

“I wanted to eat cheese!”

Dana Pavel, a Romanian student from the North University Centre of Baia Mare, spent a semester at the uB as part of the Erasmus programme during 2013-2014. We look back at her experience.

Dana decided to go to France because she studies languages at her home university.

“I speak good English but before coming to Dijon I barely spoke any French. And now I can truly say that I speak the two languages I study: English and French.”



Dana wanted to discover French culture but also other cultures thanks to people of different nationalities who live in France. “And I wanted to eat cheese!” Dana adds, smiling.

Her biggest fear before arriving in France was the language as she had never really spoken French. Nevertheless, after a few weeks she already spoke fairly well. “Sometimes the professors spoke quickly and I had difficulty understanding but today I progressed well in French and am proud of myself. And when I encountered difficulties, I smiled and said *Je ne comprends pas* (I don’t understand).”

Her favourite class was *American civilisations*. “I really liked the professor. The classes helped me a lot to progress in French. And conversations with my friends too. The most important piece of advice which I would give to exchange students: you should not spend a lot of time with your compatriots as you will not improve your language level a lot!”

In terms of exams at the uB Dana found they were easier than in Romania. “When I am revising for an exam in my country it is as if I am finding out lots of new information for the first time. But at Dijon by the end of the semester, I do not know how, but I already had everything in my head without having to revise a lot.”

Everyday life

According to Dana it was difficult getting used to cooking for herself. “At home it is my mother who does everything, I only do the washing up. We do not realise, but it was difficult for me to plan out meals.”

During her free time Dana went out into town, visited museums, spent time with her Erasmus friends and learned to cook. She also liked running in the city centre to discover the small hidden streets of Dijon.

Living in a CROUS residence, she paid 204 euros per month in rent. Her monthly expenses were around 400 euros. During her stay in France she was able to visit Paris, Nice, Antibes, Lyon and Brittany.

French culture

“I think French people are chauvinistic but sociable. I like the fact that for French people meals are very important. And social life too – you do not work as much as English or Romanian people for instance.”

“In terms of cuisine, I absolutely love French cheeses! And the traditional gastronomic meal of the French. I took part in a meal with a local family – they did not prepare French specialties but I enjoyed all parts of the meal.”

Plans for the future?

“I want to become an interpreter. And I would very much like to come back to France and live in the south where it is hot.”

One year after her stay in Dijon, Dana has finished her studies and works in a multinational company. “My working language is French and my stay in France has turned out to be very useful in starting my career,” she concludes.



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