

Hi everyone! My name is Julia and I will be sharing my Semester in Amsterdam journey with you this fall!

First, let me tell you a little bit about myself. I am a student at the University of Denver. I am majoring in English and French with minors in Biology, Chemistry, and Gender and Women's Studies. I am super passionate about travel and plan on doing a lot of it during my semester abroad!

I chose the VU program for many reasons. The classes that I am planning on taking in the fall seem fascinating, giving me a new cultural perspective on the subjects I study in America. The city is incredibly diverse and cosmopolitan, exposing me to a myriad of cultures and traditions and allowing me to experience the lifestyle of a European student. The program at Vrije Universiteit also allows us a great amount of freedom to explore life abroad on our own and challenges us to step out of our comfort zone, while also giving us the guidance we need to succeed during our Semester in Amsterdam.

I cannot wait to experience life in Amsterdam this August! Can you believe that in just a few months we will be biking along the canals and having picnics in Vondelpark? Walking around the Bloemenmarkt and taking trips to the Anne Frank House? (And the Van Gogh museum, the Rijksmuseum, the Rembrandt House, the Moco museum...I can go on and on.)

However, despite my excitement, I am also absolutely terrified. I have lived in Denver for half of my life and find it difficult to imagine myself living elsewhere. (The other half I spent living in Poland, so at least I have the comfort of knowing a little bit about European life...) Leaving my family is also a scary notion, but I am eager to find a new independence. Mostly, I am afraid of the language barrier. Though I know that a majority of Dutch people speak English very well, as a self-proclaimed over-achiever, I have decided that I *need* to master the Dutch language by the time I arrive. But even my trilingualism is not enough to help me pronounce *afstandsbediening* (the word means remote control, in case you were wondering).

It seems that the closer we get to our arrival in Amsterdam, the more questions pester my brain every day. How will I fit all my clothes into my suitcase? How much Dutch Gouda is too much to eat in one day? Will I spend all of my money at Mama's? And what are the rules of the road for people on bicycles? (On that note, how can I avoid getting trampled over by a bike?)

However, even despite all of my fears and questions about the Semester in Amsterdam, I am thrilled to be starting this journey. In fact, I think that not knowing what to expect is what makes it so exciting. And, above all, I cannot wait to meet all of you and embark on this adventure together.

Until next time,
Julia :)

P.S. Here are some of my favorite travel photos from this past year to tide you over until all of your European travels!

