

Exchange Report

BI Norwegian Business School



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BSC ECONOMICS AND FINANCE, YEAR THREE

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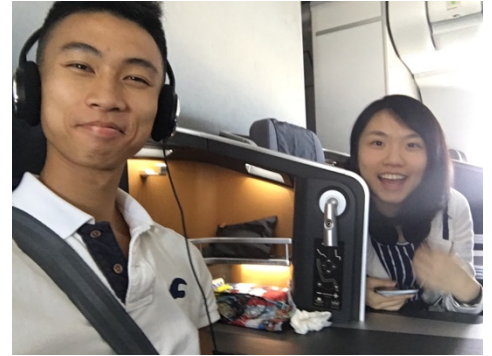
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Part I: Activity Log

Arrival

We took SAS Plus to Oslo (and luckily we got upgraded to business class so it was a really pleasant journey). We arrived Oslo in the late afternoon of 14th August, which is a Sunday. We then took Flytoget, the airport express train, from the Oslo Gardermoen Airport to Oslo S Station for 90 NOK. (Oslo S station is a train station which connects different cities in Norway. From there you can walk within a minute to Jernbanetorget, a metro station that connects every part of Oslo.)



We met helpers from BI at Oslo S, who gave advices for us on like how to get to our dormitory, where to buy the metro monthly pass, etc. Normally, they will also advice you on how to get the dormitory key. However, since I arrived Oslo on a Sunday evening, where the SiO office in Blindern was closed, BI helpers helped me collect the keys from the office and gave them to me at the station. It was really a nice act, while the only disadvantage is that you cannot choose the room you will be living in. (And that matters a lot!)

It was already 9pm after we settled down in the dormitory in Kringsjå. I was starving while the only supermarket in Kringsjå, KIWI, is closed every Sunday. (So never arrange your flight to Oslo on Sunday.) Luckily, our exchangemates helped us out and offered us food for dinner.

August

In August, BI has organized an orientation week and I joined several orientation activities. Some of them are quite useful, especially those talks that explain how BI's academic system works or how to use BI's resources (from book-borrowing to note-printing, from residence permit application to ski-equipment-renting). Nonetheless, some are poorly coordinated, for instance, a BBQ social event, mainly organized by students, was not really well-prepared. When semester begins, you can (should) sign up for Binner, where you can meet new friends from different places and most importantly, enjoy a free meal.

We visited Ikea for necessities, such as some kitchen utensils, blanket, cloth-drying rack, etc. We also went to the lake in Sognsvann, which is within 10 minutes of walking from Kringsjå. The view is gorgeous and it is the best place for jogging (before November)!



September

As I arrived Oslo pretty late (just one day before the orientation week began), I didn't travel in August. As soon as class began, we came to realize the style of our classes and started planning our trips.

In early September, I went to Bergen, a beautiful city on the west coast of Norway, with exchangemates from Hong Kong and Singapore. We rented two cars and visited the waterfalls and fjords around Bergen on the first day. (Driving in Norway is extremely pleasurable and relaxing but it can also be dangerous when the stunning scenery took too much of your attention.) On day two, we began our journey at 4am, driving 3 hours to Odda and started the most difficult hike in my life at Trolltunga. It is a long and demanding walk, with 11km each way and it took us nearly 12 hours to finish it. The journey was really tough but rewarding as well!



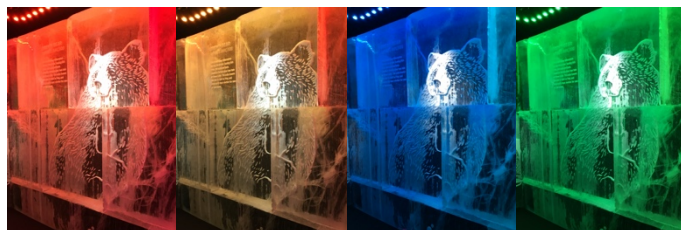
I went to Iceland in the following weekend. Public transportation is very uncommon or inconvenient in Iceland, so, in order to save money, we rented a car to tour around instead of joining local tours. (A one-day tour in the Golden Circle could cost you 900 HKD per person while the total expense for a 4-day car rental is just 2400 HKD to be shared.) Iceland is a beautiful country with a lot of spectacular landscapes, such as the "Gullfoss Falls" and "Geysir Hot Spring". Blue Lagoon Geothermal Spa is the another place you wouldn't want to miss.



By the end of September, we visited Stavanger, another city of Norway. We went hiking at the Pulpit Rock and Kjerag, before it became too difficult and dangerous to do so in winter time. The view is wonderful.

October

October used to be a hell-like month for me (and you?) in UST but it is a lot easier here in BI. Three out of the four courses I took had no midterm exams and only two of them had assignments (which can be finished within one to two hours). Unlike in UST, lecturers in BI tend to go through course materials slowly and in great details. Class discussions are common, which allow students to better memorize the mechanism behind a theory. Though courses in the first half of the semester were relatively straightforward, I tried to participate in every lecture and plan my traveling on weekends as I only had class on Tuesday and Thursday.



