

Lyon II for UCD students – What to expect



Before you arrive: Once you have confirmed Lyon II as your destination of choice, the university will send you an information pack over the summer. This will include a guide to the city, an application form for accommodation, details of the language preparation courses they offer and a request that you send them a draft learning agreement. At this stage, an approximate learning agreement (i.e. 30 credits of history, 15 of French) is fine and the exact modules you take do not have to be decided until the first weeks of term.

Getting there: The easiest way to get to Lyon from Dublin is via plane and Aer Lingus offer direct flights five times a week. The cost of a return ticket varies between €100 and €200 depending on how far in advance you book. The airport is a little outside the city centre and the best way to get to the centre is with the Rhone Express, a tram service that operates on the hour from the airport. A return ticket costs approximately €20 and remains valid for a year. Alternatively, there are also taxis but this can end up costing quite a bit, particularly if it's a Sunday when fare rates are higher (+€60).

When you arrive: During the Summer you're given the option of corresponding with a 'marrain' or 'parrain' who is supposed to help you settle in to Lyon but many of them didn't reply to their e-mails, so be prepared to get to your destination by yourself and plan your route ahead.

Split campus: It is important to note that the Lyon II campus is split in two with teaching held both at the Quais and Bron. They are roughly 45 minutes apart by tram. Classes for Law, Politics and French for Erasmus students are held at the Quais while other subjects, including History, are mostly held at Bron. The International Office is on the Quais.

Accommodation: As part of the summer information pack, you will get the chance to apply for University managed accommodation. The accommodation offered by the University is at St. Just, within walking distance of Vieux Lyon. It is approximately 15 mins away by public transport from Lyon II's Quais campus and 45 mins from the Bron campus.

You can apply for three different types of room: 1) Single Room – Corridors made up of single rooms (+ 50 per corridor) with shared communal facilities. Each room has a bed, a desk, a wardrobe and a sink. Shared facilities include showers, toilets and a kitchenette (Two hotplates, one microwave and fridges). No phone line which means no personal internet. Rent is very cheap, only €175 a month in 2010-2011 and electricity is included. 2) Studios – Slightly larger versions of the single person rooms which include an ensuite and a kitchenette. Has phone line. Rent is slightly higher at €325 a month in 2010-2011 but electricity costs are not included. 3) Shared Apartments – Mixed gender apartment blocks that house six with shared facilities. Similar standard to Belgrove or Merville. Has phone line. Rent is roughly €250.

The University Accommodation is run by CROUS, a French body designed to help students and, as a result, is made up predominantly of French students. Although your accommodation is allocated by Lyon II, CROUS administer the site and are to whom you pay your rent. You usually pay your rent at the site office although bank transfers can be arranged on request. Similarly, if you have any complaints or need any work done you should contact the CROUS office. Unless the problem is patently your fault, this work will be done for free. Students are also eligible to apply for CAF, which subsidises a proportion of the rent depending on your income level.

The site has a pool hall /bar; a CROUS restaurant; laundry rooms; and rooms that can be reserved to host parties. Additionally, they offer discounted gym membership which is competitively priced at about €30 a year. It's no Crunch but is certainly more than adequate. Finally, they offer internet for all the rooms at discounted rates. However, be warned the signal is very slow and it should not be relied upon. Either be prepared to spend extensive time in the Lyon II library or invest in your own modem/dongle. CROUS also provide new bed linen once a month for + €10 but it is of very poor quality. You would be advised to bring your own or buy some out in Lyon, with the shop Carrefour offering a cheap but comfortable selection.

Every student is guaranteed a place in university accommodation but not necessarily the place they indicated as their first preference. Of course, it is also possible to get accommodation independent of Lyon II, through websites such as appartager.com or colocation.com. Although living with French people is ideal for learning the language, it's often quite difficult for foreign students to find accommodation because landlords can be difficult about the 'garant' (guarantors). Although under EU law anyone living in the euro zone should be able to go forward as a guarantor for their child, in reality many landlords prefer French guarantors. Legally the landlord is only entitled to ask 2 months rent as a deposit for a furnished apartment, and I would warn students not to let themselves be taken advantage of by landlords. That is not to say that students shouldn't try to find alternative accommodation, but plan ahead and aim to visit Lyon during the summer to look at apartments.

Two other alternatives are the CROUS website, whereby students can live with families, sometimes in exchange for certain chores. Another option is private student accommodation, usually one or 2 person studios, but these can be quite expensive. One such organisation is adele.org, but the advantage with this is they do accept foreign guarantors and the renting process is quite straightforward.

