

TESTIMONIAL

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Preparation and course selection

To be honest, Lithuania was not one of my first favourites for a semester abroad and I only became aware of it through the remaining places. The nomination and application process at the university was totally unproblematic. On the one hand, the courses were made available in a large catalogue through the mechanics faculty, and on the other hand, you could also select them directly online when enrolling there. Since I study general mechanical engineering, it was also easy to insert the subjects into the study plan by changing the study plan. Personally, I took most of my subjects at the Biomechanics Faculty and also took a Lithuanian course.

Accommodation

When choosing your accommodation, you can either apply for a place in a hall of residence (110 out of 115 applicants were accepted this year), or you can look for a shared flat yourself. The hall of residence is very cheap at around 100-150€, but there are only double rooms - which is why it was out of the question for me. Otherwise, many people use Facebook as a platform to search and offer accommodation, and you can also ask in some WhatsApp groups. Many landlords offer flats especially for Erasmus students, but these are relatively expensive compared to normal flats in Lithuania. You should expect to pay around 300-450€/month - if you want to live in the city centre.

Weather

The weather in Vilnius is very dependent on the seasons. In the months between the end of January and the end of June, I experienced everything from -17° maximum daytime temperature and half a metre of snow, to rainy weeks and over 30° and sunshine. Especially the cold days in winter and almost an entire month of snow were definitely worth the experience!

Studying at the host university

The courses at Vilnius Tech are very small compared to those at RWTH. Of course, everything was a little different this semester anyway because of the Corona situation. My courses were even smaller than the regular courses because they were Master's subjects and there are not so many students in biomechanics. However, the professors were very eager and eager to teach you something. In contrast to the studies at RWTH, the main work at the university consisted of handing in papers or homework during the semester, and the exams were very easy.

In addition to the "normal" courses, I also decided to take a Lithuanian course. To be honest, the course didn't really take me beyond the basics in terms of language, but it was definitely worth the time for the cultural aspect. We learned a lot about traditional food, music, cities and also a bit about history.

Due to the Corona location, many organised events were unfortunately not possible, but the ESN team and the International Office still did everything they could to make as many as possible. For example, a hiking challenge around Vilnius was organised that lasted 10 weeks, several cultural evenings (online) and many online events in general. The two girls from the International Office were always helpful and always up for a chat.

Life

I don't know why, but somehow I assumed that people in Lithuania knew English - wrong. In many supermarkets, pharmacies or even post offices, it's rare that anyone understands you when you speak English - even as a German, you have to get used to this and the relatively cool way of dealing with each other. To be honest, you don't really have anything else to do with Lithuanians. What works fantastically well in Lithuania is the public transport system. It's definitely worth getting the ISIC card, as it gives you at least a 50% discount - but buses and trains are also super cheap. In addition, car sharing is super big in Vilnius and taxi rides are also totally cheap. In addition, the food delivery market has been booming since Corona at the latest, and there are a lot of really cheap offers. When it comes to apps, Bolt, Bolt Food, Wolt, Citybee, Spark and trafi are practically a must.

The number one student bar in Lithuania is +++ - not my favourite place, but if you're looking for a half-litre of beer for under €2, it's definitely the place to go. But in general, the bar scene in Vilnius is very big and especially in summer, the outdoor gastronomy fills almost all the streets.

If you want to try Lithuanian food, you definitely need a strong stomach and should ideally not be a vegetarian - a lot of the food is very meat-heavy or consists of potatoes and fat. What is surprisingly good, however, is the cold beetroot soup - definitely worth a try, especially in summer!

Travel

Due to the Corona situation, it was unfortunately not legally possible for us to travel extensively outside the country - but this meant that we were able to see a lot of Lithuania. The "most important" cities to see are Vilnius, Trakai, Kaunas, Klaipeda, Nida and if you still feel like it, Kernave, Druskininkai, Palagna and the Lithuanian Desert are also worth a visit. Outside the cities there is a lot of pure nature, many national parks with lakes and forests - but also many mosquitoes in summer. If you are looking for mountains, however, you are in the wrong place in Lithuania, the highest point is below 300m - you can visit it and go up a tower - but if you are not travelling in the corner anyway, I would rather save the whole thing. Otherwise, there are many abandoned buildings that you can discover if you feel like it :)

The best way to travel to the big cities is by train, and otherwise car rental in Lithuania is also very cheap.

Conclusion

Lithuania was never my number one travel destination, but I think that's why I liked it so much. As the largest country of the Baltic States (still very small, but hey), it's still often the least known. In the end, I would always choose Lithuania again, not to get further from a university perspective, but for the cities, the eternal nature and especially for the climate in winter (at much cheaper prices than in the Scandinavian countries :D).