

Internal Medicine in Naples, Italy

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Host town and country: Naples, Napoli Federico II, Italy

Department of the clerkship: Internal Medicine – Cardiology

What do you think of, when you hear the words tambourine, sfogliatella and cannoli? Probably for someone it has no sense. But definitely not for me, since that summer. Now it reminds me of one of the best months in my life, of awesome time that I spent in beautiful Naples...

I've been dreaming of the professional exchange since I entered the Medical University and knew that there is an IFMSA exchange program. Finally, already the 3rd year student, I had an opportunity to take part in it and magnificent Italy became the country of my choice. To be honest, at first I was intent on having practice somewhere in the north of the country, but the fortune made it different and then I was really happy about it.

Naples... The legendary city, majestically located on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea, sprawled crescent of the Neapolitan Bay, in the heart of Southern Italy. Who hasn't heard at least once about the formidable volcano Vesuvius that caused the destruction of the legendary Pompeii or about the Neapolitan pizza Margherita which is famous all over the world? This glorious and ancient city still has its unique character.

There were five more students at the same time with me for exchange from various countries, such as Croatia, the Czech Republic, Tunisia and Lebanon. We were living in the dormitory and every morning, except weekends, started with the practice in the university hospital. The way to the hospital took only about ten minutes from our hostel which was very convenient. I had practice in Cardiology department and I'm quite thankful to all doctors there for their good attitude and willingness to help. Undoubtedly, I found out a lot of new for me about another healthcare system, another organization of work of the hospital and that was very interesting.

After the practice we usually had some time to have a stroll around the city and to discover the numerous Neapolitan sights. I can endlessly recount everything that was seen by us: the amazing castles Castel Nuovo and Castel dell'Ovo, and San Severo Chapel, world-famous for its sculptures, the oldest opera house in the world - San Carlo theater, gallery Umberto, the Royal Palace ... It's impossible to forget about perhaps the most unusual excursion – the visit of the Neapolitan subterranean “Napoli Sotterranea”, stretching under the entire old part of the city.

In the evenings from time to time we settled so called “traditional dinners”, where we had an exceptional opportunity to try cuisine and to get acquainted with traditions and culture of countries where the participants of the exchange program came from. Also I should mention the marvelous Italian cuisine, that we had a chance to try there. Of course, there is a great choice of pizza, the oldest and most famous kinds are Margherita and Marinara, indescribably delicious ice cream with such numerous range of flavors that I've never tried before. Moreover, there were lots of dishes, mostly desserts, which names I've heard first time in my life, such as sfogliatella, baba, cannoli and so on.

During the weekends, free from our practice, we went somewhere out of Naples, to those wonderful small southern Italian towns which Naples is surrounded by. Many of them are famous around the world.

There are small towns, scattered directly in the coastal cliffs of the ancient Amalfi Coast, which are connected only by means of a winding serpentine, laid in the rocks. Amalfi, the historic center of the coast, gave the name to this resort region, that is famous for its Cathedral and the ancient technology of papermaking, preserved until now. Positano - a former fishing village, turned into an elegant resort town, attracting artists because of its beautiful landscapes more than a decade. Besides, we managed to visit Sorrento and Salerno, which was especially interesting, because in the XI century the illustrious medical school – one of the oldest and largest medical institutions in medieval Europe, was open there. Salerno was even called as a “city of Hippocrates”. Nowadays, unfortunately, only several museums, devoted to the medicine, and the Minerva’s Gardens, where since the Middle Ages different medicinal herbs are growing, reminds us of the past. And, of course, probably, I had the most impressions from visiting the island of Capri. There is only an hour trip from Naples and you are in a fairytale. Here, at every step, you can see magical landscapes, stunning with its beauty. I began to understand why this place is so often mentioned in the works of art, and why had the famous doctor and writer Axel Munthe built here his legendary villa.

The month of practice in Italy, as it usually happens, passed very quickly, leaving a large number of impressions, gained experience, a lot of bright photos, amazing acquaintances and hopefulness to come back there again one day, again walk through the narrow streets of Naples, listening to a barely noticeable tambourine chimes and inhaling the tart flavor of fresh ristretto, flavored with acidity of the Sorrento lemon, again plunge into an unforgettable atmosphere of the "Neapolitan theater". Southern Italy forever captivated me with its beauty, sincerity, warm sun and sunny people.