

# ERASMUS Coimbra/Portugal

Katzdobler Franz-Josef

Summer Term 2009

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Five Months in Coimbra/Portugal</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Traveling to Coimbra . . . . .	3
1.2	Lodging . . . . .	3
1.3	Courses . . . . .	4
1.4	Trips . . . . .	4
1.4.1	Carnival in Figuera da Foz . . . . .	5
1.4.2	Trip with ESN to Porto and Braga . . . . .	5
1.4.3	Trip with ESN to Fatima and Lisbon . . . . .	6
1.4.4	Easter Trip to Lisbon and Algarve . . . . .	6
1.4.5	Trip to Madrid and Mallorca . . . . .	6
1.4.6	Additional Stuff . . . . .	7
1.5	Queima des Fitas . . . . .	7
1.6	Nightlife . . . . .	7
1.7	Conclusion . . . . .	7

# 1 Five Months in Coimbra/Portugal

After 9 semesters studying Computer Science (Technical Informatics) at the Vienna University of Technology I decided to spend one semester abroad in Coimbra/Portugal.

The university was founded in 1290, though in fact Coimbra only became its permanent home in 1537. The city was also Portugal's capital in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century. There are 3 parts, called Polo's. I studied at *Polo II* (Sciences and Technologies), only the Language Preparation course was at the *Faculty de Letras* at the central part of the university.



Figure 1: The Campus of the University Coimbra

## 1.1 Traveling to Coimbra

There are several possibilities to travel to Coimbra. One can go to Lissabon or Porto by plane and afterwards continue by train. I went from Munich to Porto by plane (120 Euros) and from Porto to Coimbra by train (15 Euros).

## 1.2 Lodging

The first week I spent in the University Residence *Polo III*. It's comfortable to organize a room for the first days before arriving. After one week I found an apartment with 3 other ERASMUS students. If you look for a room you should keep in mind several things: laundry, heaters, kitchen, furniture, internet. One should calculate about 200 Euros for a room per month. In the canteens of the university there are very cheap meals offered. For 2.15 Euros one can get a complete meal (soup and drinking included). Of course you can also cook yourself, there are big markets like *Coimbra Shopping*, *Dolce Vita* and *Forum* but also mini markets in the smaller streets.



Figure 2: The Apartment



Figure 3: The canteens offer cheap food

### 1.3 Courses

In each semester there are Intensive Language Preparation Courses. I recommend to attend this course (200 Euros) as it is a good possibility to meet other students and get known to the language. There is also a certificate with 4,5 ECTS. The other courses I attended were:

- High Performance Computation
- Intelligent Systems for Knowledge Management
- Ubiquitous Systems
- Managing Software Projects

each worth 6 ECTS. The courses are usually held in Portuguese, but if there are ERASMUS students the professors sometimes try to teach in English. I was really lucky with the courses, as the professors always tried to support me and the subjects were really interesting.

### 1.4 Trips

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) organized several trips, so one won't be bored during the stay. We also traveled on our own to some destinations. Just enjoy the following pictures and comments.



Figure 4: Carnival and Beach in Figuera da Foz



Figure 5: ESN Trip to Porto and Braga

#### 1.4.1 Carnival in Figuera da Foz

In the last weeks of February there were several Carnival Party's in Portugal. One weekend we decided to go to *Figuera da Foz* (one hour by train from Coimbra). It was really amazing. There is a beautiful beach and the Carnival Parade was on a main road near to it.

#### 1.4.2 Trip with ESN to Porto and Braga

We went on a 2 day trip to Porto and Braga. It was really perfect. For 60 Euros almost everything was included (Bus, Accommodation, Boat Trip, Casa de Musica, Dinner in Restaurant, Wine Museum, . . .). We spent the night in Braga and after the dinner we went out together.



Figure 6: Lisboa: Ponte 25 de Abril, Cabo da Roca



Figure 7: Praia Beliche (Sagres) and Harbor in Lagos

#### 1.4.3 Trip with ESN to Fatima and Lisbon

The next trip from ESN was to the capital of Portugal. It was a good mix of sightseeing, party and free time. We stayed in hostel next to the sea which was very nice. Also the dinner and the party after that were great. During the weekend we visited Castelo de S. Jorge, the Oceanario, Torre de Belem and the most Western Part of Europe: Cabo da Roca. The trip was 55 Euro, everything included.

#### 1.4.4 Easter Trip to Lisbon and Algarve

In the Easter holidays we decided to visit Lisbon again for three days and to spend additional three days in Lagos/Algarve. In Lagos there are many nice places and a comfortable beach (Meia Praia). There is also the possibility to go to Sagres or to Praia Beliche. We didn't rent a car, but other students did and I would recommend to do so, as there are a lot of places which can't be reached by bus along the Atlantic Coast. It takes about seven hours from Coimbra to Lagos (via Lisbon) and costs about 25 Euros by bus. By train it is a bit more expensive but faster.

#### 1.4.5 Trip to Madrid and Mallorca

In the end of June we did one last trip to Spain, as Ryan Air offered very cheap flights for 1 Euro. We visited the capital Madrid and then the island Mallorca.

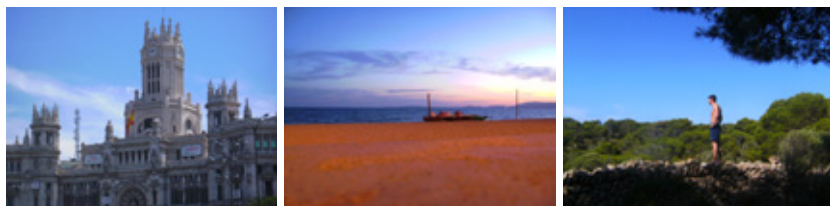


Figure 8: Madrid and Mallorca (Cala Pi, Lluçmajor)

#### 1.4.6 Additional Stuff

- Football Match: Sporting Lisboa - FC Bayern Munich (Champions League, 1/8 final, 0:5)

### 1.5 Queima des Fitas

This is probably the best 8 day long students party I ever saw. Along the river there are several stages with different bands for every day. Thousands of students come from all over the country to this event. I had some visitors in this time too. Although the entrance is quite expensive (about 10 Euros per day) it is worth to go there as often as possible. The whole city is in exceptional circumstances this week and there are no lectures in this time.

### 1.6 Nightlife

Nightlife in Coimbra is especially at the beginning of the semester amazing. The bars are full of students. I recommend following places: AAC (from the students association), Tapas, Bigorna (Erasmus Bar). The best days to go out are Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Often you can see people on the streets, just talking and drinking together also in front of different bars. As Erasmus student one should use the possibility to get known to people from all over the world. It's an experience that will never come again I guess. At the end of the semester students don't go out that much, because it's the time of the exams and usually the mentioned places stay empty.

### 1.7 Conclusion

My conclusion is that no student should miss the spirit of Erasmus. Of course there are some problems in the beginning and the decision is not easy to go or not, but once decided, it will change your life and be an experience you don't want to miss. From the financial aspect it is clear that one has to add some money from the own pocket, but with all the assistances from the state/government it should be possible for everybody to gather enough money. Portugal is a cheap country, but as I did lots of activities, I spent more money than I would in Vienna, in the end about 900 Euros monthly.