I spent my first weekend in Copenhagen and Stockholm for the Carlsberg Experience, Vasa museum, Old Town (which is quite similar to the one in Bergen) and the Ice Bar.

As I only have two days for travelling in the second week, I decided to visit Flåm, a gorgeous city in the center of Norway. During the trip, not only did I experience the UNESCO landscape in a fjords cruise tour in Flåm but also the breathtaking attractions on the way of the 4-hour drive!



Next trip was an exciting one for me as I flew to Edinburgh. On the first day, I went to Knowsley Safari Park in Liverpool where you can drive through the whole zoo in your own car. [Do not enter the Baboon section (like what we did☹) as they will “poopoo” on your car and dismantle anything they can see!] Before heading back to Edinburgh, I also passed by Manchester to visit Old Trafford, the home pitch of my favorite football team, Manchester United. Back in Edinburgh, I enjoyed the scenery on Arthur’s seat and Edinburgh castle, and the shopping time in Livingston Designer Outlet. (A minor problem encountered in this trip: Most car rental companies in the UK and in Ireland have set a minimum age of 25. Double check the terms to see if the company can rent you a car and how much more you need to pay for “young driver’s fee” if you want to have a road trip.)



I went to the Netherlands for my last trip in October. I enjoyed the famous windmills in Kinderdijk near Rotterdam and the serenity in Giethoorn, also named as the Venice of the North. Red light district, sex museum and city canal cruise are the “MUSTs” in Amsterdam, however, remember to keep a close eye on your valuables!



November

As I had four final exams in the first half of December, I spent most of my time staying in Oslo to revise in November. Since I have spent my spare time (eg. Time on a flight, Time on an overnight train when I cannot sleep, etc.) doing readings, I could quickly catch up with my schoolwork. Doing revision in November was tough as the short daytime, with only 5-6 hours of sunlight per day, could easily trigger depression.

Therefore, I squeezed 3 days out from my reading week and went for the 2016 All Blacks Northern Tour in Paris. It was my dream to watch a game of the New Zealand rugby team and it has come true! (All Blacks knocked France out a year ago in the Rugby World Cup, and they have beaten the French this time too☺.) I went back to Oslo right after the game to get myself ready for the exams.



December

I had all my four exams in the first two weeks in December. One important thing you should know: exams in BI are usually **NOT** held in the campus. Instead, BI would book a church or an indoor tennis court for examinations. It is suggested to go to exam venue with a local or try out the route a couple of days before the exam. (The exams are rather straightforward, comparing with what you get in UST. Every student has access to past exam papers, but not every (local) student seemed to have utilized the resources.)

My ultimate travel plan began when my exams ended.

I flew to Dublin the day after my last exam. (It is rather expensive to rent a car in the UK and in Ireland, but it is still worth it if your destinations are remote and exotic places and you have highly personalized plans.) The road trip began with driving to Belfast for Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge and the Giant's Causeway, where "Game of Thrones" was filmed. It was then followed by the Cliffs of Moher on the western coast on the island, where "Harry Potter VI" was filmed.



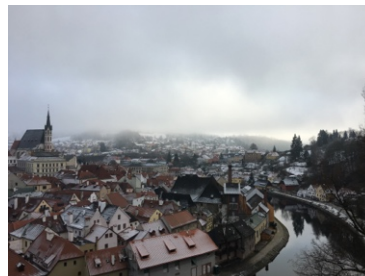
The Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) were my next stop. In contrast with the UK, car rental in the Baltic states is a lot cheaper, with lenient age restrictions. Even, there were no border controls when you travel from a country to another. So, I did another road trip for the three capitals, Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius. Old towns in the three cities are gorgeous and the local dishes are yummy!



Trying to avoid terror attacks, I went to Geneva for Christmas. The city is amazingly beautiful (while the price levels are amazingly high, YEAH!). In Geneva you can visit Lac Léman, the largest freshwater lake in Europe, and certainly the most romantic. I also went to

Glacier 3000, where I had a walk on a suspension bridge that connects two mountain peaks. (Unfortunately, the weather was really bad on that day and nothing could be seen from the viewpoint.☹)

Then, I called on Eastern Europe to continue my journey. It was wonderful to visit Budapest, Vienna, Český Krumlov (a splendid small town in Czech), and Prague. Christmas markets alongside slight snowfall made the trip unforgettable while outlets in the cities made the trip even more fruitful!



After visiting the Auschwitz Concentration Camp and the enormous salt mine in Krakow, I also went to visit Dortmund and Frankfurt before I headed back to Oslo. Signal Iduna Park, home ground



of Borussia Dortmund and also the largest football pitch in Germany, is a must to a football fan like me! We also passed by Heidelberg to visit the red-sandstone ruins of Heidelberg Castle, a noted example of Renaissance architecture.

