

EXCHANGE REPORT

Bocconi University

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Spring 2017

Part 1: Monthly Activity Log

January

Arriving in the middle of the month, I set my foot for the first time in Europe at Italy's oldest airport, Aeroporte Malpensa. While relieved after a 12 hour flight from Hong Kong, I still had a long way to go before I could reach my apartment, which was located only 30 minutes away from the city center via Ripamonti. Due to airport's long distance away from the city center, I had to take the Malpensa express to get to the central train station, Milano centrale. After the train, I still had to take a cab from the train station directly to my apartment, given the amount of luggage I had. All of these layover and connections initially overwhelmed me as the infrastructure in Milan was less integrated and developed as that in Hong Kong, which made it only more difficult for beginners to travel within the city efficiently.

After arriving at the apartment, I went about my day walking around the city and getting groceries, and of course, I had to get gelato. Groceries in Italy is cheap, especially for Cheese, Ham, pasta and sauces. Other than that walking around the city, discovering the parks and learning how to navigate through the city with my broken Italian took up most of my initial days in Milan, which altogether gave me a welcoming start for the exchange



February

As the school semester starts, the school had provided us with a 2 week Italian crash course that taught us many simple phrases and the general knowledge of the language. Specifically, the course was designed as if it was a language course for high school students, providing instructions of grammar and sentence structures as well as normal every day phrases and words, which were very useful for our daily lives in Italy. This was because not many people speak English and would prefer to speak Italian in many cases (more often in other parts of Italy than in Milan). Since there's not much coursework and stuff to study, it's best to participate these events earlier in the semester so you could leave time for travels and study later in the semester.



In terms of travel, I travelled to several cities in Italy during the month, namely Bologna and Venice, both of which had their own deviation in terms of culture, especially the food with Bologna often including more meat, broth and tortellini pasta in their meals, while Venice has more seafood and polenta. Even after you've seen the popular destinations, there's still much more to experience by simply walking in the many streets, parks and waterways in the city. However, it is important to note that the gondolas are fairly expensive (80 Euros an hour!) while the boats (think of buses but on the main river) are much cheaper in comparison, but technically you could walk throughout the main island without any transportation.

March

After the couple of short trips and the various orientation events hosted by the ESN at Bocconi, it was almost time for midterms. The midterms and the general teaching atmosphere at Bocconi tend to be more lax as compared to HKUST, with students having the option to be non-attending students, meaning that they don't have to be at class at all except for the exam sessions. This particularly benefitted me in my case as I decided, since I only had 1 midterm at the end of the entire midterm period, so I took a 10 day trip exploring the various major cities in Italy before my exam.



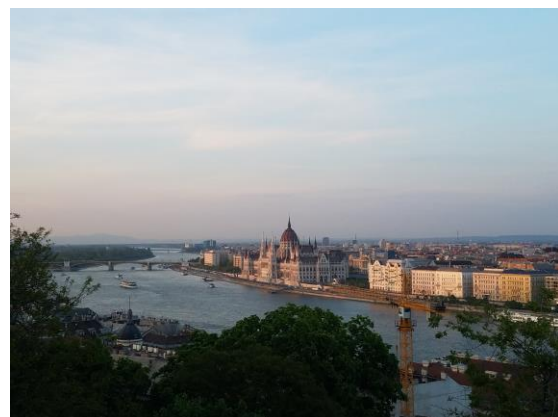
During the trip, I stayed at hostels and relied on my exchange buddies I met at HKUST prior to give me tips on where to get cheap food. Generally, prices overall lower as you go further south, this includes the possible spending for museums, food and transportation in general. Each city

has their own specialty dishes, such as Pesto from Genoa, Steaks and Paninis from Florence and of course, the margherita pizza from Naples, which is absolutely cheap and worth the hype as you can get the world's best pizza for only 3 euros! Other than food, the landscapes and the atmosphere changes as you travel further south, with the Southern Italians being much more passionate and lively, which coincidentally pairs fairly well with the famous chilli peppers from the southern region of Calabria.

April

I was getting more and more accustomed to the life in Europe and in Italy specifically, people were more relaxed and more passionate towards their relationships, either be for friends or for their loved ones. I've gotten very accustomed to the food and to the general atmosphere in the city. Milan, as I've gotten more understanding of, has been over the years trying to integrate the many communities that it currently has. From the original Italian residents to the large Chinese community and even to the recent wave of refugees that have arrived from Africa. I was fortunate to be able to observe these social phenomenas through a course about critical issues in the art market and in museums, wherein museums are starting to transform itself not only as a simple collection of the past identity a community but actually a continually transforming reflection on the community it is in. This means that rather than having museums boringly display photos of the past, they have regular events and recreational activities to attract local residents to play a more active part in curating the content within the museum. In a sense it acts as a mirror for the local residents to re-imagine their community as well as an opportunity for different groups of residents to communicate with each other. It was course of this experience that I do not regret taking courses outside of my major as I was able to gain valuable experience and perspectives that would never have gotten from my studies in finance.

