

Social Life



The meaning of 'social life' has been constantly changing for me throughout my childhood, pre-teens, and teenage years, but no shift has been as dramatic as the one that happened when I came to Amsterdam.

As I have mentioned before, I go to Grinnell College, an extremely small liberal arts college in the middle of nowhere with nothing to do except go to college. Which is why socializing in Grinnell meant study groups, finding people hanging out on campus at all hours, and bumping into friends and familiar faces all of the time (honestly, it is such a small college, all faces are familiar faces). Because of this, I didn't really need to put any effort into hanging out with people or to even distinguish between 'work' time and 'not-work' time.

However, in Amsterdam, where I do not even know all of the faces of the people in my classes and we live in the middle of a bustling city instead of in dorm rooms on a small liberal arts college campus, it is completely different. Socializing now means going to a party on a Saturday night, planning to hang out at a café, or strolling through a market. This has opened up a vastly different experience in my life in many aspects.

I live with four other girls (shout out to Hannah, Makai, Grace and Emma) and they are the ones I usually hang out with. Apart from them, I met other people through IES who are also studying here for a semester (we have many Facebook group chats, always abuzz with new plans). We usually spend Saturday nights going to bars or jamming at silent discos. We hang out in our kitchen very often, and it is always a fun discovery the next day. By just looking around the kitchen you can re-imagine bits of the evening (I once walked into the kitchen the next morning

to find every single piece of furniture turned upside down). We also have family dinners in which everyone brings small dishes and we spend hours talking. And we have movie-nights on a DIY cloth-projector (we always invade Makai's room which always smells amazing thanks to scented candles from HEMA).



However, here is a little bit of something personal for me that I would like to share. Most of the people I interact with here, including all of my housemates, are from the US. And even though I go to college in the States, most of my friends there are other international students from other parts of the world. I have never been so continuously exposed to a group of white Americans. Ironically, this was the culture shock I faced most when I moved here. And even though we speak the same language, there are times when I am sitting in a group of people and I have no clue what they are talking about. But anyway, this is just a small part of an otherwise amazing group of people!

Another big part of social life here for me is also being by myself and learning to do things on my own (which, I know is technically not a social activity, but it's outside the realm of work, so this seems like a good place to bring it up). I had never had a meal alone before I came to Amsterdam or just decided to go to different places on my own; it is something that took me a while to learn, but now I really appreciate it.

Apart from my social life in Amsterdam itself, the social life I participate in outside of Amsterdam through travelling is a big part of my study abroad experience. I have travelled to six different countries and on these weekend-long adventures I meet a lot of friends from my college who are also studying abroad. Of course, leaving for the weekend always gives me FOMO (Fear of Missing Out, for those of you who don't know and are lucky enough to not be afflicted by this), but the beauty of European countries makes it worth it.

But anyway, I know that all of the interesting people I have met, the fun memories made here, and the conversations that took place in Amsterdam will always be a part of me and my social life.