

Exchange Report

ESSEC Business School, France



Jason Kong

Fall 2016 Exchange

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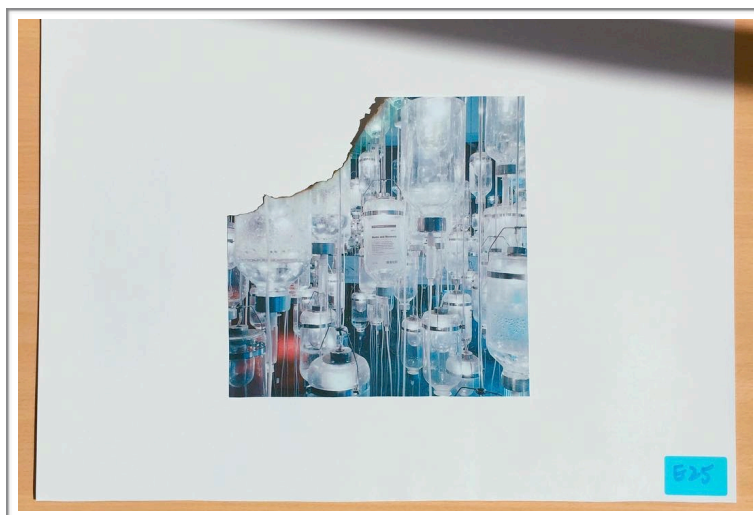
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Part I: Monthly Log

August 2016

After my arrival at Charles de Gaulle Airport, I got on a van soon with other UST students and then headed to the Cergy campus directly. Thanks to ESSEC, they provide free transportation for exchange students to get to ESSEC from CDG Airport, as long as you have registered it on their website. *Please remember to finish your online registration before your departure* so that you can save your time and get back to the dormitory as soon as possible. Otherwise, you have to show your **birth certificate, passport, VISA** and maybe other personal information to the staff in order to finish the procedure on campus. Afterwards, you would be asked to go back to the school a few days later for your **ESSEC student card**, which is **extremely useful for buying food and beverages on campus, and even visiting different museums in France**. When you finish the sign-up, you could get back to the student residence (Housing information covered in Part II).

I visited Paris for several times before attending **the orientation session and the iMagination Week**. They are **compulsory** for all exchange students, and the latter even counts attendance as it would be recorded in your transcript. Though it is a must to attend, they provide a really great chance for you to meet new friends. No pressure to attend because no grade will be given but only pass and fail, though you are asked to finish an individual project at the end of the iMagination Week. It is just a piece of cake since you can do whatever you like to demonstrate what you have experienced during the week, for example, video, music, painting or even graffiti.



September 2016

Unlike HKUST, you could easily find it frustrating if you are going to miss the first class of any courses. The course instructor may provide you all the information you need online, but they can also post nothing - even the syllabus. Attending the first class really helps you to understand more about how the instructor is going to evaluate you during the semester, and most importantly, the instructor would start teaching but not let you to leave after introducing the syllabus. If you encounter any problems regarding course registration during the add-drop period, just feel free to contact the relevant staff and HKUST as well. Since one of the courses I had registered was cancelled, ESSEC even extended the add-drop period for me and my friend, and allowed us to register any available classes.

Apart from the commencement of Fall Term, **DO NOT FORGET** to finish opening a **French bank account** (Application details could be received from the student society of ESSEC before your departure) and **subscribe to a local data plan for daily use**. Having a local bank account can benefit you from online booking and everyday payment, and becoming a cashless person in this relatively unsafe country. Moreover, there are four network operators in France, namely Orange, SFR, Bouygues and **Free Mobile**. Since most of the data plans last for at least one year, most of the exchange students would choose Free Mobile, which does not require us to subscribe for at least a year and provides unlimited amount of 4G data (but seriously poor connection 😞).

At the beginning of September, a burglar broke into my room though the security guards were on patrol. I had to spend almost two weeks to settle down all the stuff like reporting to the insurance companies and informing the police. I found out it is really important to know how to speak in French because only a minority of people in France can speak in English, even for public servants like policemen. Luckily, I had been able to buy a new phone before visiting Netherlands at the end of the month. Despite staying there for a weekend, it was still marvellous to take this trip with other exchange students from HKUST.

