

## Erasmus in Patras

01.10.2023 – 09.02.2024

### Lectures

Molecular Genetics	BIO_MFN	7 ECTS
Immunobiology	BIO_ZE01	6 ECTS
Selected Topics in Cell Biology	BIO_EOK	3 ECTS
Greek Language	PHL_1000	6 ECTS
Introduction to Greek Language and Culture	PHL_1001	3 ECTS

All lectures and lab classes are taught in Greek language, however, the requirement for the application of an Erasmus stay at the University of Patras is English B2. I only went to each lecture once to introduce myself to the professors and to ask how I can follow the classes. Basically, I studied on my own based on the PDF files provided by the teachers (also in Greek language, but e.g. translatable to English or German via DeepL software). It is advisable to ask your teachers early about what kind of examination you can take in order to accomplish the classes. The Greek students will have exams in Greek language, fortunately, I was allowed to write essays in English language instead. The teacher of the

Immunobiology class, Eleftheria Rosmaraki, let me choose a topic for my essay, which I wrote about immune response against tumors. For the Molecular Genetics class, the teachers proposed that I write about directed mutagenesis including molecular approaches, applications in human medicine and agriculture, regulatory frameworks in the EU and worldwide, as well as ethical aspects. The teacher of Selected Topics in Cell Biology suggested writing about cell viability assays.



*All lectures and lab classes take place in the department of biology, located on the right.*

For the elective courses, I selected the Greek Language Class, which is only held for Erasmus students and takes place twice a week for 120 minutes each. Here you will learn the Greek alphabet, very basic grammar, useful expressions for everyday life, and some vocabulary. The exam consists of a written part and an oral part where first the teacher asks you questions and then you present a dialogue with your partner. Upon successful completion, you receive an A1 certificate.

Introduction to Greek Culture and Civilization is taught by various teachers from different departments and takes place once a week for about 120 minutes. Sometimes the lectures are replaced by, for example, a guided tour through the city of Patras, a visit of the archaeological museum, or even a pottery class. The final assessment consists of a presentation held by small groups of Erasmus students. In addition to this class, the University offers dancing lessons where you can learn some of the most famous traditional Greek dances. I would recommend giving it at least a try!

## Application

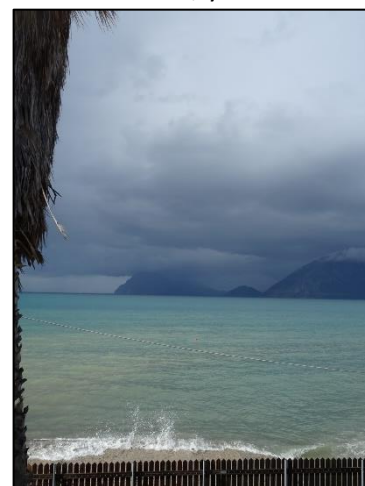
An Erasmus semester is probably the most convenient way to go abroad during your studies, and the application procedure nothing to be concerned about. Communication with Eleftheria Rosmaraki, the Erasmus coordinator for the Department of Biology, went very smoothly and also throughout the semester Eleftheria Rosmaraki was always super kind and reliable. On the online application platform Mobility Online, you can track the progress of your application, and the Greek Homolog Erasmusplus is in English and self-explanatory. Here you can also indicate whether you want to apply for a place in the state-subsidized dormitory and whether you are interested in attending a Greek Language Class and the Greek Culture and Civilization course. The Department's secretariat is comparatively less well-organized, but with a little patience and after some time, you will receive all the necessary documents for the student ID and restaurant card or the certificate of arrival.

## Arrival

I would recommend arriving about one week before the start of the semester so that you can get comfortably settled in. During the summer, a small military airport (Araxos, GPA) 55 km outside of Patras is served by tourist airlines like TUI. Most Erasmus students arrive in Athens and then take the bus to Patras, which takes about 3 hours. For those who like to travel, also a road trip through the Balkans is not impossible. On my way to Patras, I took a plane from Hannover to Araxos, and on the way back, I chose the ferry from Patras to Venice, then a night train from Padova to München. Since I stayed one night each in Padova and Munich, I was back home after a total of five days.

## Accommodation

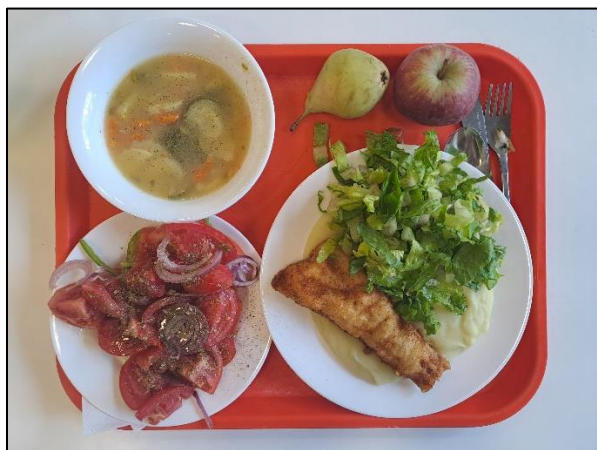
Out of about 100 Erasmus students in total, approximately half of them stay in dormitories near the University, and the other half in shared or single apartments in the city of Patras. You should be aware that the University is located in Rio, about 10 km east of the city centre of Patras. In the university dormitory (Hostel UPatras), you live very affordably (130 euros/month single room, 80 euros/month double room) about 3 km from the university and only with other exchange students. The Hostel can be a good choice if you don't mind occasional problems with hot water, the washing machine, the limited size of the kitchen and parties. In a private dormitory, the Colour Student Flats, you live 2 km from the university in newer facilities, but also at a higher rent. In addition to Erasmus students, you can also find Greek students here, as well as the junior basketball team of Patras. Overall, you should not have to pay more than 400 euros for a fully furnished room. The likelihood of getting a place in the university dormitory is relatively good, but it didn't work out for me, so I had to look for alternatives. Ultimately, I found my accommodation on Couchsurfing, which turned out to be a stroke of luck. I stayed as a guest with a Greek retired French teacher, who usually rents out one of his rooms to Erasmus students and uses the others for Airbnb or Couchsurfing. It was a pleasure and also quite helpful to stay with a Greek, and besides I got to meet interesting travellers from all over the world. Another highlight was the location, literally directly at the sea, so I could go swimming every morning.