Another option would be to sub-let, (lasouslocation.com) which is quite useful to get over the guarantor problem but the student won't be entitled to the CAF rent supplement.

Settling in: It can be quite daunting arriving in a new country however Lyon II organise a series of welcome events where you get the opportunity to meet all of your fellow exchange students. Everyone is in the same boat when they arrive and it is very easy to make new friends at these events. Additionally, there is a student run body called Erasmus Lyon that organise nights out and continue to do so throughout the year. It is well worth adding Erasmus Lyon on Facebook before departing.

The University also offers you the opportunity to arrive early and partake in a two week French induction course. Though there is language teaching involved, the primary aim is to help you feel comfortable in your new environment with teachers more than happy to answer any queries about life in France you have.

If you are missing Ireland at all, Lyon also has its own bilingual GAA team called Lugdunum. If you fancy keeping up your GAA or just want to meet some friendly Irish and French people, just check out their Facebook page for more info.

Travelling: Lyon is a very easy city to get a round and, if most of your classes are on the Quais campus, you can get pretty much everywhere on foot. Alternatively, there is a monthly student travel card available for purchase at most train stations that allows you to use all of Lyon's very dependable and efficient public transport system (Trams, metros and buses). There is also a city wide bike scheme which is well maintained and offers an easy way to get around the city. Finally, Lyon is one of the key hubs in France's overall transport network and the station of Part-Dieu sees trains going all over Europe. Students can purchase a student travel card from SNCF, the main rail company, for just under 50 euro which means students can get up to 60% off full price tickets depending on how far in advance you book.

Money and Shopping: France uses the Euro. Most Irish bank cards will work here too but additional charges may be levied by your bank and it is best to check this out before leaving. It is also well worth the effort of getting a French bank account as student accounts are offered free of charge by BNP Paribas and certain other branches. This will give you a debit card but also allow you to set phone or internet bills.

The cost of living is largely the same as in Ireland. Groceries are largely the same price except for meat products which cost slightly more. The cheapest super markets are Aldi and Lidl while Carrefour is slightly more pricy but offers a much better range of products. Alcohol is cheaper than in Ireland with bottles of wine going for as little as €1 in places. However, prices in bars and clubs are about the same in both countries.

The main shopping areas in Lyon are Rue de la République, a five minute walk from the Quais campus, and the Part-Dieu centre, akin to Dundrum shopping centre. For living needs, such as sheets or cutlery etc, Carrefour and Ikea are the best options. Both are well serviced by public transport.

Academic Life: Academic life is quite different in Lyon with a lot more freedom to choose what you study. There are no core modules and you can take modules in nearly every faculty (with the exception of medicine etc). The majority of these modules are taught and assessed through French although there are some translation classes which are taught in both. Additionally, you can take

modules in the prestigious Lyon Science Po which are often in English but tend to be more stimulating than the Lyon II politics modules.

Most modules are 10 ECTS rather than the 5 that UCD modules are worth. Each module usually consists of one two hour lecture and one two hour tutorial each week. It's up to you to organise your own timetable which has its advantages. For example, in the second semester I only had class three days a week which left plenty of time for travelling!

Going out in Lyon: Lyon is a great city to go out in with loads of bars and little restaurants, particularly in Vieux Lyon. It is well known for its Bouchons and on most nights if you wander around long enough you can find places serving 3 course, traditionaly Lyonnaise cooking for as little as €15. For slightly fancier restaurants (and prices!) Rue de Marronniers is known as the restaurant street and is a great place to take visitors for meals.

In terms of bars, most are located around Vieux Lyon or Hotel de Ville. The Wallace or Flannerys are the best bars for watching sport as they have a great collection of screens and serve tasty but reasonably priced food. There are a number of clubs but they can be a little pricy so we often went to Boston, a sort of American style dancehall, or else the Barges, which are barges that have been converted into nightclubs and are usually free in

Lyon Erasmus Year 2012/2013 - David Nicoll

I did my Erasmus year in Lyon, France. It was a challenging year but extremely fulfilling. I am very glad I did the year, and Lyon is an amazing city, with lots to do. I really enjoyed the year and can't wait to visit sometime in the future! The city centre itself is not too big, quite manageable which I really liked. It is divided into three main areas; one being 'Vieux Lyon' or Old Lyon, which is probably the most popular area of the city. The centre itself is split by two rivers, which makes for a very picturesque centre. I went over to Lyon at the end of August and took a two week French course to brush up on my French, although the French learning aspect wasn't great, it was brilliant for making friends among the other Erasmus students and preparation for college. I lived with five French and one Polish person; and on reflection, I am glad I didn't live with Erasmus students as this gave me the opportunity to integrate myself a bit better into the culture and force me to speak French all the time, though we did have a day each week where we had to speak English for the whole day!

