

MY ERASMUS TRIP TO FRANCE

THE DEPARTURE

Our trip started on April 7th, from Bari airport. After the check-in we left for Bordeaux, arriving late in the evening. We slept in a nice hotel in the city, and in the morning we had a delicious breakfast.

THE FIRST DAY

With the bus we reached the city of Niort in about three hours, where Gregoire Dupont, the English teacher of the "Venise Verte" high school, was waiting for us. At one o'clock we arrived at high school, where we were warmly welcomed by the French students.

At 3pm we did a biology experiment in the modern laboratory. They put an instrument on our finger that measures the heart rate, and we recorded the beats at rest and during squats. We really had a lot of fun!!

At half past five, at the end of the lessons, accompanied by the students who hosted us, we went to their homes.

THE FAMILY

The host family was made up of the girl I met when I entered school, Mariane, her mother, a mathematics teacher in that high school, and her second husband. They made me feel at home, with hot meals, love and immediate acceptance, always trying to have long conversations and dialogues in English.

They made me try various French dishes, such as the inevitable cheese, the best being Camembert, baguette, and desserts such as creme caramel and pain au chocolat.

THE SECOND DAY

From Monday to Friday I always woke up at 6 and, after getting ready and having breakfast, Mariane's mother took us to school, 25 minutes from the house.

At 8 we took the first bus and then the tram to get to "La Rochelle". We visited the maritime museum, full of old objects rich in history, and then, despite the initial bad weather, we went on a treasure hunt in the city, having a fantastic day. After eating the packed lunch prepared by the families, we wandered around the city in our free time, and at 5.45pm we returned to our families.

THE THIRD DAY

On Wednesday we went to "Marais Poitevin", a large national park covering around 80'000 hectares across the south of the Vendée region. During the morning we took a long walk to discover the environment, also creating some very nice drawings.

After the packed lunch, we had a rowing boat race, in which the Italian students divided themselves into groups among the French students. I, together with three other French people, won the race (obviously). After the exciting and tiring experience, we returned at 5.30pm to our host families.

THE FOURTH DAY

After setting everything up and getting dressed, I went to school and we had a wonderful tour of the city of Niort. We visited the castle, the gigantic cinema, also used as a theatre, and church of Saint-André, the most important in the city.

Subsequently, after returning to the high school at one o'clock, we ate a delicious first course of cheese and eggs in the school canteen, then we introduced ourselves to other French kids, with the help of some powerpoints. At 4pm we reached the school's Italian class, and we made friends with the students on the

course. We introduced ourselves in Italian and they tried to understand what we told them. After this fun experience, we went home.

THE FIFTH DAY

Friday was definitely the most epic day of all. We all dressed up for the carnival party. Some boys were dressed as fruit and typical foods, others as actors and singers, and there were even those who wore bathrobes and loincloths.

I was dressed as a sailor and with two Italian boys, Greta and Tommaso, followed the math lesson of prof Aurélie Ricomet, Mariane's mother, for two hours. Then at 12 we went to eat at the school canteen. We ate a very "passable" white pasta and some sausages. Then we watched the carnival show, with lots of incredible dances and songs. Then at 4pm we attended the advanced Italian lesson, where we introduced ourselves again to the French kids, and then they introduced themselves to us in their language, trying to understand as much as possible. At 5.40pm, with the last lesson over, we went home.

THE SIXTH DAY

On the sixth day we went for a tour of the markets in Niort with our correspondents. Tommaso and I, with our French correspondents Mariane and Rachelle, had a lot of fun exploring the city and took the opportunity to buy some lovely souvenirs.

In the afternoon, after a picnic lunch, we went to a large indoor amusement park, where there were lots of elastic trampolines. We almost relived our childhood and enjoyed every moment of that experience. After, Greta and I, due to the unavailability of our families, spent Saturday and Sunday morning at Professor Dupont's house, who offered us food and immediate affection

THE LAST DAY

The last day was the most touching, because we said goodbye to all the fantastic French guys we met this week. But we live in 2024, so we continue to keep in constant contact thanks to Whatsapp and Instagram. After taking the bus and then the tram, we finally reached Bordeaux airport at 5pm. After adjusting our bags one last time, we took the plane and returned to Bari at 7.30pm, where our parents were anxiously waiting to see and hug us again.

I want to thank everyone, starting from the teachers, Prof d'Aprile and Prof Recchia, the guys I spent this unforgettable Erasmus, Mariane and the host family, and all the French guys I met, from the first to the last. Thank you France!!