

EXCHANGE REPORT

ERASMUS UNIVERSITY, THE NETHERLANDS

ROTTERDAM SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

15-AUG-2016 TO 31-DEC-2016

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FALL 2016-2017



Part 1 Monthly Activity Log

August

I arrived at Rotterdam on Aug 15 more than a week before the orientation day and got familiar with environment there because this was the first time I had been in Europe. One of the most interesting places that caught my eyes was Markthal, a market hall located in Rotterdam. I believe this could be a landmark of Rotterdam. On the orientation day, we met all incoming exchange students from different countries. We were provided a welcoming package including a student ID card, some travel leaflets and T-shirts. I was assigned in a group and met some friends from Mexico, USA, Australia and Hong Kong. One of my Australian friends even became my flatmate later!



Photo (1)- Markthal

September

Since I only took 3 courses in RSM, one minor course and two normal courses, the workload for me was not heavy as you might think. However, for the minor course, it took me 15 ECTS, so the level of difficulty and workload would be slightly higher than those of normal courses. The minor course was called strategy consulting, which was taught by a professor who had experience in working for a well-known international consulting firm, Boston Consulting Group. Unlike some classes in HKUST, his lecture was always very interactive and interesting, arousing my interest in the field of management consulting. This teaching style made me strongly feel two different academic styles in eastern and western countries. Since I did not take too many courses, I spent some of my spare time on joining the activity

organized by ESN, an international student association in Erasmus University. I joined their Munich Trip to enjoy the Oktoberfest with some of my Hong Kong friends, which took place on September rather than October. That was a very exciting experience.

October

This was a tough month for me because I was stuck with all mid-term exams, assignments and projects. Since I was not sure about the grading scheme in this university, this uncertainty pushed me and my groupmates to do all the things perfectly. We arranged a lot of meetings for discussing our projects, leaving me no time for outings and travelling around the Europe. Fortunately, our effort was well paid and we all did well in the projects and assignments.

November

It was another amazing month. Due to good use of my day-offs and weekends, I successfully went to London for travelling and visiting my friends who I have never seen for years. We enjoyed a delicious lobster meal and visited the British museum. It broadened my horizons when I saw thousands of collections of world art and artefacts.

December

I had only one exam and a project left for this month. After finishing all the exam and project, I took a 20-day continuous Europe trip with my friends. That has been my unforgettable experience ever. We bought an cheap airline ticket to Barcelona and then went to Valencia for watching my first football match. Then, we spent other 2 days on Madrid and watched my second football match. After that, we took the flight to Rome and then visited Florence, Venice and Milan accordingly. After visiting all these places, I took an 8-hour coach to Nice, France. Nice was a beautiful city with marvelous sky and coast. Then, I took another 3 days in Zurich,

Switzerland and travelled on one snow mountain called Pilatus. The trip ended with the travelling of Berlin, Germany.

General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

The most important thing is to get your student visa. For me, I needed to have an entry visa and a residence permit, which might vary from different students. Remember to submit all the required documents and copies of your passports earlier, or otherwise your application will be processed later.

2) Orientation Activities

The orientation day is a compulsory event for all exchange-in students. Every student has to pay 50euros for the event and you will be given a tram card and some beer coins for the activities later on. You will have the opportunity to meet new friends, buddies and even your HKUST partners if you are not going to this university alone. You will get exposure to parts of the city (i.e. Rotterdam) and your buddy will always give you some tips about living in this city like the places to buy a second-hand bike, grocery stores nearby and etc.

3) International Services and Activities

There is an international student association, ESN, which I have mentioned before. They regularly organized student trip to various places in Europe like Belgium, Germany and France. They sometimes offer special offers to students to travel around nearby countries. But be sure about the details of transportation and accommodation when you register for their events because you may have the chance to stay in a coach for 12 hours for transportation and sleep in a tent. Therefore, my advice is ask before you decide.

4) Accommodation

You will be asked to register for your housing through email at least 3 months before the start of a new term. You can register it through SSH, in which you can live near campus. I lived in Hatta Building and the rent is 524 Euro/month, a bit expensive than normal prices, but it is a large room and you only share the open kitchen, bathroom, living room with your roommates. You will have the chance to meet other exchange students here because most of them prefer to live in Hatta Building.

5) Course Registration

The Erasmus exchange coordinators will provide you a list of courses in an excel file. What you need to do is to fill in the form and get your HKUST exchange coordinator's signature and then give it back to them. You can take the courses up to a maximum ECT of 30 with a minimum requirement of 15 ECT.

