

## Studying Abroad Experience Report

**Country:** Greece

**University Abroad:** Aristoteles University of Thessaloniki

**Beginning of Lectures and End of Exams Abroad:** 01.10.2023 until 16.06.2024

**Study Path at Viadrina:** International Business Administration, BA

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[ X ] Yes [ ] No
- 2) **Are we allowed to forward your report and contact information to a Viadrina student on request?**  
[ X ] Yes [ ] No
- 3) **Please confirm hereby that you did not mention names of a third party (lecturer, landlord etc.)**  
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### Preparation

As a student from the Viadrina Europa-Universität, I embarked on an enriching academic journey at the Aristoteles University of Thessaloniki in Greece, where I spent two semesters. I arrived in Thessaloniki on the 24th of September 2023, just a few days before the lectures started on the 1st of October. The first semester ended in late January, and the second semester ran from February until early July, so I stayed there from the 1st of October 2023 until the 16th of June 2024.

The preparation process was both exciting and challenging. The application process was straightforward, thanks to the clear guidelines provided by both Viadrina and Aristoteles University. I recommend starting the visa application process early, as it can take several weeks depending on your country of origin. Make sure to gather all necessary documents well in advance, including your acceptance letter, proof of accommodation, and insurance. The Erasmus Office at Viadrina provided valuable support, offering well-structured checklists and hosting informative events, both online and offline. Attending these events was crucial, as they provided essential tips and details for my stay in Thessaloniki.

Aristoteles University offered an orientation week, which was both informative and essential for settling in. The events were mandatory and took place during the first week before the official start of classes. This was also where I met my Buddy, a local

student who helped me navigate the campus and the city. I highly recommend participating in any Buddy programs offered, as they are invaluable for adjusting to a new environment.

### **Accommodation**

Finding accommodation in Thessaloniki was one of the more stressful parts of the preparation. I decided to live off-campus to immerse myself more in the local culture. I eventually found a shared apartment close to the university through Facebook groups dedicated to student housing in Thessaloniki. The rental market in Thessaloniki is quite favorable for students, with rents averaging around 350 to 400 euros per month. However, it's important to be cautious of potential scams, especially concerning upfront payments.

I was fortunate to have a French roommate, with whom I developed a strong friendship during our time together. Our shared experiences, from cooking meals to exploring the city, greatly enriched my stay. My landlords were exceptionally kind and treated me like family. They owned a student café nearby, which quickly became a regular spot for me and my friends. They were like a second pair of parents, always there to offer advice or share a meal, which made my time in Thessaloniki even more special.

### **Studying at the University Abroad**

The day-to-day life at Aristoteles University of Thessaloniki was vibrant and academically stimulating. The campus atmosphere was lively, with students from all over the world contributing to a multicultural environment. Attendance was mandatory for most courses, which helped me stay disciplined and engaged with the material. I enrolled in 11 courses, covering topics such as world markets, the European Union, and other subjects relevant to my field of study in International Business Administration. The courses were designed with Erasmus students in mind, conducted in English, and facilitated interaction with students from various cultural backgrounds.

The university offered a range of exams, from written tests to presentations and group projects. This variety was refreshing and allowed me to demonstrate my understanding in different ways. Additionally, I took advantage of the language courses offered by the university. The Greek language course was particularly beneficial, not only for my academic life but also for day-to-day interactions.

One of the most remarkable aspects of studying at Aristoteles University was the opportunity to eat for free three times a day at the student restaurant on campus. The traditional Greek dishes served included **moussaka**, a baked dish of layered eggplant, minced meat, and béchamel sauce, and **souvlaki**, skewers of grilled meat

typically served with pita bread. Other staples like **spanakopita** (spinach pie) and **tzatziki** (a yogurt and cucumber dip) were also regularly available. These meals were not only delicious but also provided a cultural immersion into Greek culinary traditions, adding to the overall experience. Overall, my experience at Aristoteles University was overwhelmingly positive. The faculty were supportive, and the international office was always available to assist with any issues. The university also organized regular events for exchange students, making it easier to meet people and build a network.

### **Day-to-Day Life and Free Time**

Living in Thessaloniki provided me with numerous opportunities to explore both the city and its surroundings. Thessaloniki is rich in history and culture, and I made sure to visit some of its most iconic landmarks. The **White Tower**, a symbol of the city, offered stunning panoramic views of the waterfront. I also explored the **Byzantine Walls** and the **Upper Town (Ano Poli)**, where the ancient fortifications and charming narrow streets provide a glimpse into the city's past. The **Church of Agios Dimitrios**, dedicated to the patron saint of Thessaloniki, is another must-visit for its historical significance and beautiful architecture. For a taste of the city's rich history, I visited the **Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki** and the **Museum of Byzantine Culture**, both of which house impressive collections of artifacts from various periods of Greek history. I also enjoyed walking around the vibrant **Ladadika district**, known for its nightlife and traditional tavernas, offering an authentic experience of local cuisine and culture.

During weekends, I often traveled to the nearby region of Chalkidiki, known for its stunning beaches and clear waters. Chalkidiki is divided into three peninsulas, each offering unique experiences. I spent time on the **Sithonia Peninsula**, visiting beaches like **Armenistis** and **Kavourotripes**, known for their crystal-clear waters and beautiful natural surroundings. The beaches were perfect for relaxation, swimming, and even some snorkeling. I also visited the third peninsula, **Mount Athos**, a spiritual center of Orthodox Christianity, though only accessible to men. For women, a boat tour around the peninsula offers breathtaking views of the monasteries from the sea.

### **Conclusion**

Reflecting on my time abroad, I can confidently say it was one of the most enriching experiences of my life. The best part was the friendships I formed, particularly with my French roommate, and the opportunity to immerse myself in a new culture. The warm relationship I developed with my landlords, who treated me like their own child, made my experience in Thessaloniki truly unique. On the flip side, the worst experience was the initial struggle to find reliable accommodation, but it taught me valuable lessons in resilience and adaptability.