

## ERASMUS+ project in TURKEY - My experience

### NEVSEHIR, TURKEY

In March 2019, I lived one of the best experiences of my life. This project has brought benefits, such as having learned to deal with other cultures, having improved my English and having become more independent.

Although I had the preconceived idea that this experience would be somewhat negative, it surprised me how enriching it was to communicate with the Turkish people and with the other teenagers from the other countries also involved in the project. It was interesting to observe and live the Turkish educational system and the domestic life, as it was awesome to visit some touristic points like Göreme and Uçhisar. I really enjoyed having tried the Turkish gastronomy, which doesn't have much in common with the kind of food I am used to.

This experience was very positive also because of my host family. In conclusion, this experience was one of the best I have ever had and I would repeat without thinking twice.

***Henrique Mendes, Portugal***

In March 2019, I went to Turkey, specifically Nevshir, Cappadocia, on an Erasmus program and the experience was simply amazing! I wonder if there are enough nice words to describe this experience!

In fact, when we (and I'm referring to my country's group) got there, we were all very well received by the national people. Everyone was incredible with us, with our well-being and it was notable that visitors were at the top of their priorities list! They made us feel as comfortable as possible and they were always making sure there nothing was missing! For example, on the last day I got belly aches and my host family was always asking me if I was ok, if they could get me anything (tea, pill,...) or if I needed to go to the hospital.

Besides the great hospitality, all the experiences they provided us were unique: visiting the city, making new friends, learning a new and very different culture and learning their costumes and language. This program helped me a lot on increasing my sense of responsibility, independence and outgoing personality. Despite of the language difficulties, we all worked together to communicate reasonably and we all tried to socialize with each student and host family of the exchange program. There is no doubt I was a little scared because of the food costume, but during my trip there was no food problem, I liked almost everything I tasted for the first time.

To summarize: I don't regret anything about that trip, so I would definitely and absolutely accept this memorable project again to live once more this once-in-a-life-opportunity.

***Renata Brito, Portugal***

Between March 16th and March 22th, we went to Nevsehir, Cappadocia, in Turkey.

It was a unforgettable moment for me. I lived so many different and amazing experiences that I never thought I'd live. I don't even have words to describe that type of feelings!

I visited lots of monuments and beautiful places, I saw completely new things, tasted strange food, which, in the end, was delicious, and the list keeps going on and on and on...

I liked very much the people and the environment and all the fun and new games, and the others Erasmus students were amazing too! My host family was very nice to me and my friend, and they were always trying to impress us and make us feel like home.

I appreciated that a lot. I would, absolutely, do that again. I simply loved that 100%. Thanks to all the people that made this happen!

***Bruna Ramos, Portugal***



The trip to Cappadocia was the best. I have always wanted to travel to Turkey and this was my opportunity. The landscapes were so beautiful and magical. I liked very much the city lying beneath the ground and Ihlara valley. I also enjoyed all the historical sites and monuments. Finally, I liked the Urgüp Göreme city very much.

What impressed me the was the school that was so different from my Greek school. I wish I can go to Cappadocia again.

***Maria Dimitra Goga, Greece***

My name is Max Slater, I am 15 years old and I live in Qala. I go to the Sacred Heart Minor Seminary in Gozo, Malta. I enjoy basketball, football and water polo.

I went to Nevşehir, a city in the geographical centre of Turkey. The trip was from the 18th to the 22nd of March. I was accompanied on this trip by 3 teachers and 4 students including myself.

I found out about this project from seeing the Erasmus notice board at school. We also had meetings at the school to prepare ourselves for the trip. I brought warm clothes for the morning because in that specific part of Turkey due to their being no sea or body of water nearby it caused there to be less water vapour in the air meaning heat isn't trapped.

I noticed that like Malta, lots of people lived in flats. I stayed in a large apartment building. There was quite a lot of poverty in the city and with 38% of Turkish children living in poverty it's not surprising that we saw poor areas. The school design inside was in a similar style to our school in Malta with white-washed walls, and where we have pictures of Saints in our classroom, they had pictures of Atatürk.

There are some marked differences in culture, for example, the food scene was really different from what I was used to. However, I was willing to try a few new things, and I wasn't disappointed.

I've noticed that they love basketball, I would say more than we do.

People like to stay at home in the evenings, while we tend to stay out late. This may be due to the fact that we live in smaller communities while the city we were in is quite large by comparison.

