

## **Travel Report – Fall 2018**

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I study **Peace and Conflict Studies** at **Lund University**, and during the **fall semester of 2018** I studied courses at **Sciences Po Lille in Lille, France**.

Lille is a metropole city of 300,000 people in the north of France, with only shorter bus trips to cities such as Brussels, Paris, Amsterdam, London and so forth. It is a university city filled with students in the city, with lots of shopping and late-night entertainment and bars. The city stands out with its mixture of antique buildings surrounding the main square, as well as its village-like homely streets and museums. Lille also has a large shopping center that is joined with the train station. It is often referred to as Europe's metropole because from there you can travel anywhere. The metro further makes it easier to travel around the city, for example to the city zoo in Parc Vauban by the canal. A wonderfully cute city!

I studied at Sciences Po Lille, which focuses on politics but also other societal subjects. Physically, the university has built in a modern touch into an old building, combining them into a beautiful place to study. Similar to Lund University, Sciences Po Lille offers lectures, school organizations and events that is open to everyone. Before arriving in Lille, the school sends out a file filled with practical information about how to most effectively reach Lille and the university, and what to consider about travel costs. The first week has an orientation week filled with activities that allowed for students to meet and hang out with each other. My arrival was easy once I understood how the metro worked.

Sciences Po Lille offer a variety of courses that one can choose from, ranging from religion, history, philosophy, politics, economics or a combination of these.

However, pay attention to the range of course since these can change when they update the course catalogue. I read six courses at once that I thought were interesting and useful for me, and you can choose classes both in French and English. One observation is the increased freedom at Sciences Po Lille, which means that some classes did not require any obligatory readings. This means that the student has to take more responsibility for keeping up with the lectures but also that one can explore which interests in the class they want to focus more on. The school also offers courses in French that one can take during the whole semester. My courses were *Unsettled Questions about the European Idea, From Conflict-Prevention to Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Religion and Politics in the US, Contemporary Environmental Challenges, Politics as Spectacle and War and Peace in the Middle East*, which were all good quality classes. Politics as Spectacle is an intensive course, which only lasted one week. Make sure you know if your course is an intensive course or not, and that your classes do not overlap. If they do, contact the teachers and make sure they know your attendance might be difficult at times, and try to obtain your notes in other ways, such as through classmates. I had one or two exams in each course, such as one essay or one presentation. Since the grade might be based on one or two elements, make sure you work attentively on them. Some courses also have obligatory attendance that can affect your grade!

Sciences Po Lille offers access to the website **Studapart** where students can find accommodation that fits them. Another website is **housinganywhere** or Facebook groups focused on housing in Lille. There are many student buildings in and around the city, as well as private apartments and rooms. I lived in a 40m<sup>2</sup> apartment with my partner, which worked well for us. I would advise others to find an apartment closer to the city center, but otherwise the metro is a good and fast transport system. One tip is to note that some websites charge a service fee, meaning that they charge the customer in exchange for finding good housing for

them. In some cases, this can be expensive but they are helpful. In my case, I had to quickly move from one apartment to another and Studapart helped me with the move, transfer of money and communication with the renter.

Lille offers a variety of bars, nightclubs, movie theaters and arcades. The night-life is lively and filled with students and young people. If this is not interesting, there is a wonderful opera and the opportunity to travel to other cities during the day. During the spring and summer, hanging in the parks or in the zoo is wonderful. Make sure to keep an eye out for the events by the Vauban Park, that could be an amusement park or a circus. France is slightly cheaper than Sweden, and in some instances, the cost is similar. For students, the student discount can be useful when buying beer or other alcohol. Me and my partner never experienced that it was highly priced or much cheaper than Sweden. France is a wonderful country, but it can be difficult to meet native French speakers if they do not speak English, which can limit the communication. All in all, trying to learn a few basic terms is useful and most people are patient with foreigners.

Some important practical notes are to understand that France is a very bureaucratic country. Make sure you have insurance during your stay in France and a visa permit if you are not from Sweden. If you are considering financial aid from CAF in France, if you need to buy Wi-Fi or pay any bills, you need a bank account which requires a lot of documents. Open a bank account as soon as possible. My advice is to contact an organization connected to the University, such as **ESN Lille (Erasmus)** that could help with setting up a meeting at a bank, the language barriers and making sure you bring the correct documents. For me, since I lived in a private apartment and paid an electricity bill, I needed my ID, travel insurance and a home insurance for my housing in France, which is usually very cheap to get, in order to open a bank account. Conclusively, it could also be good to get used to the kiss on the cheek greeting!

