

SPbPU Student Speaks about Her Studies at the School of Design in France

The first half of the summer is over; thorny exams are left behind, and it is just the right time to start making plans for the next academic year: to think about the student exchange programs and an opportunity to spend one or two terms at an SPbPU partner university abroad. Quite recently, a 3rd-grade student of the Department of “Engineering Drawing and Design” of the Institute of Metallurgy, Mechanical Engineering and Transport Anastasia GORSHKOVA has got back from Nantes (France) where she had been studying for a full semester at L'école de Design Nantes Atlantique. Upon her return, Anastasia shared her impressions about France, told how to process documents for the trip, and gave some advice on how to better adapt to the life in a foreign country. Our interview is about all of this and not only.



- Anastasia, welcome back! Could you please tell us how did you decide to study abroad?

- Studying at a different country had been my dream of many years: since my early childhood, I've been traveling around Europe with my parents, and I always

wanted to know how students live and learn in different parts of the world. This was not my first experience of studying abroad: last year, I went to Hong Kong for a summer school. I am very glad that SPbPU students have such opportunities.

- Did you meet any obstacles collecting the documents for your trip?

- The main difficulty is that you have to prepare quite a lot of documents. I highly recommend to start collecting them as early as possible and read through all the requirements very carefully. You need to check if translation of a particular reference is necessary, should it be notarized, etc. There are lots of nuances, and hence it is crucially important to prepare documents in an utmost responsible manner.

- How did you choose the university? What were your major criteria?

- I took it very seriously. First, I studied the list of available schools. In most cases, websites of each university provides with detailed information regarding the disciplines you can choose from. I major in "Information Design", and for that reason, I was most of all interested in interfaces and 3D modeling. This way, after a while I already had a list of several universities, and I started to look for comments on studying there in the Internet. I tried to find out if other students had already been there on exchange programs, and, mostly, I was focusing on the information in social networks of official university communities.

Besides this, the financial aspect was also quite important. This is why I recommend everybody to check in advance on the approximate monthly expenditures in the country of your choice; you can easily find this in the Internet.



- And you chose France after all. Was it necessary to speak French to study there?

- The requirement to know or not the language of the country of study fully depends on the recipient university. In my case, the training was completely going in English. I had not studied French prior to my trip, and in the beginning it was not easy for me: local people practically did not speak English, and I had to explain myself with gestures or use mobile translator in the phone.

- Which city did you study in? What was particularly special about it?

- I studied in the south of France, in the city of Nantes. I had never been there before, and I've got this impression that Nantes was a small and quiet European city. I was even worried that I might have nothing to do in my free time. However, my concerns had absolutely no grounds: Nantes has nearly 300 thousand residents, and it is full of life! I ran across an unbelievable number of creative people, visited numerous exhibits, musical performances, and installations. Diverse cultural events are taking place there on a regular basis, while the architecture delights the eye not only in the old city but in the modern districts as well.

- Was it easy for you to adapt to living in a new country? Did you have any difficulties?

- In the beginning, it was not very easy to adapt: you get into an absolutely unknown country, communicate with people in a different language, and have to get used to the fact that all your friends and family are thousands kilometers away from you. However, the adaptation goes fast enough, and you start noticing how many new and interesting things are there around you. Gradually, the language barrier goes away, you get new friends, and the city becomes familiar and even a little bit your own.

Also, when you come to a new city, a whole series of minor issues occur: what SIM-card to choose, how to get a travel card, what grocery store to go to for food? It was great that our curators told us about this at the introductory lectures which had taken place at the university a week before the beginning of our classes.



- Please, tell us about the studying. Did you like the university, your teachers?

- L'école de Design Nantes Atlantique had impressed me a lot. Even the French themselves believe it to be one of the best design universities in France. In the course of our classes, we had access to all instruments we needed; we could use the audio and video studios, etc. Our teachers were very responsive and always open for dialogue. The website of our campus was also quite convenient: you could always see your schedule, your grades, the average grade, or get in touch with your teacher.

- What else was particularly memorable?

- I liked their approach to teaching. Design is an applied profession, and we could right away use our new knowledge in practice. Many subjects presumed broad-scale projects in the end of the course. We had been working on them right from the first days of studying. We also had a joint term group project which we had implemented for a real company.

An interesting point is that in France they have a twenty-point grading system, while they practically have no such a thing as “examination session” or “credit week.” All courses at L’ecole de Design Nantes Atlantique end at different times, and students defend their projects by the end of each course learned. Besides this, two times a semester, we had workshops which included several days of intensive work on a major project.



- What are your impressions by the outcomes of your studying in France?

- Unbelievable! I have seriously reconsidered my attitudes to studying. I believe that communication with students from other countries, the possibility to understand their culture and mindsets, and improvement of language skills give us priceless experience. Besides this, each person coming to an new country quickly learns to be independent, self confident, and self-reliant.

- What would you recommend to students who consider going abroad for studying?

- Be who dares! Do not be afraid of difficulties and start preparing your documents well in advance. Think about taking language courses before you go: that would make your communication in a foreign language a lot easier. Compose a list of things which you will take with you and which you should be able to buy on the spot. And don't worry! All efforts will fully pay you back! I wish all the luck to all those who still are to go through this unique experience!

- Anastasia, thank you for the interesting interview! We wish you new artistic achievements!

Дата публикации: 2018.07.31

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