
Exchange Report

ESSEC Business School, France

Fall Semester 2016

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Monthly Activity Log

August 2016

I arrived at Paris CDG Airport on 22nd August, which was the mandatory arrival date. Basically, the whole August was to settle down and get used to the environment, attend some orientation and the Imagination Week. The Imagination Week was a special workshop for all Year 3 Global BBA Full-time students and exchange students. The school arranged different talks and workshops for students, aiming to encourage students to explore and imagine their futures. Unfortunately, most of the talks were in French and the translator didn't work most of the time. Therefore, it made foreign students a bit difficult to actively participate.



September 2016

School started officially in the first week of September. I took 5 courses and I had day off every Wednesday and Friday. Workload wasn't that heavy for the first month so I attended a few school parties and activities to meet some new friends, explored some famous spots in Paris such as Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and the Palace of Versailles etc.. I also went to Amsterdam and Rotterdam in Netherlands during one of the weekends with some other UST friends in France. That was my first trip after coming here and it was a really great memory to finally meet some HK people in Europe and travel together. One of the unpleasant experience was that my exchange mate who is also from UST's phone and a pair of shoes got stolen in his room at the dormitory one night. He went out to do laundry for around an hour and didn't close the shutter of window completely. We

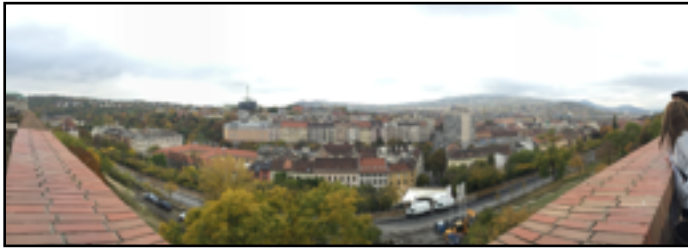
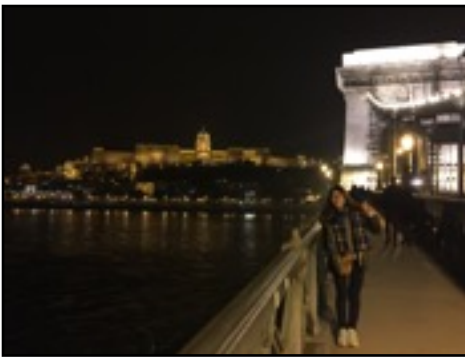
believed that it's because he lived in the ground floor and someone broke into his room through the windows. But the good thing was that not much of his things got stolen and ALEGESSEC (Department of housing in ESSEC) was so willing to help and handle. They even offered him to change his room to the third floor. Another thing that is worth mentioning is the weather in Paris. The temperature difference became bigger since the middle of September. It could reach around 25 degrees in the afternoon but drop to 15 degrees at night and in the morning. So it is really important to make sure that you wear enough in the morning but also not too much for the afternoon.



October 2016

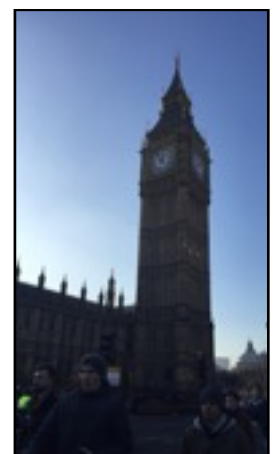
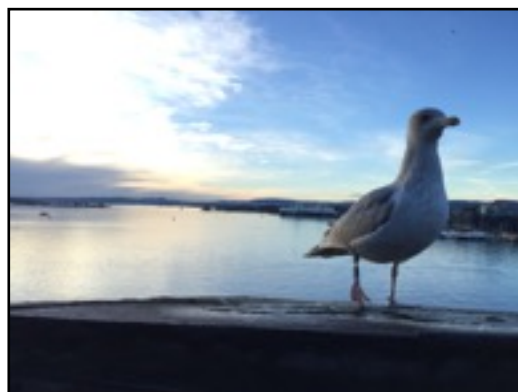
There were more and more assignments and projects this month. So most of my day off were used to do my school work and relax a bit in Paris. I went to Brussels and Brugge in Belgium in the first weekend of October with my UST exchange mate and also two Singaporean girls that we met here. It was a fun experience. There was a 2-week fall term break in the end of October. So I travelled to Eastern Europe for 11 days with my friends here. I went to Krakow in Poland, Budapest in Hungary, Bratislava in Slovakia, Ljubljana in Slovenia and Split and Zadar in Croatia. This was my first backpack trip and it was not easy. We took overnight bus and stayed in youth hostels to save up money. However, it was an really unforgettable and meaningful trip that was worth all the challenges. Things in Eastern Europe are comparatively cheaper than Central and Western Europe. So I managed to save up quite a lot.





