

My Erasmus Experience

"An exciting and unforgettable taste of fun, friendship and freedom!"

Zoe Maclean

Studied BA Hons in Spanish and French

Went to Valencia in Spain for 10 months to study Spanish and French language and literature



I believe that having a disability or impairment should not stop you from living life to the full. The Erasmus experience is one that will transform you as a person and your life forever. I think that the experience taught me to see my disability differently as I felt more accepted and made more friends in spite of the challenges I faced before going. It was a life-changing experience.

At first my biggest fear was that it would not be possible to go at all. There were so many financial and practical challenges involved in going abroad. It was something which to my knowledge had not been done before at my university. There was very little information available. Where would I find carers to help me? Where would I find accessible accommodation? How accessible was the city? I knew I wanted to go in my heart of hearts but wasn't sure how things would go. I also had a great fear of not being socially accepted in a foreign city due to my disability.



I know in Britain from experience that people are often put off in a social situation by my wheelchair. How would this turn out in a foreign country?

My university helped me find out as much information as possible regarding accessibility and accommodation.

My family was also very supportive in helping me to find practical help in the form of personal assistants and the extra Erasmus funding I received as a disabled student was very helpful.

My fear of not being accepted turned out to be totally unfounded. The young Spanish people that I met at the university in Spain were very welcoming and treated me like one of the crowd. These are friends that I still keep in contact with today.

The best thing about the experience was gaining a new sense of self-confidence and self-belief and making new friends. Also I experienced many new things, for example travelling on the metro for the first time in my wheelchair.

I felt that the whole experience changed me as a person. It gave me more confidence and self belief. I do not deny that I had some serious doubts about whether it would be possible at all.

It was challenging and difficult to organise at first for everyone involved. However, in spite of these challenges I successfully completed the year. It is an experience that I do not regret and one that I will never forget. I hope that my experiences give hope and courage to those people planning their journey for the first time particularly those with a disability.

