

# INDEPENDANCE : THE GATEWAY TO HAPPINESS

## A JOURNEY THROUGH ERASMUS

We are in the XXI century and people often live in groups and depend on this team spirit. If the group does something, they do it as well. If the group thinks in a certain way, they think it as well. Nowadays it is all about community and dependance. For example social medias are the heart of today's society which depends on the acceptation from others.

Independance is the key of freedom. Indeed it allows you to think and act freely without people's influence. It's a quality not to be submitted to a group. Independance is an act of nature, it's defined as a balance between what we want and what we have. But we rapidly become dependant by tilting on one side or the other.

According to Susan. B Anthony, « Independance is happiness ». These simple yet profound words define the essence of human achievement. The pursuit of independence is deeply rooted into our desire for autonomy, self-discovery and the liberation from obligations. One tangible and transformative way to experience this cheerful state is through travels like the Erasmus program, a month-long journey that not only broadens horizons but also serves as a proof to the idea that embracing independence leads to genuine happiness. In this essay, I will prove why in fact independence makes us happy and complete. In a first paragraph we will be talking about independence in Erasmus and then in a second one we will be talking about how independence makes happiness.

To begin with, my name is Wendie Depret and I went an entire month in Poland from the 16th of November to the 14th of December with Erasmus. The purpose of this trip is to step out of your comfort zone and experiment an entire new culture. Erasmus is a program that allows you to be independant but still with a lot of support. Indeed every week a teacher is calling us to see if everything is okay and even in the school the foreigner teachers are very careful towards us. Furthermore, Erasmus has a lot of values like solidarity, acceptation, pride. However for me the most important one is independence. Indeed it supports self-discovery and personal fulfillment. In Erasmus, where students immerse themselves in a foreign culture for an entire month, the quest for independence is palpable. The challenges of navigating in an unfamiliar environment, interacting with a diversity of people and managing day-to-day belongings on their own, all contribute to a profound sense of self-awareness. Students are forced to step out of their habits, face uncertainties and adapt themselves to the changing lifestyle in a foreign country. During this month abroad, individuals are not only independent in the management of their daily lives, they are also responsible for their own cultural integration. Learning a new language, understanding local customs and establishing links with people from diverse backgrounds illustrate the transformative power of independence. It is through these experiences that people discover strengths and abilities they didn't know they had and boost their self-esteem and satisfaction.

Moreover, independence in an Erasmus setting allows individuals to cultivate resilience and problem-solving skills. Navigating the complexities of a foreign city, handling new challenges, and making decisions independently grow a sense of resourcefulness. Overcoming these difficulties contributes to a profound sense of accomplishment, reinforcing the idea that independence is not just a means to an end but a journey that builds happiness through personal development.

Independence also plays a massive role in forming genuine connections. The Erasmus experience is characterized by wholeheartedly meeting with strangers, students, locals, and people from around the world. The ability to independently navigate social situations, make friends, and establish connections based on personal choices rather than external influences is essential to build meaningful relationships. These connections, free from the obligations of familiar environments, are often more authentic and contribute significantly to happiness.

Thus my trip to Poland during my Erasmus month made me realize how much my personal independence contributes to my happiness. Initially, heading alone to an unfamiliar country was a bit scary. I worried that my host family might not meet my expectations, or worse, that we wouldn't get along at all. But this fear actually helped me keep my expectations quite low, making me appreciate every positive moment even more.

Despite my initial worries, my host family turned out to be amazing. We formed strong bonds, and I hope to see them again someday. However, being away from my own family for a month was tough. Their habits and customs were very different from mine, from meals and sleep times to the types of food they ate. For example, they had dinner very early, around 5 or 6 p.m., or had salty food for breakfast. Experiencing this contrast made me see both the positive and negative aspects of these different ways of life.

When I returned home, I felt a mix of sadness that my independence and constant discoveries were over, but also happiness to be back with my family. While it's comforting to be with loved ones, it's the pursuit of independence that truly enriches our lives and brings us genuine happiness.

Thanks to this month, I learnt to empower my personal growth. When you are independant you are forced to take responsibility for your actions and decisions. I was proud of myself because I succeed to overcome obstacles I was not used to, like the language. Instead of relying to others, I took care of my own issues even if I didn't have the solution. For example if I didn't know how to say some words in english, I just mimed them. Then, with my independance, I felt more free and trusted. I was able to express my true self and to build meaningful relationships without being judged. It also made me trust myself a bit more. I had more confidence, and I actually still do. Knowing I can manage being on my own, be with others is now easier.

In summary, my time in Poland confirmed that independence helps us grow personally and adapt better to life's challenges. It allows us to act better in society and with ourselves.

In conclusion, the assertion that "independence is happiness" finds tangible validation in the transformative journey of an Erasmus trip. The month-long exploration of foreign cultures, languages, and social landscapes is a proof to the profound joy that is created from independence. The self-discovery, personal growth, resilience, and genuine connections forged during this journey are all parts of the construction for this indispensable value of independance. Finally the fact that pride, trust and freedom coming after being independant is a big part of the reason why independance makes us happy and complete.