I enjoyed the trip and found the outings to be interesting especially the caves where the Christians hid from the Muslim Arabs. I would participate in a trip like that again and would highly recommend it.

***Max Slater, Malta***



Turkish cuisine is very different from Maltese cuisine. Turkish cuisine is healthier than Maltese cuisine because in Malta we lead a faster-paced life so we fall into more processed food and in Turkey they eat more moderately and natural food.

In Turkey for breakfast, they eat a moderate and healthy meal, with vegetables, cheese, olives and even chips. Chips! I was surprised too, because usually you eat chips at lunch or maybe at dinner, but I was amazed that they do not cook them in oil. This is a healthier version than ours, yet still very tasty.

Usually in Malta we just take a cup of coffee or tea, maybe a toast and then maybe we snack later. I believe the Turkish version gives you more energy to cope with a long day of work.



For lunch, they eat a variety of food such as vegetables, bread, cheese, olives, eggs, sometimes meat and carbs. One time we went out and bought a wrap and it was quite plain, but delicious. Although it had just 2 ingredients, meat and lettuce, the former was marinated in an array of spices and herbs which resulted in a

lovely combination.

In Malta, judging from what I see, we eat more fast foods like burgers or nuggets with chips.



For dinner, which was usually the main meal in Cappadocia, meats featured quite often. However, the hosting families were very kind to us and they sometimes prepared dishes which were comparable to the ones we are used to back home. However, Turkish cuisine is based on a generous serving of rice and protein. Beef was the staple protein but lamb is very popular too. The main contrast I noticed is that our cuisine is more inclined on pasta and other forms of carbs. The amount of processed foods is more evident in Malta. However, I think that the Turks have a sweet tooth, perhaps more than us, as desserts are elaborate and rich, to die for, honestly.

**Francesco Bonello, Malta**

Cappadocia has a very rich history with many sites to visit. From spectacular rock formations, to a whole underground city, Cappadocia is filled with interesting sites to admire.

The first place we visited was Göreme which has an amazing panoramic view of the volcanic landscape which over thousands of years, formed conical pillars which people carved houses in and resided in them (and still do).

Pigeon valley was the second place we visited and as the name suggests, the valley has hundreds of pigeons all residing in the rock-cut pigeon houses. Pigeons were very

important in Cappadocia as they were a source of food for the people and they contributed to the richness of the soil as they produce a lot of fertilizer.

At one end of Pigeon Valley there is the underground city of Kaymakli which was built by Christians to hide from invaders which persecuted them. Thousands of Christians resided in this underground city, and only a small percentage is open to the public. But I wouldn't recommend it if you are claustrophobic!

Another great highlight and probably a jackpot for the whole trip was the Ihlara valley with many Byzantine churches that contain a lot of frescos depicting Christ's miracles and many early saints.

The next day's highlight was the Göreme open air museum featuring many churches from the 4th and 5th century along with hundreds of frescos which this time were well preserved unlike the ones in Ihlara valley.

Cappadocia has one of the richest histories in the world in my opinion. I would definitely recommend it to anyone as I learned a lot from this experience and the things you see are one of a kind.

**Mizzi, Malta**

Life in Turkey wasn't that easy for me since there is a marked difference between the two cultures. The Maltese culture is based mainly on Mediterranean style while the Turkish one in Cappadocia felt different and definitely akin to central Asian customs.

When I was in Turkey I experienced many different changes in my daily routine. There we usually took breakfast the first thing when we woke up and I also noticed that they wake up very late as compared to the average Maltese student. My hosting family usually woke up around 8 o'clock. We usually ate a very good and generous Turkish breakfast complimented by many cups of Turkish coffee and Turkish tea.

They also follow different religious customs since they are Muslims and about 5 times a day we usually heard the Imam praying from the Mosque. In Malta, Catholicism is very prominent, yet the presence of our belief is more subtle.

There I also noticed that they have a lack of social commodities like public buses and also garbage pickup.

\*The food in Turkey is healthier than in Malta since most of the produce we consumed is organic and also there aren't many take away shops.

The average size of the home is much smaller than what we are used to since they live in small flats with other relatives in the same block. In Gozo this isn't very common.

They also have different types of baths than those in Malta. In Malta we usually use a shower while in Turkey they use a Hamam style which basically involves a large recipient for water and one is encouraged to drowse oneself with loads of water. In my opinion is more relaxing than the shower we have in Malta.

All in all, my experience in Turkey was an experience we taught me a lot and if I was given the chance to do it again, I will surely go for it.



***Xuereb, Malta***