



Exchange Report – Spring 2017

University of Innsbruck, Austria

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BBA in Information Systems

Monthly Activity Log

FEB

ROTTERDAM • HAMBURG • PARIS • BRUSSELS • AMSTERDAM

I arrived in Amsterdam on 8th February after finishing my winter job. It is recommended that you find a job in winter in Hong Kong, as most of the Year 3 exchange students will be gone and the competition is hence smaller. Since school starts in March, even if you arrive in Europe in February, you still have one month to travel around. Winter in the Netherlands is very cold. It was because there was a cold storm in January in Europe that many people died, even in the South of Italy, which is warmer supposedly. I lived at my friend's place in Rotterdam. We then went to Hamburg, Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam. It is better to visit Hamburg in spring or summer in my opinion, as it is a famous place for sailing. However, the sky is always grey. It is also very convenient to travel to Paris and Brussels from the Netherlands. I remember it was my first time to take a night bus from Rotterdam to Paris. I could not sleep very well while my friend could always on the contrary, but from that time onwards I got used to taking night buses or trains already. Paris is a rather dangerous place, so you better read more reviews online and prepare a belt wallet. Luckily, I did not lose anything.



Amsterdam canal



Boat House Museum



Amsterdam canal



Heineken experience

SALZBURG • STUBIER GLETSCHER

It took me 7 train journeys to arrive in Innsbruck from Rotterdam. However, I do not recommend this mode of transportation. Looking back, I think it is better to have arrived by plane to Innsbruck. It is because when you first arrive, your luggage must be very heavy. Hence, changing trains will be very painful. I think there are direct flights from Rotterdam, Amsterdam, London, Frankfurt, Vienna etc. to Innsbruck Airport. Most of them are provided by Transavia, Lufthansa and Austrian airlines (same company as Lufthansa). I did not consider the option of flying in the first place because I thought that my luggage is 22kg and I might need to pay extra cost for exceeding the luggage limit if I took flights. Looking back, I would rather pay the luggage fee instead.

I arrived on 28th February since the registration started on 1st March. However, I think it is unnecessary to arrive 1 day earlier if you are coming from Europe. Even though the coordinator Christoph or the dorms told us that they could provide accommodation 1 or 2 days earlier than the commencement of the contract date (ie 1st March), when I emailed both to confirm my stay on 28th February, they said it was not possible. Hence, I had to find my own youth hostel in Innsbruck.

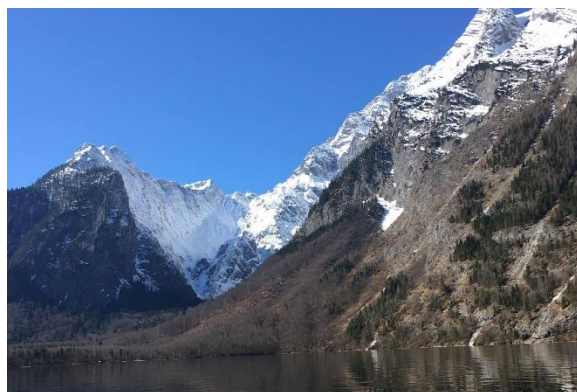
Since there were a lot of registrations, I only travelled to Salzburg and learned skiing in Stubier Gletscher (means Glacier in English).



Hohenwerfen Castle



Skiing



Königsee



Salzburg

NEUSCHWANSTEIN • ZURICH • LUZERN • MOUNT RIGI • INTERLAKEN • GOLDEN PASS LINE • LAUSANNE • LEYSIN • GENEVA • LUGANO • MILAN • FLORENCE • VERONA • VENICE

My friend visited me from Rotterdam and he took a plane and arrived directly at Innsbruck airport, which was only a 3-minute walk from my dorm. We explored Innsbruck together by buying an Innsbruck card for 96 hours. We went to Nordkette (Nord means north, Kette means mountain range), Hofburg, Swarovski crystal world, the clock tower, Hall in Tirol, Golden Roof, Schloss Ambras, Alpen Zoo, Bergisel (ski jump), sightseer bus and bike rental. It was quite surprising for me that Innsbruck was such an important place back in time. If you want to see Nordkette in full white color, it is better to go in March because there was only a few snow left in early April. It is the steepest skiing slope in Europe. There is also a bar in an icehouse called Cloud9, which was quite unique.

The Easter holiday was 2+ weeks, so I went to my first solo travelling in Switzerland and Italy to visit my friends studying there. However, I do not recommend going to Italy during Easter holidays, because it was so packed that I thought I was in Hong Kong. Swiss Travel Pass is a must to have, because a single journey from Zurich to Geneva can cost you CHF 90 already. Then, you can go to Italy via Lugano. It is even better if you use the Travel Pass to go up on the mountains or take boat trips, because then you can fully utilize the Pass. Personally, I do not recommend you go to Jungfrauoch. It is because even with the Pass, you need to pay CHF 130 more. Also, from the pictures online, I think that it is just an ordinary snowy mountain that is similar to many mountains in Austria. It is because the Swiss are better marketers than Austrians. They framed it as 'The Top of Europe', attracting many visitors who in general, do not consider Austria as a travel destination among other European countries. In fact, Austria also has its own mountain ranges with the same spectacular view. When I came back from Venice on 20th April, it was still snowing in Innsbruck.