November 2016

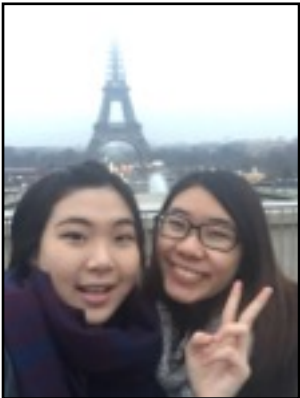
It was a busy month after the semester break. There were projects and midterm for each course. However, it was still relatively more relaxing and less demanding than in HKUST. Therefore I still managed to travel in Oslo, Rouen and London this month. It was quite an exciting experience to Oslo because I mistakenly went to the wrong airport when I set off. However I managed to go back to the correct one on time. In fact, it is quite important to triple check before you leave as there are three airports in Paris and it can be confusing if you book the departing and return ticket separately like what I did for the Oslo trip. London trip is my first ever solo trip in my life. It was a really great experience to travel alone. London is a good place for girls to travel alone as it is safer than other places in Europe. It even felt like home for me because I can at least speak in English and communicate with all the people well.





December 2016

The semester ended in early December and exams started in the second week. There were quite many days between exams so I went to Disneyland, Barcelona and Madrid. Exams were actually quite manageable and you can pass the exam for sure if you did study and attend lessons. Barcelona and Madrid were great places to visit and were in fact two of my favourite cities of all as things there were relatively cheaper than other big cities in Western Europe. Food are nice and the cities are vibrant. Another highlight was that I went to Disneyland twice. I strongly recommend you to go there at least once as it is much bigger and also cheaper than the one in Hong Kong. There were discounts quite often if you buy online and it was only 36 Euro for a one day pass when I went there. There were also much less people and I didn't even queue up for most of the facilities. I also made use of the remaining time to explore Paris more before leaving after the exam. December was quite a sad month because it was the last month and I know that I am going to miss this place so much.



General Exchange Report

- **Visa Procedure**

Basically there are two parts for applying Visa. The first part is the academic interview at Campus France Office. Don't worry, it is just a simple interview about details of your study in France and see if you know French or not. It is totally fine even you don't know French at all. The second part is to make an appointment to submit your documents for visa application. You can find all the documents needed for the interview and visa application in the link below. Make sure you prepare everything well before going so the process would be smooth and easy.

<http://www.consulfrance-hongkong.org/Study-long-stay-more-than-90-days>

- **Orientation Activities**

School provides official orientation one week before semester starts. It is an one day orientation at school which includes general information about courses, grading, accommodation and also introducing exchange partners of the school. There will be school tour after the talk which bring you around the campus. It's quite useful for getting used to this new environment.

- **International Services and Activities**

One of the good things about this school is that there are many exchange students every semester who come all over the world. Therefore, there is also a student society for exchange students called Melt Essec. It provides a lot of information even before you arrive France including pick up in the airport, opening bank account etc.. They also organise a lot of gatherings every weekend like tour in Paris, BBQ parties at school etc..

- **Accommodation**

There are three options for accommodation. The first one is Cergy Le Haut, which is also the place that I lived in. It is two train stations (7 mins) away from the school station and school is 5 mins walk from that station. However, the frequency of train is quite bad sometimes and delays happen quite often. So it usually takes around 30 mins to go back to school in total. There are two supermarkets near the dormitory and an asian market (15 mins walk). Another option is Les Linandes, which is 20 mins walk to school. It is the cheapest but one of the cons is that it may be quite dangerous to walk alone back at night for that long time. I have quite many friends who live in either Le Haut or Les Linandes. The last option is Le Port, which is right next to school but also the most expensive one.

You can find pictures and videos of the accommodation in the ALEGESSEC website. Note that you may notice that there is a thing called APL Subsidy for housing. However, HK Visa is not eligible to apply so we have to pay the full price of housing.

