

#Erasmus Story: My Erasmus Experience in Paphos, Cyprus

My Erasmus journey started on the 29th of September when I landed in Paphos, Cyprus. The warm weather immediately put me in a good mood, especially since I had just left behind the chilly autumn air of Poland. Since my apartment at Paphos Garden Leptos was only available from the 1st of October, I spent my first two nights at a cozy hostel called Bee in the old town of Paphos. It turned out to be a great decision, I met so many new people and got a head start on exploring the city before my classes began.

At the hostel, I shared a room with two amazing girls-one from Russia and one from the Philippines. We clicked instantly and ended up exploring Paphos together, visiting the Archaeological Site of Paphos, the Tomb of the Kings, Sunset Point, and the beach. It was such a fun way to start this new adventure.



On my second day, I went to the university to get information about my visa requirements, as I needed one due to my third-country status. I also decided to apply for a student card to make my life easier with transportation, even though my apartment was just a ten-minute walk from campus. I wanted to get to know the city better, and taking the bus seemed like a great way to do that.



Before coming to Cyprus, I had applied for a temporary residence card in Poland, as my current one was set to expire on January 3rd. Unfortunately, I never heard back from the authorities, so I had to apply for a Polish visa again at the embassy in Nicosia. At the same time, I gathered all the documents needed for my Cyprus residence permit (the yellow card), making sure everything was in order for my stay.

One of the most unforgettable moments during my Erasmus was my birthday. I had always dreamed of learning how to surf, so I decided to give it a try. It was a lot harder than I expected, especially since the beach had some rocky areas, and I got a few minor injuries along the way. But it was still an incredible experience! In the evening, I dressed up, put on some makeup, and went to a restaurant alone to celebrate. It was my first time trying seafood, and it felt like a special moment—growing up in Tajikistan, seafood was never part of my diet, so getting the chance to try it in Cyprus was truly exciting.

During my time in Cyprus, I spent a lot of time alone, but I kept myself busy with activities like morning runs, swimming at the beach, working out at the gym, and even taking kickboxing classes where I met some great people. I also got really interested in Cypriot cuisine and taught myself how to cook some traditional dishes.



Academically, my workload was quite manageable with just four subjects. When Christmas break arrived, I decided to travel to Northern Cyprus, and that was an eye-opening experience. Crossing the border in the middle of a street was surreal-it felt like stepping into a completely different world. The language, currency, and even the food were different. I visited Girne and Famagusta, two beautiful cities, and met some fellow travelers along the way. Everything there was much cheaper than in the South, and I had the best time exploring historical sites, taking a boat trip, and indulging in Turkish cuisine.

One of the biggest surprises of my Erasmus experience was when my American parents(an American couple who have been supporting my education since 2017)came to visit me. They are photojournalists who travel the world, and I first met them in Tajikistan during their Silk Road expedition in 2015. They were in Argentina when they decided to change their plans and surprise me in Cyprus for Papa's birthday. When I saw them, I was completely shocked and overwhelmed with happiness!

We had the most amazing time together, going on private tours to places like the Blue Lagoon, the National Forest Park, Shark Cave, the Baths of Aphrodite, Turtle Beach & Museum, a winery, and even a village where they make cheese and olive oil. One of my small dreams was to swim in the sea during winter, and I finally got to do it! To make Papa's birthday special, I even arranged for our hotel to decorate the room with balloons as a surprise. Those days with them felt truly magical.

After my exams, I spent some quality time with my university friends. We had a fun beach day and even visited the zoo together. Then, on February 3rd, I finally had my embassy appointment and received my Polish visa, which was valid from March 1st-the same day as my flight back.

Looking back, my Erasmus experience in Cyprus was a whirlwind of adventure, personal growth, and unforgettable moments. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity, and though I had many wonderful days, I also started to miss Poland. Now, as I prepare to return, I know that I'm leaving with a heart full of memories and a newfound appreciation for travel, independence, and the friendships I made along the way.

