15. picture: *Fountain in front of the library*

If you are considering to choose Tartu as your Erasmus destination, do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail: szekely.anna.95@com.