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Listen up! A Year abroad will test your patience, your drive, your bank account, and more...

Most of all you will experience a whirlwind of emotions that will change you, shape you, and of course, challenge you!

Now here's a few challenges I have come across, most of this applies to

Paris or big cities but can pretty much be applied anywhere in the world :)

CHALLENGE ONE: HOUSING

Finding housing is probably one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences. There is always a high demand for a place and not enough supply.

I left it waayy too last minute and ended up only finding accommodation outside of my budget. I also was too focused on trying to find a flatmate and then decided to go solo which resulted in finding a place quicker!

TIP:

Do your research way before you move into the country!

Join Facebook groups!

Or if possible, move into a hotel and attend viewings in person

Here are some websites for Paris/France:

<https://gensdeconfiance.com/fr> <https://flatbay.fr/fr> <https://whoomies.com/>
<https://www.lodgis.com/> <http://www.pap.fr/> <http://www.lacartedescolocs.fr/>
<https://www.colette.club/>

Here are some generic ones for students:

<http://www.studylease.co.uk/> <http://www.erasmusu.com/> <http://www.erasmusplay.com/>
<https://www.student.com/> <http://www.nestpick.com/> <http://www.studapart.com/>

BEWARE OF SCAMS! Do not sign any contract without doing research on the agency, read the contract properly even the small print, and make sure you do a viewing! If they are reluctant, most likely it is a scam!

CHALLENGE TWO: VISA

For the first time ever, I needed to apply for a visa for France (thanks to Brexit) and it was very a stressful process. when I went to the French consulate, they asked me to write a cover letter, to provide evidence for Erasmus and I didn't have the documents with me...

TIP: Ensure you have done every step before booking an appointment and read multiple resources as sometimes the visa website itself isn't helpful.

For example, for France, you NEED to register on Etudes en France before you apply for a visa and if you don't, you will be turned away.

Do not apply late! it will delay your application as the consulate will have a backlog of applications – so apply at least two to three months prior to when you're leaving!

Also, ensure you bring every single document you can – even documents you think may not be necessary – better safe than sorry!

CHALLENGE THREE: BUDGETING

If you are a student, most likely you have an overdraft or perhaps you just spend without looking at your bank account, resulting in a shortage of cash!

So, I downloaded a few apps and read articles, and voila! I can budget now;))

TIP: Calculate your monthly income – and then set a certain amount of money aside for food, bills, rent, emergency fund, etc.

This is a good article to read on budgeting: <https://www.expats.com/en/expat-mag/960-how-to-budget-your-money-when-living-abroad.html>

Download these apps to help you budget and be aware of your spending!

<https://emma-app.com/> <https://mint.intuit.com/>

Also, a huge and very simple tip is PAY WITH CASH! This way you are more aware of how much money is going out of your pocket.