*The view from my room over the golf of Patras after a storm.*

## University

The university campus is quite large and all departments are located there. I was particularly pleased with the canteen, where you can have free breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day except during holidays. You can choose between two main courses, along with bread, soup, salad and fruit. The quality is not bad, and at the same time, you often meet other exchange students here, so you always eat in good company. For vegetarians, however, it is impossible to maintain a balanced diet here. Besides the canteen, there is also the university sports centre, where all students have free access to a gym, running track, table tennis, basketball, soccer, volleyball or tennis, court. Even a laundry room where you can wash your clothes is offered by the university for free. In general, all my teachers were very kind and helpful, but some a little bit shy to speak English. In contrast, the Greek students' English is often excellent and many are very nice and willing to help you during the lab classes or with any questions you may have.



*A typical meal at the canteen.*



*The view from the laboratory to the department of chemistry.*

## Climate

The weather was amazing! Upon my arrival in late September, it was still very warm (up to 30°C), and until the end of October, you can walk around all day and night without the need for a jacket. During my entire stay, I counted only two days without sun. In November, the water temperature of the sea reaches its maximum, then decreasing to not colder than 15°C when I left Patras in February. I went swimming every morning, and it was very pleasant. Maybe two or three times there were heavy storms and rainfall, but always followed by bright sunshine afterwards. I would recommend bringing a waterproof jacket and, in case you would like to go hiking in the mountains, a winter jacket as well.

## Transportation

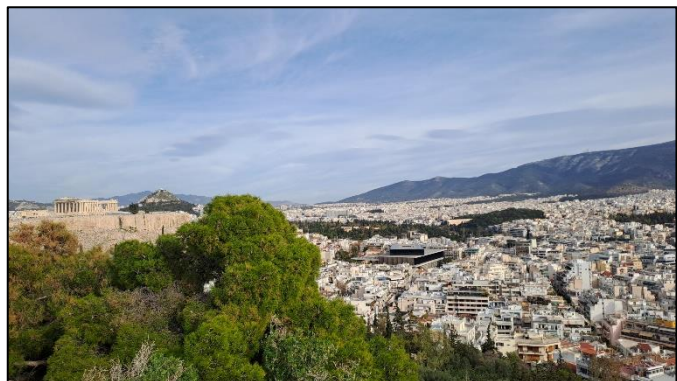
Despite being strongly discouraged and often considered crazy, I went everywhere by bike. There may be more hills than in Hamburg, but I didn't feel any less safe. The infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians is often non-existent. Greeks usually use motorbikes, cars or buses. You can buy a monthly bus ticket for 37 euros, which allows you to use all the buses in and around Patras. However, they are often very crowded, so you may not get on and have to wait for the next one. The train is rather unpopular throughout Greece and either not available at all or not used.

## **Trips**

Especially until mid-December, when the weather is so summerly and pleasant and exams further away, it's a good opportunity to travel. Therefore, it can definitely be advantageous to have a car facilitating day trips, for example, to ancient Olympia and Delphi, hiking or skiing in the mountains, or to nearby cities such as Navpaktos and Nafplio. You should definitely visit at least one of the numerous Greek islands. From Patras, you can reach Kefalonia and Ithaca by ferry in about 4 hours. More distant but well worth a visit are Monemvasia, Meteora, Athens or Mount Olympus. If you prefer not to travel alone, you can join the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), which organises trips from time to time. For men, the Greek Culture Lab also offered a visit to the monastery of Artos, where they could gain insight into the daily life of monks for a few days.



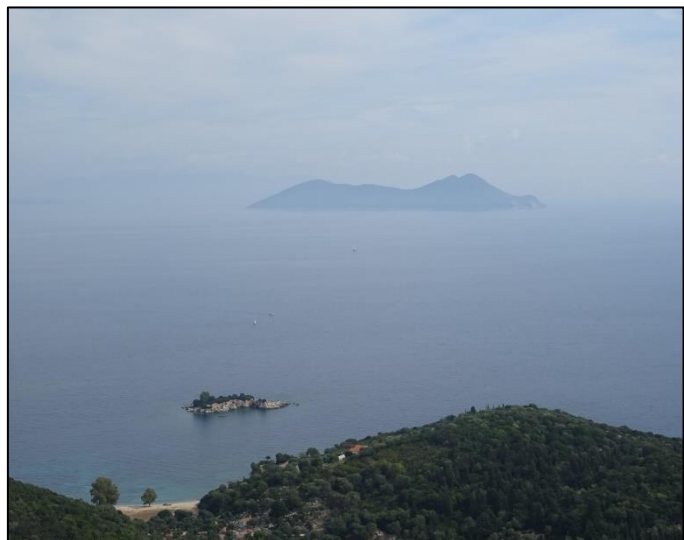
*The picturesque town of Monemvasia is located in the south of the Peloponnese.*



*Compared to the vast city of Athens, Patras seems very small.*



*The acoustics in the ancient theatre of Epidaurus are impressive.*



*The island of Ithaca is close to paradise.*