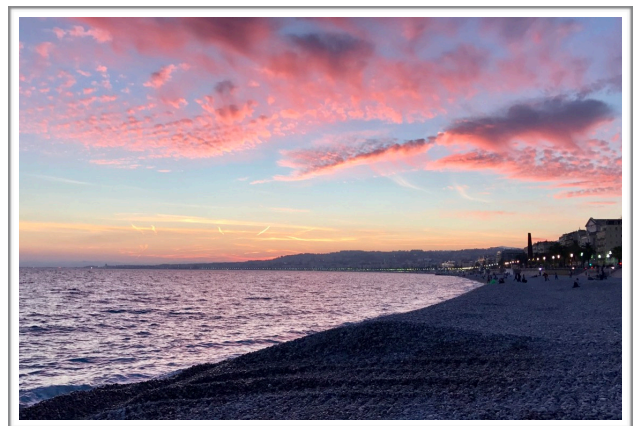


October 2016

As classes only started for a while, I only had weekly presentations and a few French quizzes with me. At the beginning of the month, I went to Belgium with other ESSEC students so as to visit Brussels and Bruges. For me, Bruges is way more prettier than Brussels. As the capital of Belgium, Brussels is just like a modern city with typical European style buildings. However, I would describe Bruges as the garden of Europe and it is really worth visiting because of its amazing city view!



After the trip to Belgium, I had been planning for the next trip already - exchange students would have a 2-week break near the end of October! Therefore, I travelled to Prague, Krakow and Budapest as per my travel plan. Compared to the Western Europe, the Eastern counterpart is far more different because of the history. The view of these cities tends to be more Russian, and you can easily find cheap but delicious meals here. After that, I got to the Southern France before the weather there became too cold. Honestly, it is really an advantage if you can drive there, since many cool tourist attractions are located separately. Also, it is better to be there in summer time if you would like to visit lavender fields as well, but for wine lovers, now is the grape-harvesting period in France so it would be a nice timing to visit different wineries in France!

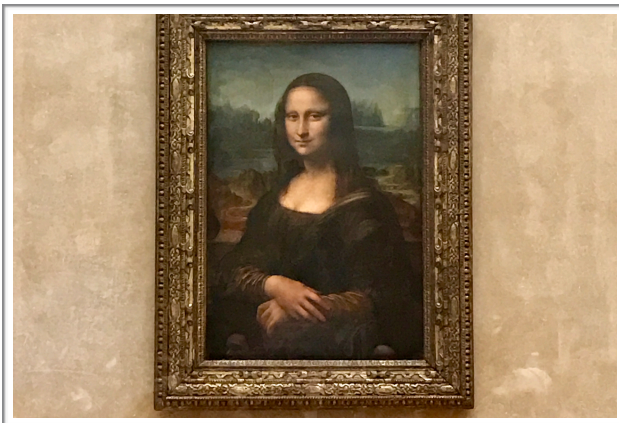


November 2016

It was a month full of quizzes and exams. I had quizzes in French Beginner and exams in Sales Force Management and International Marketing. I did not hang out frequently this month since I was just back from the trip mentioned and had to prepare for my own journey in January. Also, it was the time to finish the group projects and some individual assignments. What a hectic month!

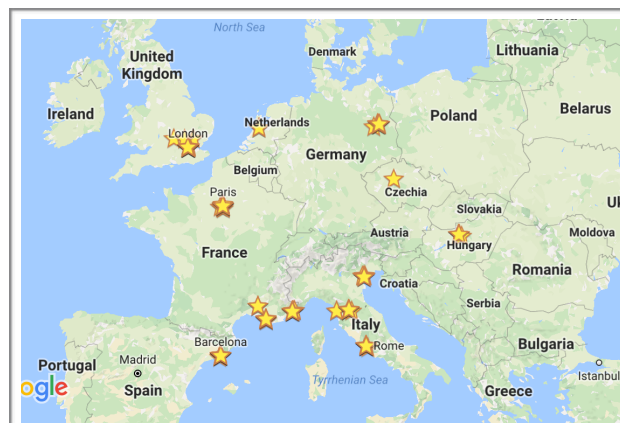
December 2016

Final exams began until mid December, so everyone here was spending most of their time to get prepared. After that, most of the people would visit different Christmas markets in Paris, especially the one in Champs-Elysees. There were a variety of food selling in the market, such as chocolate crepes, cheese, Frankfurt sausages and different kinds of French cuisines. You can also be able to buy various souvenirs like hats, badges, perfumes and so on. Unfortunately, most of my friends left the town already after the final exam period so I have spent most of the time to visit Paris in late December.