I was studying in Lyon II Lumière; a university which has two campuses; one right in the middle of the city, on the banks of the river Rhône (one of the two rivers which run through Lyon, the other being the Saône), and another campus in the suburbs, in Bron. I would recommend you make sure where your classes are taking place as it takes around 50 minutes to get to Bron on public transport from the city centre. The campus on the 'Quais du Rhône' is a much nicer campus than Bron, although the majority of classes, and particularly sports, are in Bron. I joined the football team there until I broke my ankle, but the football which was great way to meet new people. As I am studying History in UCD, my classes were mainly in Bron, although I took French and Music classes

which were on the quays. Once you have chosen your classes, you have a supervisor in Lyon which has to sign off on your choice of classes, called a 'contrat d'études'. You also have to inform the International Office in the university of your module choices for each semester, on a 'contrat pédagogique'.

You can also take classes at 'Sciences-Po' (Institut d'études politiques), which is located near the campus on the quays and offers political modules, and modern French history classes, something I struggled to find in the normal university system at Lyon II. I believe there is also an ability to take classes at Lyon III Jean Moulin, located right beside the campus on the quays though I didn't hear of anyone doing this. Classes in French take a while to get used to at first, but I found students were very accommodating towards giving you their notes and generally helping you in class.

It can be sometimes difficult to find accommodation in Lyon, as in Dublin, so I would advise you to not delay in finding accommodation for the year. I myself applied for the university accommodation and was not successful but thankfully found other accommodation. A lot of Erasmus students, including myself, lived in a 'co-location' during the year, where you rent an apartment with a few other people, although there are things to be careful with there, such as the length of the lease you are taking and how much of a deposit they will ask. Don't be afraid to ask the International Office in Lyon (Direction des Relations Internationales) about this, they give lots of information about it. You are able to apply for a grant for a French government during your stay there, called the CAF, which although has a fair amount of paperwork, is still worth doing. I received 90 euro a month which wasn't much, but which was great to have. You also get a grant from the European Union, which is around 1500 euro

each yet, but differs with how many students do an Erasmus each year. For example, for my year, I received more than this sum. You receive 80% at the start of the year and 20% near the end.

With regards to the Direction des Relations Internationales (DRI) office in the university, they are great at answering any questions about college or life in France in general. When you arrive, the university requires you to take out a basic insurance, costing around 15 euro and there is also a housing insurance required on your accommodation, which is not expensive either.

Lyon had a lot of things that I was unaware of before going there on Erasmus. In December, there is the 'Fete des Lumieres', which is an enormous lights festival and is certainly not to be missed. Last year the visitors to Lyon for this festival were into the millions and the city centre was extremely crowded. It was certainly one of the highlights of the year for me. Speaking of the nightlife, Lyon has a lot of bars and clubs; although most of the bars seemed to be Irish bars! Some of the clubs are on the river barges which are something different. In relation to things like phone networks and setting up of bank accounts, I would advise you to look around, as there can be better offers available, for example, some of the banks offer both insurances mentioned for free if you open a bank account with them.

As I broke my ankle while skiing during my year in Lyon, it might be helpful to know the details about the medical system there. Everything medical is usually dealt with the 'feuille de soins', which is basically a medical receipt. For example, if you go to the doctor, you pay 21 euro (always around this price), he / she gives you this 'feuille', and you can claim 60-70% of this back from the CPAM (Caisse Primaire d'Assurance

Maladie), a process which you do in France. If you have private medical insurance taken out in France too, you can claim more of this back (la mutuelle). This 'feuille de soin' system goes for everything, from prescribed medication to physio appointments.

The university system is quite different to UCD, as an Erasmus student, you have to manually inscribe to each class. There is less emphasis on everything being on the Internet as well, so you may find for some details, it is necessary to visit the campus. In relation to transport, Lyon has great transport links. When you arrive, you should get a TCL student travel card as soon as possible, which costs around 30 euro a month, covering metros, trams and buses. The public bike system is great, which I used a lot during the year, being a lot more extensive than in Dublin and not very expensive. If you plan on travelling around France a lot during the year, the 'Carte Jeune' is a good idea, costing 50 euro for the year but gives really good discounts on SNCF train tickets. Overall it was a brilliant year and I would really advise taking the opportunity to do an Erasmus year.