

Nova Lisbon
2014 Semester One
BCom ECON

The University

I found the university very well catered for international students. All of the classes are taught in English so you will have no trouble with this, and therefore the lecturers and all of the Portuguese students have fantastic English.

The lecturers are very approachable and always willing to help. Most of the Portuguese students have done or are planning to do an exchange so are very understanding and helpful, and live meeting the exchange students.

You must sign up for your papers online around 6 weeks before the university starts. Make sure you are approved by Otago for more papers than you need as Nova is not as well organised and you may find some are no longer available. If you can't get the papers you need or want to change you are able to do this easily in the first week of university.

I did undergraduate commerce at Nova. Unlike Otago, I found that a lot of the work was group work. Sometimes you choose the groups, but more often you are assigned to groups with a mixture of Portuguese students and exchange students. Some of these assignments are very large and I found myself in 2-3 group meetings every week for various subjects.

I found that the papers I took in Lisbon, although more work throughout the year, were not as challenging as Otago papers.

The university has a lot of Facebook groups - I recommend signing up to these to find out about accommodation offers and weekly student events. I met most of the exchange students on the orientation day, and the university also held an international weekend which was like a camp on the first weekend of university. I chose not to do this but regretted my decision. The university hold many other events for exchange students and to integrate the exchange and Portuguese students. I was surprised to find you can buy beer, cider, and sangria at university. A lot of students would sit in the square and socialise after class on sunny afternoons.

The City & Transport

Lisbon is a relatively small city and the metro system makes it very easy to get around. You buy a metro card for around €10 and each month top it up €35 which allows you to use the metro and buses as many as you like for that month. However the size of Lisbon also makes walking anywhere easy and sometimes faster than public transport.

There are 3 main beaches in Lisbon which take around 45 minutes to 1 hour to reach from the city centre, via bus or train depending on which beach.

There are many other places you can visit nearby - Sintra is only a 40 minute train ride, and the Algarve (the south beach region) is around 5 hours on a bus, other cities such as Porto are great to visit.

Accommodation

This is very well priced. My flat was newly renovated and cost €320 per month inclusive of electricity and internet. The first payment is can be costly as you generally must pay the flat bond as well as the first and the last month of rent up front.

In terms of areas you can choose to live in the city centre (Bairro Alto) or near university (São Sebastião) or somewhere in between. Taking the metro from the centre to university will take you around 25 minutes (and another 5-10 minutes' walk from university train station). Many of my

friends lived in Bairro Alto and some in Rossio as it is central and everything is at your doorstep. However it is very noisy all nights of the week and rooms are small in comparison and some have no windows. Of course there are some exceptions of nice flats in Bairro Alto, it depends on your budget. I would recommend living in Marques de Pombal, as it will take you around 15 minutes to walk to either university and to the city centre.

There is no option of a university hall for students. Many people organise their accommodation online before arriving, there are various websites through which you can do this. I would recommend staying in a hostel on arrival and finding your flat, as I found when you are taken to look at the flats they appear very different to the photos online.

The Food and Culture

In comparison to other places in Western Europe, Portugal is extremely affordable. Once I discovered the small local Portuguese restaurants and bakeries I found it was cheaper for me to eat out than to make my own food. A 'bitoque' is a typical Portuguese dish which is a chicken or beef steak with a poached egg, salad, fries and rice - my favourite Portuguese restaurant sold this for €3.95 and it was a huge portion.

A lot of their food is very plain and they don't like to add sauce to sandwiches. The city is covered in small bakeries which sell very cheap food including many pastries, rolls, sweet treats, espressos and freshly squeezed orange juice.

I found the Portuguese to be extremely friendly and happy people in general.

The Language

You can choose to take a language course throughout the semester, however you must pay to do this and it is independent of Nova so is not worth any credits. It would be great to be able to speak the basics so maybe take a short course before you leave. But most of the Portuguese people speak adequate English so you can get by.

The Nightlife

The nightlife in Lisbon was really great. There are a lot of small streets of bars that comprise Bairro Alto, this is where everyone generally meets. The beer and Sangria here is exceptionally cheap (from €1).

There are also a number of great clubs. Many of them have free entrance with Erasmus organisations on certain nights. I recommend signing up with ELL or one of the other organisations, they also offer great weekend trips throughout the semester around Portugal and Spain.