January 2017

Amazing journey starting from Barcelona, then Venice, Florence, Rome and London.



Part II: General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

To stay in France for such a long time, you have to apply the **Long Stay Visa (more than 90 days)** by yourself since HKUST will not be involved in the visa application.

2 Main steps to do so:

1. **Make an appointment to arrange for the 'Academic Interview' with Campus France** (located above the French Embassy)
 - You will be asked to bring along some documents with you when going to attend the interview. During the interview, the staff would like to know the reason why you are going to France, generally which courses you are going to take, when you are going to leave Hong Kong for the exchange program, which date you would come back to Hong Kong, where you are going to live during the exchange, and even your personal preference for learning French there. In short, they are going to ask you some questions related to your visit.
 - You are advised to make an appointment with them **EARLIER** because they have to decide the date of the interview and time slots for the interview are usually quite full. You can proceed to the next step **ONLY** after the interview.
2. **Schedule a time again to bring along all the required documents with you to apply for the Long Stay Visa**
 - Read their website **CAREFULLY** before heading to the Embassy
 - Make sure to bring all the documents before going to apply
 - You are **NOT** qualified for applying the housing subsidy since you are going to stay in France for less than 6 months. Thus, you do not have to apply for OFII or APL.

It usually takes **2 weeks** for you to get the Visa. For more information, please refer to the following link: <http://www.consulfrance-hongkong.org/Study-long-stay-more-than-90-days>

Orientation Activities

As mentioned, you would have to attend the welcoming session and the iMagination Week. During the week, the school will invite different speakers to hold seminars and you will be asked to discuss what the speakers have said afterwards, just like a group discussion but on an informal basis. Then, every group would be asked to present their thoughts of the seminars. At the end of the week, every student will submit an artwork or something else like essay or video for the individual project. Basically, this is a great time to get to know more local and exchange students, and listen to the talks given by different renowned French scholars and businessmen. If you are really unwilling to attend, you can

skip 2 days at most as I remember. **DO NOT skip too many sessions** as the iMagination Week is one of the courses appeared on your transcript!

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

Apart from those compulsory events, student clubs named KMT and MELT will be going to organise many recreational activities throughout the semester. All the exchange students would be invited to join their Facebook Group, where you can find the event details and participate in them. Be careful that there are numerous events organised by other organisations as well - Ask a local student for details if you are not going to miss anything!

At the end of August, there should be Le Seine Cruise Tour and City Hunt in Paris. The cruise tour is highly recommended because it is totally free and it would be expensive to join this kind of tour by yourself. Moreover, there would be several parties at the beginning of the semester. Join them if you are a party animal! They are fabulous and you will be able to get to know some new friends there!

There is also a buddy program in ESSEC, but it really depends on the number of local students participating. If there are enough students joining it, then you can automatically have a buddy with you throughout the semester. Otherwise, just ignore it.

Accommodations

An ESSEC-owned organisation named ALEGESSEC is completely in charge of the student residence. It now provides students with 4 residences, namely **Résidence Hauts-de-Cergy**, Résidence du Port (For Year 1 students ONLY), Résidence Port (Le Port), and Résidence Linandes. In June or July, you should receive emails from ALEGESSEC for housing application. All you have to do are to fill in the application form, pick the residence you want and pay the deposit. The majority of exchange students from different parts of the world would be in Résidence Hauts-de-Cergy, which is located in **Cergy Le Haut (CLH)**: 2 railway stations away from the campus (CLH to Cergy Préfecture). Though it is not compulsory to stay in any of the residences mentioned above, they are still some of the cheaper options for exchange students in France. If you would like to live in Paris, then make sure you can tolerate that *NORMALLY* 2 hours have to be spent every day for travelling to and from school.

