

**Exchange Report:
NOVA School of Business and Economics**



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September 2015



Image 1: Sintra, Lisbon

Part I: Activity Log

I arrived at Portugal on 3rd of September for the orientation day in NOVA on the next day. Since NOVA did not provide any accommodation for exchange students, I have chosen to live in a student residence offered by a third party. I found this accommodation on the welcoming guide from NOVA. In the guide, there is a wide range of choices and you could absolutely find one that suits you the best. As there was a week free before the school starts, I took the opportunity to explore Portugal. I travelled to Sintra, Fatima and Porto. The sceneries were fascinating and breathe-taking.

During my study in NOVA, I only enrolled three courses. For the first few weeks of school, workload was not too heavy and I decided to visit the World Expo in Milan, Italy. It was a 4-day trip. Since the topic for this year's expo is "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", I was able to taste food across countries. The weekend spent in Milan was enjoyable. After I came back from Italy, I started getting busier. There were group presentations every week. I had meetings with my group regularly. My group consisted of students from Spain, France, Peru and China. It was easy to communicate with them and a valuable experience to work with students from different countries.

October 2015



Image 2: The Japan Pavilion, Milan Expo, Italy

November 2015



Image 3: Madurodam, Den Haag, Netherlands

Nova ends its semester in early December and exams takes place in January. Thus, I planned to travel more during the month. Since I am a final year student, I am active in job searching. In case you would like to work as a civil servant, you would have to take the Common Recruitment Exam (CRE). The CRE in Hong Kong takes place in October, but I was unable to take it. I searched online and saw that overseas students could take it on London, United Kingdom. Thus, I went to London on the 4th December for the exam. I was lucky to have friends staying in Bath, which they offered me an accommodation. I stayed in UK for almost 2 weeks and visited a few cities there. Visiting to the Harry Potter Studio was a highlight of the trip. Most of the scenes were recreated and it was a nice experience there! Afterwards, I travelled to Norway, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Berlin and Slovakia. During our trip to Norway, we bought a travel package called 'Norway in a nutshell'. It provides you with transportations (ferry, bus and train) from Oslo to Bergen and you could enjoy the sceneries along the journey.

As workload was a bit heavy at NOVA, I didn't really get much chance to travel. Nevertheless, I still planned to go to the Netherlands in one of the weekends. I went there with a friend of mine who was studying in UK. We originally planned to go to the Netherlands and Belgium. But since the terrorist attack by Isis was quite serious and there were rumors that members of Isis were staying in Brussels (Capital of Belgium). We ended up removed Belgium from our list and decided to spend more days in NL. We went to Amsterdam, Zaanse Schans and Den Haag. The weather was cold there and there were even snow showers! After the trip, I returned to Portugal and prepared for the final presentations and reports.

December 2015



Image 4: Nyhavn, Copenhagen, Denmark

January 2015



Image 5: Pastels de Belem, Lisbon

January is an exam month to NOVA students. I had three exams and they were pretty spread out. Apart from studying for the exams, I took some days visiting some more places in Portugal. Cascais was 30 minutes drive away from Lisbon and it was famous for its beaches. Since we went there in wintertime, we didn't get to enjoy the sunbathing there. However, it was still worth visiting! I also tried some more local Portuguese food before I leave. Portuguese food wasn't the same as I previously imagined. They mostly served grilled pork, codfish with seasoned rice or fries. My friends and I were also searching for some souvenirs for our friends. We ended up buying some hand-made soaps, cord-made products and wine. Wines in Portugal are very cheap and it's a nice choice as a souvenir! ☺



Image 6: On our way to Bergen



Image 7: Milan Cathedral, Milan, Italy



Image 8: Chilling with friends in Cascais



Image 9: My project group ☺

Part II: General Exchange Information

1. Visa Procedure

Visa application to Portugal is quite complicated. You have to contact the Portugal Consulate and pass them the relevant documents for a letter that is needed for the application of the Certificate of No Criminal Conviction. You have to pick up the letter from the Portugal Consulate in Hong Kong and take it with you to the Certificate of No Criminal Conviction Office for the application of the no criminal record. It takes around a month for the No Criminal Conviction Office to send the consulate the proof. At around a month's time, you have to contact the consulate again to see whether the letter is reached and arrange an interview in Macau. After the interview in Macau, it takes around another month time to for the visa application to process. You have to go to Macau again to pick up the visa. It is better for you to book each appointment beforehand.

2. Orientation Activities

The orientation day takes around 5 hours, consists of 3 parts. The first part is which the exchange officer would give you a general introduction of the school and areas you have to pay attention at; the second part was the school tour, students from the student union would take you around NOVA; the last part was a barbeque gathering with the rest of the exchange students.

3. Accommodation

As mentioned above, NOVA does not provide any student accommodation. You would have to choose accommodations offered by third party. Suggested links are listed on the NOVA Welcoming Guide.

4. Course Registration

You can get the course information from NOVA in advance before you decide which courses to enroll. However, you would not know the timetable until 2-3 days before school starts. You can take at a maximum of 30 ECTS.

5. Teaching & Assessment Methods

The teaching style in NOVA is more or less the same as HKUST. Students are active in class and willing to ask questions. Among the 3 courses I took, I do not have any midterms. But there are projects and reports for ongoing assessments. Moreover, there are final exams for all of my courses. If you have failed any exams, you would have to retake the exams in NOVA. You would not be able to take them in Hong Kong.

6. Costs/ Expenses

The living standard in Lisbon is low among European countries. The total spending during my stay is around 80,000 to 90,000 HKD. On the orientation day, they would advise you to apply a bank account, in which the bankcard would be the same as your student id. However, my card failed to deliver to me. I asked for assistance from the bank but they did failed to offer me any help. Almost all of my friends did not receive the bankcard. My advice would be: do not apply for the bank account. Bringing more cash, using credit card and travel coupons would be better alternatives.

7. Food

In order to save more money for my trips, I usually cook with my friends. Buying ingredients was very convenient in Lisbon, you could go to Pingo Dolce (similar to Welcome and Parknshop) or a more high-end supermarket in El Courte Ingles (a large department store which is similar to Sogo).

As for dining out, it usually costs about 12-15euros per meal. One point to note is that choosing to eat outdoor is more expensive than eating inside the restaurant (they will charge you extra service cost). You could also reject eating the starters (e.g. cheese and bread) offered by the restaurant when you sat down. Once you have started eating, no matter you have finished or not, they will still charge you for those food. It is very common for Portuguese to return the starters to the waiters if they do not want to eat, so do not hesitate to return the food to them 😊

8. Transportation

The transportation in Lisbon is convenient. By applying a monthly vivo pass (~37euros), you could take any public transportation around Lisbon (including ferry, tram, bus and metro).

9. Climate

The weather in Lisbon and Hong Kong is quite similar. From September to November, the weather is warm at around 18-25 degrees. However, starting from mid November, the weather starts getting colder and there are much more rains. During the winter, the weather ranges from 13-17 degrees.

Part III: Checklist

1. Student Visa
2. Passport
3. Adapters
4. Computer
5. Rice Cooker
6. Medicines
7. Adequate Cash
8. Credit Card

Hope you have an unforgettable exchange experience! :D