• **Course Registration**

You will receive an email with an academic pack which includes information of course enrolment. The process of enrolment is not that complicated. You just have to check the time of each course and mark down the CRN. Exchange students are the first group to register. So you don't have to worry about the quota of each course. Fill in the boxes with the CRN code in the registration website by that time and you will be successfully registered into all courses. The following are courses that I have taken:

1. Merger&Acquisition and Private Equity
2. International Cash Management
3. Beginner French
4. Communication
5. International Marketing

• **Teaching and Assessment Methods**

The school offers courses in both French and English. For course in English, most of the students are also exchange students. Professors can speak fluent English but in French accent which you may need some time to adjust to. For grading, the school uses absolute grading for all courses which 20 marks is the highest. The school also has policy of taking attendance of every class and one mark will be deducted for skipping every two lessons.

• **Sports and Recreation Facilities**

There is a sports and recreation centre at school which has facilities like basketball court and gym room which are free of charge. I have not used those during my exchange, however, I have heard that it has been renovated this year. Also, there are two gym rooms in my dormitory (Cergy Le Haut) which is free of charge too.

• **Finance and Banking**

I would say that opening a local bank account is necessary in France even you will just stay for few months as it is quite dangerous to keep so much cash with you even you put them in your room and it will be much more convenient to book things online with a credit card. Therefore, I opened a local bank account which is operated by Societe

Generale. The bank has cooperated with the student association of school to help exchange students to open an account. You will know more information about it through a welcoming email from the student association. Also, I was able to close my bank account and get back all my money before departure. Make sure you go to the bank next to the school and request for closing the account at least 2 working days before your departure so that you will be able to get full amount of your money.

Here is my expense for 4 months of exchange. (It may vary depending on your living style. I am quite a budget traveller and I bought relatively few things during travelling and stayed in hostels. I also saved up quite a lot of money by cooking by myself in dormitory.)

Items	Amount (Euro)
ESSEC Exchange Daily Life Expenses (Accommodation, food, transportation etc.)	4815.27
Travelling Expenses	1748.05
Total	6563.32

- **Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities**

There is a clubs exhibition during fall semester for students to join clubs at school. However, most of them are only looking for local or full time students and most of the activities that they organise will be held in Spring semester. The only social clubs that is suitable for you to join will be the international student association called Melt which organise activities for exchange students.

- **Health and Safety**

As you may know, safety problems in Europe have been serious and even more severe because of terrorist attacks. After 4 months staying in Europe, I would have to say that it's true that it may be more dangerous than in Hong Kong, however, pickpockets and all these are avoidable if you are careful enough. I haven't lost anything during this 4 months and I think if you are worried about the safety, don't stay outside till late night and always find some company.

- **Transportation**

Basically, there are metro and RER which are actually similar. Cergy is located in RER Line A. I would suggest you to download an app called 'RATP'. It has real-time schedule for all transports in Paris. You can easily find the best way to travel from one to

another location by using the app. Price of an one-way ticket is 1.9 Euro for metro. As I lived in Les Haut which means that I have to take train everyday, I bought a Navigo card which you can subscribe to either weekly or monthly plan, so that you can travel unlimited times during the period. The card can be bought in any station.

For travelling around Europe, there are 3 options: bus, train and flight. You may use a website called GoEuro to find out the cheapest transportation for each location. Bus is usually the cheapest but also the slowest. It depends on your budget and the timing of your trip.

- **Climate**

If you are scared of coldness, this may be a good news to you because France is not that cold compared to Northern Europe in winter. Moreover, autumn is quite comfortable in France from September to Early November. It rarely snows in France before January. But one thing that you may have to be aware of is that it's very dry in winter.

- **Telecommunication**

Most of the exchange students including me subscribe to a monthly plan from a local service provider called Free Mobile. The plan is 19.99 Euro per month with unlimited 4G and 30 days 3GB data for each EU countries. It is quite convenient for exchange students, however, the signal of Free Mobile in my dormitory (Cergy Le Haut) is quite weak and unstable. You can terminate the contract anytime but only by sending a letter to them by mail. There is a Free Mobile Store in the shopping mall called 3 Fountains next to the school.

Items to bring

Documents:

- HK ID, Passport, Visa (Make a copy of them too)
- Admission letter of school
- Passport photos

Clothing:

- Winter clothes
- Summer clothes
- Thick jacket
- Scarf
- Beanie
- Gloves

Others:

- Backpack for school/travelling
- Laptop
- Portable charger
- Medicine

Hope this report do help you to know more information about exchange in ESSEC Business School and experience to travel in Europe. Feel free to contact me for more details by bmugexch@ust.hk.