Résidence Hauts-de-Cergy is highly recommended. You only have to spend 20 minutes *for going back to school* (10 mins walk & 10 mins on train). For other residences, you may have to walk 20 minutes until you get back to the dormitory *from the railway station*. There is an Asian market in CLH, 20 mins walk away from the residence. Two supermarkets can

be found near the Cergy Le Haut station as well, but I still prefer the one named Auchan near the Cergy Préfecture station. ATM, pharmacy, cinema and other useful facilities can also be easily discovered in CLH. In terms of rent, it ranks in the middle among 4 options (i.e. €602 / month).

For details, please refer to the following link:

<http://www.essec.edu/en/pages/about-essec/essec-business-school/housing/>

Transportation

The regional transportation system of Paris (i.e. RATP) is divided into 6 zones, and its metro system consists of two major parts: **Metro** lines and **RER (Réseau Express Régional)** lines. The former are classified into numbers (Lines 1-14) and operate within the downtown Paris; the latter are identified by letters (Lines A to E) and runs from the city centre to its suburbs and airports. Stations within the downtown are usually inside zones 1 and 2, while the remaining zones are located outside of the city.

Riding on an RER A train should be the most common way for you to travel around Paris, as you can arrive its central part in 45 minutes from CLH *normally*. It is *usually* the fastest way to get back to the campus or visit Paris, though RER runs less frequently than the Metro (5-10 mins for an RER train during the daytime and 15-30 mins at night) and **there could be strike, maintenance and breakdown very often**. If the train service is interrupted, you can still get on free shuttle bus to go to other main stations such as Cergy Préfecture and stations in Paris.

Most of the exchange students living in CLH would usually buy the monthly Navigo pass (€70/month) in order to freely get across all the zones, since a single journey ticket from Cergy to Paris already costs around 7 euros. Nevertheless, I have applied for the student pass because it only costs €35 per month. *The prerequisite for this pass is that you have to study in Paris for a year actually, but I capitalised on the expiry date of my ESSEC student card to get rid of it at that time. Therefore, I had to send a letter (i.e. 'Demande de Résiliation') to the office of issuing the pass (i.e. AGENCE IMAGINE R) so as to cancel my subscription at the end of the semester.*

Other things you may be interested to know:

- Price of a one-way ticket within a zone is €1.90; €14.50 for a package of 10-ride tickets
- Always try to check the train schedules via RATP mobile app before you go
- Last RER A train to CLH *normally departs* from Paris at around 12AM
- At least €40 for taking Uber from Paris to CLH

Cost / Expenses

Items	Approximate Amount (HKD)
CX Flight Ticket	\$6,200
Accommodation	€130 (AUG) + €602 x 4 (SEP - DEC) = \$21,000
Transportation	€70 (SEP) + €60 (OCT) + €35 x 2 (NOV - DEC) = \$1,700
Monthly Expenses on Basic Living Necessities	\$1,500 (AUG) + \$6,500 x 4 (SEP - DEC) = \$27,500
Others (e.g. Travelling, Shopping, etc.)	\$53,600
Total	\$110,000

In early July, you should receive emails from MELT, which would provide you the application form of opening a bank account at Société Générale (法興銀行). Apply for it then you can quickly have your own French bank account once after arrival!

Course Registration

There are two rounds of course registration. For the first round, it will be conducted in August and all you have to prepare for the registration is you should figure out the **corresponding CRN** of each course you would like to register before the round starts. The second round will start in September for you add and drop courses. Make sure the courses which you want to register will be offered by ESSEC in your exchange semester, otherwise you may have to submit an assessment application to ARR for course mapping before the actual study. No worries since exchange students will be given the highest priority to register for courses.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

Though there are different teaching styles, which really depend on the professors, **all of the courses require over 80% of attendance (basically no more than 2 absences)**. For the majority of marketing courses, you are evaluated through final exams, long-term projects, class participation and in-class group discussions. During the lecture, instructors will usually provide you real-world examples and cases while explaining the concept, and you will be expected to apply them during the group discussion.

