

Social life

One of my main concerns before coming to Amsterdam was that it would be hard to socialize and make new friends. Before I got here, my friends and family at home kept telling me how brave I was for going on this adventure alone, and I didn't understand why. Then on the plane, it hit me: I was about to live and go to school in a place where I didn't know anyone. Not one person. Three months later, I'm glad to report that the social life as a student at VU Amsterdam, and as a twenty-something-year-old in Amsterdam, has been awesome so far. From parties at the campus housing to events at school and nights out in the city with friends, I've immersed myself in a social setting that has so far shaped my experience here in a wonderful way.

The first day I arrived, I was lucky enough to meet three girls whom I now call my best friends: Trish, Tina, and Caroline. I stumbled upon Trish since she lived a few doors down from me on my floor and later met Tina and Caroline sitting at a picnic table prior to our neighborhood walking tour with the Semester in Amsterdam team. Thanks to the Semester in Amsterdam's social program I was able to hang out with these ladies again at events such as a welcome picnic at Museumplein near the Amsterdam sign, a tour of the Heineken Brewery, and a day trip to Efteling Theme Park. I also met many other people from the program whom I now call my friends as well. From then on, the four of us did little things together such as going to HEMA (a one-stop shop for everything you might ever possibly need) to buy items for our rooms, grocery shopping at Jumbo and trying to figure out the Dutch words for certain foods, and safely biking to Vondelpark using proper hand signals. It was the little things that forecasted how the social aspects of the upcoming months would unfold.

Eventually these arrival interactions turned into larger social events. For example, we would go to floor parties together and introduce each other to other friends we had made, or we would go



to bars and restaurants downtown and socialize with other students and Dutch locals. These occurrences eventually turned into more parties, which led to more interactions with new people and new friendships. My friends and I have also done

many other things together such as shopping in the city center, traveling to different countries, and attending the Amsterdam Dance Event. The social scene here is honestly endless. There is something going on every night and every weekend, and people are inclined to integrate into different groups of friends which allows you to meet so many different people.

Looking back at how intimidating it was to come here without knowing anyone, I'm glad I took the plunge and did so. I've been able to meet so many awesome people, learn many new things about different cultures, and challenged myself by building a new life on my own. The social life here has led to many amazing opportunities and allowed me to create friendships with people I most

likely wouldn't have met without coming here. I'm looking forward to my last two months here to spend more time with them and enjoy all that Amsterdam has to offer. I am grateful for these friends and hope that we will all stay in contact when we return to our home countries.

-Kate Jahnsen
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