

Osijek, Croatia

Clinical Internship, IFMSA

Participant name: Summer Ali

Term: July, 2018

## **Arrival**

I booked a 14 hour Flixbus from Olomouc to Osijek for 9EUR (spontaneous sale). Usually these tickets cost 30-50EUR. Upon arrival I was picked up by a CP & lodged into my dorms. The process of registering my accommodation was time consuming because there was an issue with their system.

## **Accommodation**

There were 9 students during July in total. We all had shared rooms ( same sex ), except one girl who came last and there was no one to share with her so she was lodged into a single room. The rooms were great, we had desks, chairs, lamps, shelves, wardrobes ( no hangers ), a fridge and air conditioning. The windows had nets so no bugs could come through. The bathroom was shared between 2 double rooms ( 4 people ). We had to clean the bathrooms ourselves. There was a kitchen with a stove, but no oven or microwave. We were given utensils, pots and pans by CroMSIC but no plates or glasses. I brought my own plastic plates. Our accommodation was a 20 minute walk from the hospital.

## **Internship**

On the first day a student from CroMSIC took me to meet the head of the Paediatrics department. The head then gave me the option to choose which specific department I wanted to start with; gastroenterology, pulmonology, neurology etc. I started with gastroenterology. I did visit the other departments but since this was the department that peaked my interest the most and the doctors here were absolutely incredible, I spent most of my time in this department. Every week I could go to a new sub-department of my choosing.

Every morning at 7:30 I would attend the meetings with the other doctors during which they would discuss case reviews. They spoke fluent English so I could understand everything. Then we would do ward rounds and examinations. From my first day I was given the opportunity to examine patients. My doctors made me feel included in every step of the process. We would discuss lab values, the differential diagnosis and radiological results of every patient. They would encourage questions and I have learnt a lot from them.

My doctors would even recommend me places to visit and things to do. They were very friendly and caring. They truly want you to enjoy your time in their country.

I was also given the opportunity to attend other departments in my spare time if I wished so I also attended the surgery department.

### **City**

Osijek is a smaller city compared to the other options for Croatia IFMSA. It is in Slavonia. It is more like a country side. A week into our stay the city became quite empty as most students had finished their exams and left to the coast for their vacations. We walked everywhere on foot because it is a smaller city. There isn't as much to do here as there is on the coast but we visited nearby cities and just explored. There is a river beach where locals would often go and swim in the Drava river but it didn't look so appealing to any of the exchange students as the river was quite murky. It is 5 hours from the capital. Most people here are fluent in English so communication with the locals was quite easy.

### **Food**

We were given breakfast, lunch and dinner by the hospital cafeteria. There were specific timings for the exchange students. Personally I did not like the cafeteria food. Eating halal isn't really an option in Croatia because Muslims are not so common there and they usually add meat to everything ( especially the dinner ) , so there weren't many vegetarian options on the menu for the vegetarians in our exchange group. We were just given a larger amount of the sides they usually serve with the meat.

As we had a kitchen sometimes we would prepare our own simple meals or we would go to the fast food restaurants. McDonald's and fast food isn't so common in Croatia, especially on the coast so we would have to walk quite far to get to find a common fast food chain.

We were told to drink bottled water just to be on the safe side. Some drank tap water and were okay with it.

### **Travelling & Social Programmes**

Since Osijek is so far from the other touristic attractions, we had to travel much longer than the other exchange students from the other cities and it was also more expensive for us. In Osijek we could travel to nearby cities Dakovo, Vukovar and the Baranja region as a part of the Local Social Programme. We also went kayaking which was an amazing experience. I wouldn't recommend going to bowling or zoo Zoo because it's nothing special.

We also organised a trip to Zagreb amongst ourselves and we had a great time.

On the NSP they took us to Zadar, Sibenik, Split and Hvar. A group of other students and I stayed longer. We also visited Trogir, Dugi Otok & Brač islands. In my opinion and in the opinion of many other students this programme was rushed and overpriced. There were 'hidden' expenses throughout the trip. I would suggest organising your own travels because it'll be more relaxed and cheaper.

### **Overall Experience**

Although a lot of us felt extorted by the NSP, Croatia is really a beautiful country and I would have loved to see more of it. The clinical experience was great because of the doctors' motivation to teach as well as their fluency in English. The accommodation was great and the CroMSIC team in Osijek was always there for us and did their best to keep us happy.