

Pre-departure

My adventure in The Netherlands started long before even learning about the Semester in Amsterdam program. I visited the country for a short vacation and was immediately hooked. Within minutes of stepping off the plane into Schiphol airport, hailing a taxi, and arriving at my hotel in Amsterdam, I knew I wanted to study abroad there. I was only able to spend four days exploring the city but I felt an overwhelming feeling telling me “this is where I want to be.” I felt safe and at home in Amsterdam, and its people gave me unique vibes ranging from open-mindedness to friendliness to hospitable. Those factors made me adamant that I would live there for a period of time. I left Amsterdam feeling a little defeated that I wasn’t able to see everything I wanted to see, or do everything I wanted to do, but I knew I would be back very soon.

Fast forward to a few months later, during an extremely cold and rainy day in February, when I finally decided to apply for a study abroad program at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. A week prior, I was debating back and forth about the pros and cons of studying abroad at this point in my life. The cons: I had recently transferred to a new college, so I was a bit overwhelmed with making up credits, and I had moved to a new apartment in Brooklyn. I had just begun to feel settled down and the idea of changing schools again, packing up my things, and adjusting to a new city was very stressful. The pros: I would gain new perspectives about life, I would meet new people, and obviously I would get to travel to one of my favorite places and see new parts of the world. Still, I was conflicted between whether or not I wanted to leave New York, a city that I love. Ultimately the idea of spending a few months in a foreign country won. I made an appointment to see my academic advisor, who gave me clearance, and decided I was ready to roll. That cold, rainy day proved to be eventful because it was the day when I clicked the “submit” button on my application, unaware that I was about to open a door to a whole new chapter of my life.



Kate Jahnsen, Semester in Amsterdam Student Blogger

I received a quick response from an International Officer from the Semester in Amsterdam team notifying me that I had been accepted. I was really really excited! I started to think about all of the exhilarating things to come, like learning the Dutch language and immersing myself in the Dutch way of life, and grew more excited each passing day. Fast forward again to the day I’m writing this, July 28 to be exact, and I am three weeks away from my departure date. I have been in an intense summer haze between working a lot to save up for my trip, going to the beach, and seeing old friends, which has made me feel unorganized and unprepared. But since the three week mark has arrived, I’ve been taking steps to organize myself and get ready for this adventure. I’ve been prepping the little things such as fixing my camera, buying things like Advil, and making a huge Spotify playlist for the plane ride. But I have been thoroughly avoiding packing. I cannot even fathom how I am going to fit four months’ worth of clothes/shoes/supplies into bags I can lift, let alone fit on a plane. Hopefully I will figure it out.

Other than all of the little worries, I have just been enjoying my time with my family and friends before time runs out and I have to say goodbye. I am kind of sad to leave my current way of life, especially since it has taken so long for me to get in a routine, but I know bigger things are headed my way. I notice myself feeling more confident each day, and I can finally say that I am ready to take on Amsterdam. Tot ziens!

-Kate Jahnsen
Semester in Amsterdam Student Blogger