Part II: General Exchange Information

1. Visa Procedures

Exchange students staying in Norway for more than 3 months have to apply for a residence permit. You can start the application right after receiving the admission letter from BI. You may send an email to Royal Norwegian Consulate (norwayhk@ncchk.org.hk) to obtain guidelines for the application. You can make an appointment with the Consulate to hand in all required documents and application fee at their office in Sheung Wan. Upon your arrival in Oslo, you have to report to the police office to get the residence permit done. In BI's orientation talk, it will announce the date and time where you can make an appointment with the police at BI's campus, and where you will choose a time slot for handing in documents at the local police office.

2. Orientation Activities

Most of the orientation activities are quite useful. It is suggested to attend all of the talks where you can obtain important information, such as how you should complete VISA application with local police, or how the school's intranet works. There were also some social events, mainly organized by students, where you can meet new friends.

3. Accommodations

Exchange students need to apply housing online beforehand. There are a lot of options in terms of housing, with a wide range of prices. I chose a furnished single room, sharing bathroom with one and kitchen with six in Kringsjø, which was one of the most reasonably priced housings. You will have to go to the SiO office at Blindern to pick up your access keys. If you arrive at a time when the SiO office is closed (eg. on Sunday), helpers from BI will help you get the keys. (Suggestion: Avoid that and go pick up your keys so you can choose to stay in a block near the metro station with a laundry room.)



4. Courses Registration

You can research on the courses offered from BI's website or the course list sent to you from BI. After checking for the availability for credit transfer from ARRO, you can register the courses by completing an online form according to the course schedule provided by BI.

5. Teaching & Assessment Methods

I took a total of four courses in BI:

- a. EXC 3603 International Economics
 - In this course, you will learn to use different models to analysis and predict international trade. There is no assignments and midterm exam, while the final exam counts towards 100% of the total grade. Lecture notes are a bit hard to comprehend while the pace of teaching is rather slow. (Recommended: Questions in the final exam are highly predictable.☺)
- b. EXC 3670 Financial Markets and Institutions
 - This course explains the work of different parties in the financial market, and the principals of various financial instruments. You will also be required to complete Bloomberg Market Concept test, which gives you fundamental knowledge of a Bloomberg terminal. Two assignments contribute to 30% of the final grade, while the remaining comes from the final exam.
- c. EXC 3671 Corporate Finance
 - The course is about some basic knowledge of corporate actions such as IPO, debt issuance, M&A, etc. There is no assignments and midterm exam, while the final exam, which comprises of 30 MCQs, counts towards 100% of the total grade. (Recommended: Course for Corporate Finance is much harder in HKUST)
- d. EXC 3672 Analysis of Financial Data
 - Some basic knowledge on statistics will be useful for this course. In addition to mathematical calculations, this course also introduces the use of R, a program for statistics analysis with coding. There are two quizzes, one assignment and a final exam for grading.

6. Finance & Banking

I opened at account in CitiBank in Hong Kong before the exchange. The ATM card allows you to withdraw money at ATMs with PLUS Service, which is very practical all around Europe. It is convenient too as it does not charge you transaction fee per withdrawal.



7. Food

Dining out is rather expensive in Norway. Having lunch in TGI Friday or Jensens Bøfhus costs around 80-150 NOK, nevertheless, the quality of the food is quite decent. To save money for travelling, I usually cook for myself in dormitory. There are a KIWI that provides cheap food in Kringsjä, and a MENY on the other side of the Kringsjä metro station. For even cheaper food, you can look for the Asian market in Grønland.

8. Transportation

Students can purchase a monthly Ruter pass which gives you access to all kinds of public transport run by Ruter, for instance, metro, tram, bus and ferry. It costs 414 NOK as of 2016.

9. Climate

In summer time (August and September), temperature fluctuates between 15 to 25 degree Celsius. You are okay with tee shirts. In winter, temperature is around 0 degree Celsius and it can drop to -10 degree Celsius within a night. In 2016, the first snow in Oslo came in early November. It is suggested to bring your own down jacket or thick coat since there are only few (and expensive) options in Oslo. (Alternatively, you can purchase warm clothes outside Norway, like in UK, if you plan to do a bit travelling before November☺.)

10. Communication

The dormitory does not have WIFI coverage. You need to bring your own WIFI router and Lan cable to connect to the internet in your room. For mobile network, I used MyCall as it does not require permanent residency for registration. (As of 2016, the costs per month for 1GB, 3GB and 6GB data are 79NOK, 149NOK and 219NOK respectively.)

Part III: Things to Bring

1. Passport, HKID and their photocopies
2. BI Admission letter
3. Driving license (both local and international) if you plan to drive in Europe
4. Some cash (NOK, Euro), ATM Card and Credit Card
5. Thick clothing (beanie and gloves)
6. WIFI Router and LAN Cable
7. Adapters (European adapters and Korean adapters looks similar! Don't mix up!)
8. Phone, Camera, Computer, and their chargers
9. Portable chargers (Life saver of your phone when it is switched off in cold weather)
10. Medicine