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Major: Economics

Fall 2016 Exchange Semester Report - Erasmus University, the Netherlands

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Monthly Activity Log

Aug:

The first month of my exchange semester marked the beginning of an exciting chapter. As a new comer, an “outsider”, to the new country, everything and everyone I came across was interesting and exciting. Everything was an experience, and a process of understanding the culture of the city. I interacted with as many people as I could, explored as many places as I could, because being open-minded and understanding is the best, and the most direct way to adapt to the city. The excitement and growing that I gained from the first month was irreplaceable, and definitely set me off to feel more at home in this strange city.

Sep:

Classes started in September. I noticed that the most distinct difference between students at Erasmus University and HKUST is the way they approach studying, being a student, and finding out answers. Students at the host university were very outspoken, they were not afraid to ask questions in classes, to fight for the rights they have, and to challenge things in a direct manner. They stand up for themselves whenever necessary, and I have learned to believe that is essential in being a successful person.

Oct:

After two months of living in the city, I had, at this point, felt at home in the city. Going to school, meeting up with friends, biking around the city, and doing things in Rotterdam had slowly become a routine. Me and my friends, therefore, decided to explore other parts of Europe with the idea in mind that perhaps we could get ourselves motivated again. This had proved to be a valuable decision. We went to Copenhagen. Once again, in the course of 6 days, I opened myself up, experienced and did my best to understand a different culture, a different society. This entire trip reminded me again, who I really am, who I really want to become, what are the things that are important to me in my life, and what my priorities are. It is not the “roadblocks” in life that I should care about, it is the goals, the dreams, family, friends, and romance that makes one’s life complete and full, and these really are the only things I should care about.

Monthly Activity Log

Nov:

November was a very tough week, as I have previously mentioned in my exchange questionnaire. The entire month was a preparation for exams, at the same time a test and a life lesson for me. I learned that to not regret anything, it is important to make every single decision with the utmost respect and diligence.

Dec:

December was goodbye. December reminded me of every single great memory I had in Rotterdam. I didn't want to leave. I didn't want to say goodbye to my friends. As a solution, me and my friends did a road trip around the Netherlands, and explored the rest of Rotterdam that we had not explored and made the most out of our exchange semester experience for the remainder of it.

General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures:

HKUST and Erasmus University together provided necessary and convenient support for the visa procedures. The contact officer from Erasmus University provided a list of items and clear instructions on what I had to submit. I only, then, had to make an appointment for the rest of the process in advance with the Dutch consulate in Hong Kong.

Orientation Activities:

Erasmus University and student organisations that is associated with organised several introduction days and orientation day activities for a low cost. The one I participated in organised us into groups, gave us a brief introduction about Rotterdam and organised activities for us to complete as a group. This also ended with a session filled with beers and welcomes. It was a great way to introduce us to the city, the school, the culture of the school, and at the same time this allowed us to network, make friends, and build connections.

International Services and Activities:

Erasmus University has student organisations that organises trips to other European countries. Furthermore, I had met people from more countries than I had the entire year before that whilst in Erasmus University. It was a great learning experience to interact with people from different countries.

Accommodations:

Erasmus University offered a limited number of student housing and partners up with a few student accommodation providers. However, available spaces were soon filled up and it was difficult to find suitable accommodations through the other accommodation providers as they also face strong demand from other students. At the end, I had to rent an accommodation through airbnb. This was partly due to insufficient research on my part, however, further assistance on housing provision and options could also be exceedingly helpful.

Course Registration:

Erasmus University pre-registers exchange students in their courses before arrival, which made the process smooth and efficient. Adding, or dropping the courses, however, would be a difficult process and exchange students may find that preregistered courses for them may be different from what they had expected.

Teaching and Assessment Methods:

The main difference between teaching and assessment methods, or approach, rather, was the fact that professors at Erasmus encouraged questions, and required students to think independent and consider for themselves independently. What this means is that, on the one hand, they provide the essential knowledge for you to ask them questions or initiate discussions with. I really enjoyed the “hands-on” approach to education they have there.

Sports and Recreation Facilities:

Erasmus University had a gym in school. The majority of the students ride a bicycle to go to school as that is the easiest and cheapest means of commute.

General Exchange Information

Finance and Banking:

The expenses depend on how much students travel, and expect to spend on entertainment, shopping, and socialisation events. The main currency used is Euros, and it is very convenient to have a Dutch bank account as most shops accept maestro card (commonly used in the Netherlands) payments.

Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities:

Living near the area that the university is located at, and going to the myriad social events, and markets that Rotterdam has allowed me to make many new connections and friends with whom I am still in contact with.

Health and Safety:

Erasmus University has a physiotherapist in the gym on campus. The school website also lists out several General Practitioners near campus that students can go to. The appointment fee that I paid for a general practitioner appointment was approximately 27 euros.

Food:

I cooked the majority of my food as it was the cheapest option. There is an open market in Rotterdam easily accessible by bicycles and public transports on every Tuesdays and Saturdays that sold fresh ingredients for prices cheaper than that of supermarkets'.

Transportation:

The easiest and cheapest way to travel around Rotterdam is by bike. The biking lanes are safe, organised, and allow one to go almost everywhere in the city.

Climate:

The climate is humid and windy, it is recommended to bring plenty of windbreakers, coats, scarves, and gloves.

Communication:

There are computers in the school library if emails need to be sent or received. The primary channel of communication between students and school staff is email. SIM cards are easily accessible through network providers, e.g., vodafone, lebara.

Cautionary Measures:

Temperatures and weather change rapidly and unexpectedly in Rotterdam. The humidity and wind makes it even more unpredictable. It is important to bring plenty of warm clothing.

Essential Itinerary Checklist

Check	Checklist
	Essential Electronics (Laptop, Phone etc.)
	Chargers
	Adapters
	Winter Clothing (preferably some for rain and wind too)
	A few pieces of spring / summer clothing
	Towels and toiletries
	Bed, pillows, and duvet covers.
	Locker locks
	Stationery
	Extra copies of necessary documents for identification, visas, resident permits etc.
	Credit / Debit cards
	Emergency food

Useful Links and Contacts

Erasmus University International Office Website:
<https://www.eur.nl/english/essc/internationaloffice/>

Rotterdam Commodity Market Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/commoditymarketrotterdam/>

Google Maps