May



During my exchange, I had taken some short trips outside of Italy, such as Berlin but I haven't really taken much time to travel to other countries, with the exception of May. During May I've taken upon myself to travel Northern and Eastern Europe. As it was approaching the final exam period, I've prepared and studied quite a bit to take the opportunity to travel more during the exam period. I've decided to start from Amsterdam for a few days and take a second flight to Prague and travel along the east, across several cities in neighboring countries such as Vienna and Budapest. The difference in culture, architecture was vast with the Dutch emphasizing a very open culture in terms of communication surrounding the idea of "telling the truth so that there's no secrets to hide". On other hand, people in Eastern Europe tends to be more quiet and reticent, which looking back to their respective histories, it is not hard to imagine the environment that had made them so.

June



After working hard at the exams at Bocconi, I've realized that my exchange program was almost done and I only had a few weeks left in Italy and in Europe in general. After all the trips I've done and the friends that I've met, I decided to take a rest and go through the next few days in the city with 1-2 short trips around. I've had dinner with the friends I've made, got some drinks at Navigli, went to some art galleries and exhibitions, ate a couple more gelatos and took my flight back to Hong Kong.

Overall, the exchange was wonderful as it gave me a lot of perspectives and insight towards how to live a good life and what I really wanted to do with mine in the future. For those who would be travelling to Europe, take it upon yourself to realize that the lifestyle in Europe is much more relaxed and open as compared to Hong Kong with people there much more accepting and gratuitous towards anything that happens along the way, so I hope that while you travel, be a bit more adventurous and try to take the paths less travelled and most importantly, have fun while doing so.

General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

I would recommend allocating plenty of time before you get to Italy for Visa procedures as it tends to take more than a month to finish the whole process. In order to arrange a meeting with the consulate you would first have to make an appointment at their website. The Italian consulate tends to be busy all the time so be sure to arrange it as early as possible.

The international Student Desk (ISD) at Bocconi or the Italian consulate website would provide you with a checklist online so you could make sure on what documents to bring on the day of your appointment.

It is advisable to bring your visa related original documents during your exchange as you might need them for further documentation during the initial weeks of your exchange (e.g. Residents Permit)

2) Orientation Activities

The International Student Desk (ISD) from the University will usually organize activities at the start of the semester for students to meet up and orientation. At the same time, they also have the helping desk which is available throughout the semester to assist students with various problems during their exchange ranging from visa issues to housing issues.

At the same time, A student organization called the ESN will also host a variety of orientation events at the start of the semester so there's plenty of opportunities to make new friends.

3) International Services & Activities

As mentioned previously, the ISD and ESN hosts various events and services catered to assisting student with various issues during their exchange as well as for regular social gatherings, the events could range from a simple game night to a trip to different parts of Italy. To join ESN activities, you have to acquire the ESN card which you purchase for around 10 euros at the campus. Keep in mind that the tickets for the trips usually sell out really quickly so remember to sign up asap.

4) Accommodation

It is very important to find an accommodation before you go to Italy as it could take months to find one. Bocconi only has a limited number of housing available for exchange students so if you want to make sure that you get it then you would have to apply very quickly once the application starts (like registering courses at UST) or else you would have to look for apartments yourself. Bocconi has a list of external websites which you could refer to for searching apartments or you could go to the Bocconi International Student Page as landlords and other exchange students would also be looking for renters and rooms for rent.

5) Courses Registration

There is usually a list of courses available for the semester and it comes a semester before so it's important to check what courses you have to apply for credit transfer and those for your interest. The timing of the courses aren't that important for your consideration as you could overlap your courses, just make sure that the courses you are overlapping don't take attendance, or else you would have to apply to become a non-attending student for one of them. Non-attending and attending students have different course curriculums (e.g. only exams vs projects+exams) so give it a thought before you pick which course to become a non-attending student in.

6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

The teaching methods at Bocconi are similar to HKUST with the exception of the method of assessment. The scores are out of 30 with the exam usually taking the most portions of the final grade, unless there are project required to be completed for the course. If that's the case then you could simply apply as a non-attending student to circumvent the project and simply take the exams, however the curriculum would be if you do so, so beware. If you fail in one of the exams, you could simply apply for the next period to retake the exam. If you think you will fail during the exam, you could tell the professor 15 minutes before the end that you wish to not count the results of your exam and apply for the next, this is more advisable if you really think that you will fail as you it is better to get a higher score next time than a lower one this time!

