When I told people that I was going to Istanbul on Erasmus, I got a strange look from everybody. I just thought it will be a challenge, and I like challenges, so why not?

I didn’t know what to expect when I started this big adventure; Am I going to miss home, my friends, normal life...? Nothing of this was true.

Instead of all these sad thoughts, I made some really close friends, saw new things, travelled a lot and got to learn a new interesting city and an even more interesting and misunderstood culture.
I saw crazy things in this semester, things that do not even exist in Belgium. But the craziest thing is the weather experience. I experienced four seasons in one semester. We had 30 degrees in the south of Turkey, rain and wind in Cappadocia and Istanbul, spring warmth in Israel in December and a few weeks later snow in Istanbul. Istanbul is a crazy city, I can’t deny that. It’s like they say: “Istanbul, they call it chaos, we call it home.”

“The Istanbul: They call it chaos, we call it home.”

Some typical things about Istanbul:

* Drinking çay + Baklava = Turkish tea and pastry
* Cats everywhere
* Salah in the streets = ritual praying
* Crazy traffic
* Public transport ends at 24:00u
* Dolmus = Little taxi busses, they ride during the day and night
* Istanbul is separated in an European side and an Asian side. In-between you have the Bosphorus.

You could find cats everywhere. People in the streets give them food. These cats are the pets of Istanbul.
We made in total four trips. All four of them were amazing. They were really different from each other, different atmospheres, etc. Three of these trips we did with Erasmus organisations and one we did on our own.

First trip was to Fethiye. This is in the south-west of Turkey. It was at Butterfly valley, a beach with a waterfall in a clove of a rock, this waterfall was the natural habitat of a thousand butterflies. We slept on the beach in big tents and had to shower outside with ice cold water. We did several activities here: Rock climbing, swimming, boat trip, beach party and paragliding. After this we went to Pamukkale: An Unesco world heritage site.

Second trip was to Antalya, in the south of Turkey. This was a trip to an all-in total at the beach side. It was fun because we were with a lot of our Erasmus group and we became good friends after this trip.

Third trip was to Cappadocia. This is in the Center of Turkey. It’s an Unesco world heritage site. It was an interesting trip, just to see all the rockformations from over a thousand years. This trip involved a lot of tourism.

Fourth and last trip was to Israël. Most of the days we spend in Tel Aviv. Also we went to Jerusalem and Haïfa. Tel Aviv was really different from Istanbul, it felt more modern and Western. Jerusalem is one of the most holy places in the world, it felt a bit magical. It was eye opening to see that three of the biggest monotheistic religions could live together in one city.
I’m very grateful for this opportunity to go on Erasmus, it’s have been the best time of my life so far. It’s not always like paradise, because there is a lot of administrative and responsibility involved if you go on Erasmus. But if you have the chance, you are open - minded, adventures and ready for a challenge, then you have what it takes to go on Erasmus!