

# Travel report – The Netherlands, Leiden University

## Content

Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

Spring 2018, elective courses (psychology)

## Leiden

Leiden is a city of 23 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 123,800. That is almost the same as Lund (26 km<sup>2</sup> & 121,800), just a few more people on a slightly smaller area. It is located south of Amsterdam, which is only 35 minutes by train. Just like Lund, Leiden is a typical university city with university buildings scattered throughout the city and with students from all over the world contributing to the vivid atmosphere. The city is lined with beautiful canals, which offer some lovely boat-cruising in the summer, and if you're lucky, some ice skating in winter. The old and narrow houses give a genuine and picturesque feel, and it truly is a well-preserved old, Dutch city. If you are interested in history, you will definitely enjoy Leiden. There is an abundance of historical sites and several museums to spend your days visiting. One of the world's most famous painters, Rembrandt, was born and educated in Leiden.

I personally love Leiden! It is absolutely gorgeous and everything I want and expect in a Dutch city. It is of course not as active as Amsterdam, but it definitely offers enough to enjoy yourself during your studies. If you prefer something that is not as hectic as Amsterdam, but still a place buzzing with university students, Leiden is the place!

## Leiden University

Leiden university is the oldest university of the Netherlands (est. 1575) and as one of Europe's top universities, it boasts thirteen Nobel Prize winners, it is a member of the League of European Research Universities and positioned highly in all international academic rankings. Leiden University has around 28,000 students. The university facilities are fantastic, and a nice mixture of the original old buildings and modern renovations. Wherever you are in the city you can almost always find a building related to the university, which makes it easy to get help if needed, or, for example, to print something. It is a very active university and they always have something interesting on the agenda. I found it to be very welcoming and a pleasant place to spend my time in. In Leiden they also have the academic quarter, but here they call it the Leiden quarter.

<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/>

## Arrival

I used the services that Leiden University offered for accommodation, which included some services for arrival. Traveling to Leiden is very smooth. The plane ride from Copenhagen airport is usually less than 1,5 hours. After that you can take a 15-minute train from Schiphol airport to Leiden Centraal. If you arrive on the designated arrival day (if you use the university services) there will be guides waiting at the central station which will take you to pick up your keys. From there you go to your accommodation. I found the services to be very helpful, and arriving was no problem at all.

I arrived a week before the orientation (OWL) week started, which gave me plenty of time to settle in, get a bike, locate university buildings and get familiar with my surroundings. I highly recommend attending OWL week! It is where I got the most useful information, and where I made the friends I

would keep for the rest of the semester. It is a week packed with activities such as info markets, dinners, pub crawls, ice skating and parties. Do **not** miss out on this fun (and intense) week!

### **Courses**

The academic system and way of studying is not too different from how it is in Lund. Similar to Lund, Leiden university has optional lectures mixed with mandatory seminars and independent study of the course literature. You usually have one lecture a week per course, and perhaps one seminar every second week. A big difference is that the courses here are usually only 5 or 10 credits and the duration is usually only half a semester. This means that if you are going to read 30 credits, you might end up taking six different courses (like I did; three in the first months, and three in the last months.) The work load is supposed to be adjusted to the number of credits, but I personally think the work load is slightly more in Leiden than in Lund.

The courses I took were Social and Organisational Psychology, Developmental and Educational Psychology, Sexology, Cognitive Psychology, Biopsychology and Neuropsychology & Psychology of Advertising. All courses were fairly introductory. Most courses had a good mix of theory and practical teaching. Examination usually consists of a few minor tasks during the course (e.g. presentations, reports, posters) and a bigger exam at the end of the course. For some courses (level 300) there is only an exam. All the exams I took were multiple choice exams, and two of them had a few open answer questions as well.

I think the psychology courses at Leiden university are of good quality and indeed interesting to take. Courses can be found here: <https://studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/en/courses/exchange/2017-2018>

### **Accommodation**

Content: Description/personal evaluation of the accommodation that was offered in the city, how accommodation was arranged, advice and/or tips on contacts, websites, costs, standards, etc.

Leiden is full of students and it has a major shortage of student accommodation, so make sure you are looking for a place to stay early.

I used the services that the university offered for accommodation. It is not the cheapest option, but it gives you some security and it's easy! Accommodation with DUWO via the university can cost anything from €300 to €800 a month, depending on what building you get, what room you get, and if you want to share a room or not. I had a single room with shared kitchen and bathroom for €580 a month. I am very pleased with my room and everything that comes with living in a DUWO building. The Hugo De Grootstraat building I was staying in is very beautiful and it has nice and spacey rooms. I had a room on the top floor, which resulted in a more expensive rent, but it came with a nice view and a high ceiling which was worth it. It is the basic student accommodation experience, but I have been very happy with how it turned out for me.

Information about housing via the university can be found on their webpage:

<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/education/international-students/prepare-your-stay/housing>

If you do not use the accommodation service offered by the university you might be able to find something cheaper, especially if you are willing to not stay in Leiden (e.g. in The Hague or Delft instead). I would however recommend using the services given, and also to stay in Leiden if you are studying in Leiden. If you are studying at campus The Hague, accommodation in The Hague might be better for you. Either way, you make most friends during OWL week and during your courses, and it can be a bummer to miss out on hang-outs and events because you are living far away.

## **Fun and leisure**

There are a billion things to do for fun in Leiden. You will never find yourself having a boring day! The great location means you are within bike or public transport distance of so many places, such as the beach, The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Groningen, Maastricht, Utrecht and more. If you want to do a day trip you can take the bus to Belgium, which is only two hours and super cheap with Flixbus (+ it has Swedish student discount). If you want to stay in Leiden you can always visit the botanical garden or any museum, cruise the canals, have a beer in the sun or just relax in a park. Personally, I love going for a spontaneous bike ride, either alone or with friends, and see what we find. There is always something to discover in Leiden! There are lots of different events to attend, and I recommend you attend as many as you can. Leiden has a great number of bars, and a few clubs. If you are interested in more, Amsterdam is only a short train ride away.

## **Costs**

Just estimating, I would say that the cost of living is about the same in The Netherlands as it is in Sweden. Some things are cheaper, some things are more expensive, but in general it's the same. For example, alcohol is cheaper, and so is going to the movies. I think as long as you are well-prepared, financially, you will have no issue with the costs of living here. It is not too expensive.

## **Other**

I highly recommend that you get a bike, like, the first thing you do. The most price-worthy option is the company Swapfiets. They have an office by the centraal here in Leiden. You pay €12 a month, and for that you get a super nice bike with pedal breaks, lights and a bell. It also includes services in case your bike breaks. You could try buying a second-hand-bike of off Facebook, but of course nothing is guaranteed there and you might end up with a bad bike. <https://swapfiets.nl/en/>

For public transport you will need to get an OV-card. You can get a personal one or an anonymous one, but there is no big difference, except you need a BSN-number (Dutch person-number) for the personal one. It is enough to get the anonymous one, this one you can let someone else use as well. You order an OV card here: <https://www.ov-chipkaart.nl/home-1.htm#/>

The Netherlands is an amazing place to go for your studies abroad. I am struggling to find something negative to say about this place!

## **By:**

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