Courses mentioned below all have different teaching and evaluation methods:

- **IDS14130 e-Business:** The professor would share about 100 slides with you every lecture, but he only requires you to finish a long-term project and final exam for the course. (For sure, class participation is encouraged as it accounts for 10% of the grade)

- **LGFR13130 Beginner French:** It is just an optional course for exchange students. However, if you decide to register for it, you should expect that there will be a quiz every two weeks (only listening & writing), an easy group presentation and final exam (oral, writing and listening). Be careful, you might find the instructional pace too quick so you may have to make preparations before each class.
- **MKGF14120 Sales Force Management:** you will be evaluated via a series of group presentations, and two exams (mid-term & final).
(Tips: Local students are familiar with the teaching style and expectations of the instructor of this course. They could be really helpful to exchange students like us.)
- **MKGM13141 International Marketing:** It consists of two exams (mid-term & final), two projects (mid-term & final), class participation and in-class group discussions. For most of the lectures, half of them are allocated for group discussions, and you have to present at least once in front of the class to show what your group have been discussing.
- **MKGS14404 Influence & Marketing:** It is a new course offered by ESSEC, and you are expected to finish only 2 group presentations (mid-term & final; without any written report) throughout the semester.

International Services & Activities

I did not notice that there were international services during the exchange period, but you can still find various sorts of international activities as I mentioned before. Always stay tuned to your Facebook News Feed, and you may be able to find group visits, winery trips and even student tours organised by different external organisations.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

You can find a gym, a pub, a dance room, an indoor basketball court and an outdoor tennis court in the campus. There could be parties every week in the school pub. If you are looking for some sports classes or dance lessons, check out the board outside the dance studio. But if you are interested to join the school team, there will be an exhibition at the beginning of the semester and you can go for it to have more understanding of different sports clubs.

Health & Safety

I would say that the campus is rather safer than the residence. As I mentioned above, I lost my phone and other belongings at night when I was in the residence and even there were security guards on patrol. Be alert to all of your surroundings anytime. Moreover, I was sick for once only and cured by the medicines I brought from Hong Kong. I would thus recommend you to bring some of your own medicines as a precaution.

Food

There are two restaurants (staff & student) in the campus, providing few choices of meals every school day. Therefore, some of the students will bring their own lunch boxes and use the microwaves in campus to reheat the food. There are also a number of restaurants around the campus, selling Japanese and Western cuisines, fast food, sandwiches and coffees, but they would be pricier than the meals provided by the school canteens. After class, I usually went to Auchan (as mentioned above) to do grocery shopping and prepared the dinner by myself.

Climate

It was still very hot until mid October last year (2016), so it is better for you to bring part of your summer wardrobe apart from the winter one. Compared with Hong Kong, the weather in Paris/Cergy is much foggier yet dryer, and there are sunny days occasionally in the wintertime. Although the temperature there is usually above 0 degree Celsius, it could be still freezing cold at night, compared with the daytime.

Communication

The majority of the French cannot be able to speak English, so that is one of the major reasons why many exchange students would like to take the Beginner French.

In terms of **cellular connection**, please refer to my monthly log of September (P.4).

In terms of **WiFi connection**, the school one is quite stable and fast. (it's *FREE* as well!!!) However, for the one in CLH, I think there is still room for improvement as it really sucked at the time of its initial setup. (and you have to pay for it!!!)

Cautionary Measures

- Remember to close the windows and lock the door when you leave your room
- Deposit all valuables in the safe or somewhere with a lock
- Beware of pickpockets and strangers when you are on the train
- Make copies of your personal identity documents and store them in separate locations

Part III: Items to bring for your wonderful exchange

- ☐ Summer & Winter Clothing
- ☐ Notebook, mobile phones, camera and their respective chargers
- ☐ Medicines
- ☐ *Adaptors*
- ☐ Necessities

e.g. toothbrush, toothpaste, towel, skincare products, stationary, hairdryer, grocery shopping bag, local food like instant noodles and snacks, flip flops, calculator, etc.

- ☐ Travel Size Toiletries
- ☐ Backpack/Small suitcase for weekend trips

- ☐ **DOCUMENTS**

- HKID
- Passport with French long stay visa
- Birth Certificate
- Copies of all of the above