

## ***Semester abroad at Istanbul Technical University***

### *Erasmus report*

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity I had to study in the vibrant city of Istanbul. As someone who is always hungry for knowledge from various perspectives, I chose Istanbul Technical University (ITU) because their curriculum brilliantly intertwines my two passions: architecture and programming. Discovering that ITU is one of Turkey's most respected universities makes me proudly declare, "Yes, I studied there!"

Navigating through the application process at both TH OWL and ITU was a breeze. The necessary information was readily available online, and the application deadlines at ITU were more forgiving than those at German universities. Despite the bureaucratic tango, I managed to gather all the required documents before embarking on my journey.

Securing accommodation from Germany turned out to be a quest of its own, with Facebook and Airbnb as my trusty companions. A tip for future students: scour the ITU Erasmus Facebook page for English-friendly offers.

Upon landing in Istanbul, the university rolled out the welcome mat with an event for all us Erasmus students, totaling around 100 students on this first event. Shockingly, this semester had more than 200+ exchange students.

Istanbul is colossal, especially coming from the cozy Detmold. Yet, the city's transportation system is a lifesaver. The metro, buses, and a little walking were my go-to modes of exploration. Being a student in Istanbul also comes with perks—hello, istanbulkart! This is a card for public transport in Istanbul, offering a 50% discount on all travels. Getting it is an easy process; just flash a photo, your passport, and enrollment certificate, bring all these to the metro station in Taksim, and you will get it on the same day. Most students that I met opted for public transport, saving them from the car-ownership headache. Istanbul is also well-known for long traffic situations.

As an architecture student, my classes primarily unfolded at the compact but centrally located Architecture Faculty. However, the main ITU campus, where you have to go to visit the international office, resembles a labyrinth of buildings, but it has its added bonuses like a swimming pool and gym. The architecture faculty, housed in a historic Ottoman barracks, was a visual treat. The central patio became the go-to spot for friend meetups and class breaks. And yes, cats casually strolled through, sometimes even attending classes. They're the chilliest students on campus.

About the classes, on the first week of the semester took place a “choose-your-own-adventure”. Class selection, professor Q&A sessions, and exploring courses made it a thrilling start. You get a little feeling of every class and will help you finalize choosing which subjects you will like to take. Sending in your course preferences to the coordinator, by the end of the week, was the final step to official enrollment. A little disappointment was that some classes were already full or faced cancellation due to low enrollment, keeping us Erasmus students on our toes.

More about the city, Istanbul pulsates with life 24/7. From museum visits to sipping Chai, there's always something happening. Erasmus Student Network-organized events were a fantastic way to connect with fellow global students. The city itself exudes history at every turn, and locals were always welcoming, especially when I was lost in the city. One thing that I enjoyed doing was walking across the city. There were some roads (mainly the commercial axis of the city) that I liked to go through every once in a while, full of life and new things to try.

The educational system at ITU left me thoroughly impressed, mainly with its student resources. A university with a gym and swimming pool? Unheard of! And especially the library system, which provided access to various and big online databases, added to the academic marvel. Networking events with companies were the cherry on top of my Istanbul adventure, but sadly, most of them were conducted in the Turkish language.

In conclusion, my time at Istanbul Technical University was extraordinary. I found myself immersed in a dynamic learning environment that seamlessly blended my architectural and programming passions. Istanbul, with its rich history and warm hospitality, provided the perfect backdrop for this academic journey. I was not just a student; I was part of a

vibrant community that embraced diversity and fostered a sense of belonging. The welcoming atmosphere, coupled with the city's endless charms, made me very happy during my stay. To my fellow students at TH OWL, I wholeheartedly recommend considering ITU and Istanbul for your academic adventure. It's a unique experience that goes beyond textbooks and classrooms, offering a blend of cultural richness, academic excellence, and memories that will last a lifetime.