6) Teaching and Assessment Methods

Professors expect punctuality from every student so you may not be allowed to enter the classroom if you are late. Also, they require preparation before the class and all the required readings should be well read. For most of the courses I have taken, except the math course, the assessment always includes assignments, group projects and presentation. The frequency of presentation is even higher than that of UST. Almost every class students are expected to give at least one presentation or be involved in a group discussion. I think this is one of the styles in western university that professors expect students to contribute to the class. For the others, it involves mid-term exam and a final exam.

7) Sports and Recreation Facilities

If you are interested in sports, you can register for the sport center membership at a fair price. You can enjoy all the sport facilities until the end of the semester.

8) Finance and Banking

You will need to open a Dutch bank (either ABN AMRO or ING) account after your arrival in Rotterdam. There are two important reasons for you to open your account. The first one is before you come to the Netherlands, your exchange coordinator will require you to transfer sufficient amount of money to Erasmus University bank account to prove you have enough money for living in the Netherlands. (It should be 3600Euros for 4 month + 311Euros for Visa Application) When you successfully open an account in the Netherlands, the university will transfer you back the money later (excluding the visa fee and some procedure fees). The second reason is for students whose bank card only accepts UnionPay, there are no ATMs that accept UnionPay in the Netherlands. That's why you have to apply for a new one.

Here's the expense for my exchange:

	HKD
Flight	6331
Orientation Day(50euros)	444
Insurance	1564
Rent(524euros/month)	22816
Visa(311euros)	2759
Travelling + Basic activities	42395
Total	76308

9) Social Clubs/ Networking Opportunities

There is a regular event ESN Tuesday organized by ESN. It is a social gathering night that all students can enjoy a wonderful dance night in a

place booked by the ESN. Students can even enjoy free admission when liking their Facebook page. I would really recommend this event if you want to meet new friends because there are a lot of exchange students coming going for this event. Also, ESN organizes outbound trip regularly and it is also a great opportunity for new incoming exchange students to meet friends.

10) Health and Safety

The Netherlands is relatively safe when comparing with other European countries, but you still see some policemen with army patrolling on the airport and other important places. For the hospitals and clinics, I have no ideas about it because I had never been sick during my stay.

11) Food

Most of the time I cook the food myself and there are some supermarkets around the campus. Once you get a bike, you can simply carry a backpack and hunt for your favorite food. There are two stores around the campus. One of them is called the Spar and it seems like a convenient store located on campus. The second one is called De Esch Plus and you can simply take a 5-min walk to get there. Another famous grocery stores are Albert Heijn and Jumbo. If you are looking for cheaper food and drink, the latter one would be a better choice. For Asian students who love eastern food, Wah Nam Hong and Oriental Express are two recommended chain stores for you.

12) Transportation

Bike was the major transportation of my stay in Rotterdam and I even used this bike to visit some famous places there like Kinderdijk and Erasmusbrug. But if you are new to the environment or you do not want to use bike as your transportation, tram and metro would be a better choice for you. You can go everywhere you like by taking these two public transports. You can get your OV-card (like Octopus Card in Hong Kong) from the

vending machine in the metro station or from ESN at the beginning of the term. If you want to travel outside the Netherlands or between the cities at a lower price, Flixbus, a German coach company, would be your best option because you can simply pay 7-9 euros from Rotterdam to Amsterdam or pay 30euros to travel from Rotterdam to Paris.

13) Climate

The weather from August to November is pretty good in the Netherlands and it's not that cold even in December. Be careful of the wind! the Netherlands is always too windy and that's why there are lots of windmills there.

14) Communication

Lebara is one of the most common sim card in the Netherlands. Another option would be Vodafone. You should check whether your sim card offers you international data, which you can use data in all European countries. I am sure that you may need those data when you are travelling around countries outside the Netherlands.

15) Cautionary measures

Stay alert anytime and be cautious of your passports and wallets.

Checklist of Items to Bring

1. Passport, Visa and birth certificate
2. Bank card/ Debit Card (the most common transaction medium in the Netherlands)
3. Credit Card (substitute if you forget to bring your debit card)
4. Windbreaker Jacket (that would be enough for autumn)
5. Clothes for summer (It is super hot from August to October and don't expect the winter will come really soon.)
6. Laptop
7. Charger
8. Medicine

Useful websites:

Flixbus website: <https://www.flixbus.com/>

Skyscanner: <https://www.skyscanner.net/>

Rome2rio website: <https://www.rome2rio.com/>

NS International:

https://www.nsinternational.nl/?gclid=CjwKEAiAxKrFBRDm25f60OegtwwSJABgEC-ZXHaw9go84rpdw9nm5bHb4XHMr9TrPeTwLnltDLkTGhoCDnnw_wcB

ESN Website: <https://esn.org/>