

Erasmus in Rouen for UCD Students

Getting there: While Rouen is a rather sizeable city (approx. 200,000 people), finding your way there may take a while, depending on how you choose to travel. If you prefer to fly in, you'll need to fly into either Charles de Gaulle or Beauvais airport in Paris, and then take a train from the Paris Saint-Lazare station. Another alternative is to take a ferry from either Rosslare to Cherbourg or from Cork to Rosscoff, and then drive down to the city. However, bear in mind that there the University itself and its offices are located in the suburb of Mont Saint-Aignan, which is atop a hill overlooking Rouen, and getting there when you've only just arrived may be tough, given the number of one-way roads in Rouen.

Arrival: UCD and Université de Rouen will contact you during the summer with the necessary information regarding the accommodation, university life, necessary documentation, etc. After that, when you first arrive and set yourself up, the International Relations office holds an introductory seminar for International students, to help you meet other International students and help you set up the minor aspects of living in France, e.g. setting up a bank account, getting a French mobile phone, etc.

While you can use your Irish phone in France, it is much more worth your while to get a French one, as it proves to be cheaper in the long run. However, it would be more advisable that you go for a phone contract as opposed to a pay-as-you go system, as phone credit in France is on a temporary basis, i.e. regardless on the amount you top up by, you have a certain amount of time before it expires.

Accommodation: The Université de Rouen has its own office that deals with accommodation matters called CROUS, which is located on the campus itself. As stated before, the university sends you information about accommodation before you arrive, which is the choice of a room in three different residences. The three available residences are Galois, Panorama, and Bois. Each one has a different rent; €307 for Galois, €230 for Panorama, and €180 for Bois. There is also a deposit of one month's rent to be paid, but this is returned at the end of the year. As this is all managed by the CROUS office, everything relating to the residences (paying rent, electrical or plumbing problems) is to be sorted out there. While they do send you a list of required documentation before your arrival, it would be best to contact them if possible to find the full list, as some necessary documents are sent later in the summer via post, which means some people can be waiting hours to get their room.

If you decide not to get accommodation on campus, then unfortunately it is up to the student themselves to find their own accommodation in the city, be it with a host family, or renting a flat on their own, or with flatmates.

For those who do decide to stay with the campus residences, be aware that you will need to set up an internet connection at your own expense when you arrive in the residence. As well as that, the furnishings are rather basic, but fortunately there is an IKEA located in an industrial estate in the southern outskirts of the city.

Settling in: When you arrive, you may find yourself panicking a little at the prospect of spending an entire year in another country, but this is completely natural. Fortunately, the Université organises a two week introductory course both to help you get used to the idea of speaking French in a

classroom atmosphere, as well as helping you meet other Erasmus students. As well as this, the International Relations office has a number of French staff members in hand whose job is to help you get set up in Rouen.

Money: Obviously, France uses the Euro; however, while the ATMs don't charge you to withdraw money with your Irish card, using your card for transactions in a shop or supermarket may cost you extra, depending on the card. As such, it makes sense to open a French bank upon arrival, as not only do these help save you money, the accounts that are available to students include a number of deals that really help every now and then, as well as a French debit card which are free from the interest charge that some shops may put upon Irish cards.

Cost of living: France is rather cheaper than Ireland when it comes to most things, such as accommodation, groceries, etc. The two big supermarket chains in Rouen, Carrefour and Super-U offer a great deal of both popular brands, as well as their own cheaper brand. The opening times for both of these supermarkets are the same as in Ireland, but bear in mind that everything is closed on Sundays, though Super-U stays open until noon. And by everything, that means EVERYTHING. While some bars, cafés and restaurants may open, Sunday is the day where everything closes for the entire. However, if you should find yourself in desperate need of groceries, there is Super-U until noon, as well as a farmer's market in the city centre at Place Saint Marc, which also ends at noon.

Alcohol is cheaper in shops than in Ireland, particularly (and stereotypically) wine, though bar prices are the same as Ireland, while they are more expensive in nightclubs. Cigarettes are cheaper as well, while eating out in restaurants and takeaways can vary from place to place.

Studying: There is quite a difference between the universities in Rouen and in Dublin. First off, the length that each class goes on for is 2 hours rather than 1. Also, credit allotment (ECTS) is different from UCD's 5 per module. Classes can be worth as little as 2 ECTS up to 9 in some cases. All of the classes are in French; the only school which provides classes in English is the Business School. As such, it would be advisable that you have at least some competency of French before going to Rouen, as it is not only necessary for classes, but also for the administrative side as well, as well as socialising with the locals. Registration for classes is also different to UCD's system in that there is no online registration; brochures of the available modules are offered in the department offices of each individual School. Once you find what class you actually want to take, all you have to do is make an appearance at the first class of the semester, and the professor will mark you down as registered.

Going out: While not the smallest city in France, Rouen does certainly make itself seem like a town created ideally for students. That is to say, there are a number of bars and clubs that cater to both French and International students, with class parties being rather common each week, but in different bars or clubs each time. The most popular with students are Chester's, Highlands, Emporium Galorium and Le Bidule.

There are several Irish bars dotted around the city, with the two more prominent ones being O'Kallaghan's and Le Saxo. Highlands is an English bar, and regularly play soccer matches, while O'Kallaghan's sticks to rugby for the most part. O'Kallaghan's is fairly popular with both French and International students, particularly on Saturday nights.

The areas around the Musée des Beaux Arts and Place Jeanne d'Arc give a more French atmosphere in terms of both restaurants and bars, the latter of which provide a number of Belgian and Normandy beers.

In June there is a Fête de la musique, a street festival where local bands, and some regional celebrities, perform in the streets and squares of Rouen.

Getting around: One of the great things about Rouen is the efficiency of its public transport system; buses not only run on time, but are rather cheap to ride, particularly if you get a bus card which costs €185 for the year: and given the size of Rouen, it would be advisable to invest in one. The university and its residences are located in Mont Saint Aignan, which is located on top of a hill overlooking Rouen city centre. The hill is rather steep and, while this may make going down easier, coming back up can be a bit of a nightmare, especially for bike riders. At the weekends there is a night bus that runs until 3am which costs the same as a regular daytime bus (€1.40).

For travelling around France there is the train station in the centre of town. If you open an account with BNP Paribas, then you can buy a 'carte 12/25', which cuts all rail ticket prices in half, for free. By that, you still need to pay the required €50, however, should you pay with your BNP debit card, and the money will be refunded by the bank. This proves to be very useful, certainly when traveling to Paris is necessary in order to access the airport.