7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

The school only has a small gym that you have to pay membership fee for that I personally do not think is worth. It is more advisable to find a local gym instead as they might have more equipment than that at Bocconi.

8) Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

There are several banks you could open bank accounts for, such as Banca Popolare di Sondrio or Intesa San Paolo, both are fairly good to use you would be able to withdraw cash throughout Europe. However, during my exchange I simply used my Hang Seng Card to withdraw money as it has Unionpay, which has recently become more popular throughout Europe. Usually disregarding rent, you'd need about 400-800 euros for food, transportation and travels etc.

9) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There are plenty of student societies and events that you could participate. Most notably is the ESN student network in which they would host regular events and particularly a frenzy of clubbing nights and drinks in the first 2 weeks so there's plenty of opportunity to meet friends there. If you want to meet people who have similar interests as you do it is advisable to look for clubs at Bocconi as they do have promotional periods for different student clubs so it is also a good start. Another way would be the professional talks that the students clubs hosts regularly so if you don't want to join clubs because of the fixed schedule (assuming you would like to travel throughout Europe instead during the week), then these professional events would be another good alternative.

10) Health & Safety

Milan is a generally safe city with exception of pickpockets and theft, to which Milan has been a hot spot for these petty crimes. It is generally a good practice to always keep your stuff in check with your bags at the front, hidden neck wallets and waist pockets etc. At the same time, you have to be aware of your surroundings, especially when you're in the metro or any form of public transport. Stay by the walls when you are waiting for the train and away from the doors when you're on the train is a good way to avoid being mugged.

At the same time, be aware of the people trying to sell you random stuff when you're in tourists places like the Duomo. Try to ignore them and if they go slightly out of line such as being more aggressive, do not panic and simply tell them that you're not buying their stuff and leave asap.

11) Food

The food is generally amazing, with the pastas and pizzas and risotto etc. There are so many good places to get food around Milan, and a lot of restaurants around Bocconi have lunch sets

that usually cost around 10 Euros which are very worthwhile. This is because the usual way of dining consists an entre, a primo (Pasta, risottos etc), a secondo (meats and fishes) and a cup of coffee, but usually people just get the primo since the pasta is good enough to make your day.

12) Transportation

The company behind all the modes of transportation is called ATM and you could simply buy a ticket that will apply to the trains, busses and trams for a few options:

- An urban ticket (one-way)
 - You could ride any modes of transportation for 90 minutes
- A 24 hour pass/ A day pass
 - You could ride any modes of transportation for 24 hours

There are also 48 hours and week passes which technically works the same as above. The hours are counted once you activate the ticket via a machine. At the same time you could buy a student card, like the octopus card, for 22 euros a month (10 euros for starting fee) at the Duomo station.

13) Climate

The climate is generally cool and dry, with winters reaching below 0 and summers similar to that of Hong Kong – Hot and Humid. While it is best to bring clothing for both seasons. It's much simpler if you bring just for one season and prepare for winter and summer by buying clothes in the Factory outlets in Milan as you get both the quality and price there!

14) Communication

There are 4 major telecom companies – TIM, Vodafone, 3 and Wind.

Tim and Vodafone have infrastructure throughout Italy while 3 and Wind rent infrastructure in Italy and throughout Europe. So if you want a cheaper plan and you expect to stay in Italy longer, get TIM and Vodafone. If you are travelling outside of Italy more often, get a plan from 3 and Wind instead.

15) Cautionary measures

Beware of pickpockets around Milan and other cities in Europe and pay special attention when you're in public transportation. Generally people who get pickpocketed are those who don't so as long as you do, you don't have to worry as much. Just prepare.

Items to bring

- Clothes (depending on season)
- Adaptors
- Laptop
- Medicine
- Small suitcase/ bag for traveling
- Small amounts of Cash (euros)
- Cards (usually those with unionpay would generally work throughout Europe)

Useful Links and Contacts

Links for finding accommodations

<https://www.booking.com/>

<https://www.hotels.com/>

<http://www.hostelworld.com/>

Links for finding information for travelling

<http://tripadvisor.com/>

Links for searching cheap air tickets

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

<https://www.ryanair.com/>

<https://www.easyjet.com/en>

Link for travel advisory and other transportation options

<https://www.goeuro.com/>

<http://flixbus.com/>

<http://www.trenitalia.com/>

All the resources provided by the University is provided in the below link:

https://www.unibocconi.eu/wps/wcm/connect/Bocconi/SitoPubblico_EN/Navigation+Tree/Home/Campus+and+Services/Services/International+Relations/International+Students/International+Student+Desk/

The International Student Desk (ISD) is the Bocconi office responsible for exchange affairs. Please contact them for any questions regarding Bocconi at inexchange@unibocconi.it