Neuschwanstein Castle



Milan



Venice Canal



Mount Rigi, Switzerland

MAY

MEMMINGEN • LONDON • BUDAPEST • BRATISLAVA • VIENNA • MUNICH • FRANKFURT • MANNHEIM • MUNICH • SALZBURG • LJUBLJANA • BLED • ZAGREB • PLITVICE LAKES • MUNICH

I finally found a way to take Ryan air flights: taking Flixbus to Memmingen ZOB (bus station) in Germany and fly from Memmingen Airport. At first, I did not do enough research as I planned the trip only a few days before after a hectic week. To save money, I walked 5km for 1 hour with my luggage from the bus station to the airport since I briefly read that there is a shuttle bus costing 10 Euros. Also, Memmingen is not a tourist place at all, so there is a lack of information. However, I later realized that 10 Euros is for the whole journey from Munich to Memmingen airport. The journey from the bus station to the airport was only around 3 Euros. There was really nothing to see in Memmingen, but the only perk was that the flight to London was 40 Euros round trip. I love London very much that I felt that I did not spend enough time there. Then, I took a Flixbus from Innsbruck to Budapest costing only 39 Euros, but there was a story behind it. Usually, if a Flixbus is late, they will send you a text message about the delay. However that time, they did not. So, I waited at the bus stop for more than an hour at 3am in cold weather on my own. I think in this kind of situation, all you need is your trust that the bus will come. Finally, the bus really came.

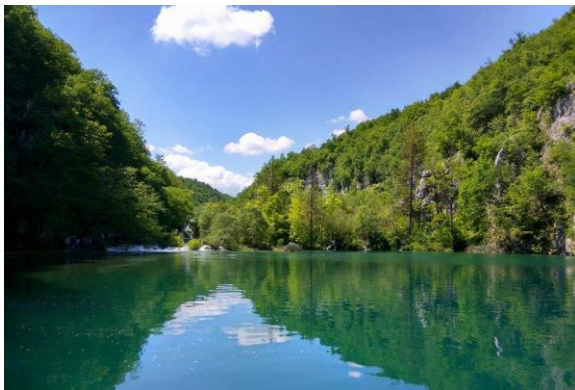
In mid-May, my mom came to visit me and we travelled around in Germany, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia and France. Personally, I think the Plitvice Lakes Park was not as impressive as I thought, in some areas it even looks like reservoirs in Hong Kong. However, I heard that cities further down Croatia like Dubrovnik and Split are stunning, but I did not have time to go. The weather in Plitvice Lakes was really good in May that we could even wear a goose feather jacket while hiking, but do not go there before April because it will be very cold.



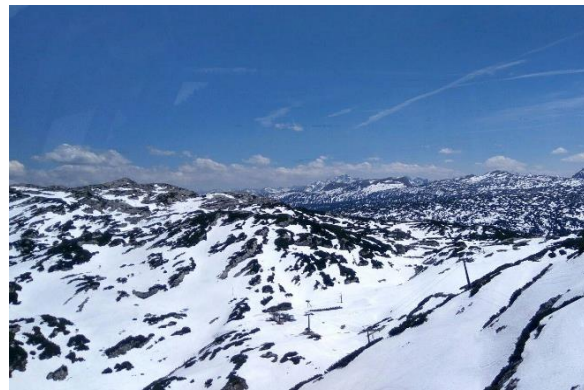
Plitvice Lakes



Lake Bled



Plitvice Lakes



Five Fingers Attraction in Salzburg

JUN

STRASBOURG • REIMS • PARIS • GRAZ • BUDAPEST • BELGRADE • SOFIA • ISTANBUL •
BUCHAREST • VIENNA • ZURICH

Before my mom left in Paris, we went to some cities like Strasbourg and Reims in France. Since I have many friends from different parts of France, I always feel that I have not explored France enough. Strasbourg is the border city of Germany and France, which offers an interesting mix of the French and the German culture. During this exchange, I discovered many border cities and regions like Strasbourg, South Tyrol (Innsbruck is in North Tyrol), Austrian-Swiss region, Geneva and Bratislava. People in South Tyrol can speak German and Italian, but their German accent is considered as hard to understand. People from the Austrian-Swiss region are also the same, and their German is even harder to understand. People living in the border regions are usually the nicest and have a higher sense of cultural differences among people, which is quite different compared to, for example, the Parisians.

Reims is a city of Champagnes. I did not know this city before my friend exchanges there. We visited the Pommery Champagne House because it was the nearest, but sooner realized that it is one of the most prominent Champagne houses in the world and is the origin of the modern Champagne developed by Lady Pommery.

The highlight of this month was the trip to Turkey. I started my journey in Innsbruck and took trains all the way down. To make my trip shorter, I stopped in Budapest, Belgrade, Sofia, Istanbul, Bucharest and Vienna. If you wish to travel by train to Turkey, it is better to do it in June because the train of

Sofia-Istanbul and Istanbul-Bucharest starts operating in early June. It was quite an experience because you will spend 24 hours on a train. Sometimes, you will find yourself being the only 1 of the 2 passengers of the whole cart and can have the experience of sleeping in a 'private' coach. When you reach the Turkey border, you need to get off from the train and do the passport check in the middle of the night. I moved out from my dorm on 28th June.



Boat trip to the Black Sea



New Mosque in Istanbul



Galata Tower in Istanbul



Strasbourg

JUL

GENEVA • LUZERN • BERN • VIENNA • TRENTO • ROVERETO • PRAGUE • CESKY KRUMLOV • CESKE BUDEJOVICE • MUNICH

As I did not want to extend my dorm contract and pay the rent for July, I put my luggage at my friend's place and went travelling before the exam as I only had 1. My aunt visited me and we went travelling in Switzerland. Later, I went to places in South Tyrol like Trento and Rovereto to see the place where my local friends are from. I went back to live in Innsbruck for 2 days before the exam with a friend in an Airbnb apartment. I think it is the best not to visit those places near you at the beginning of your exchange and leave them in the end (I visited Vienna, South Tyrol and Munich in the last month of my exchange, as my previous visits were only for short stays or bus transfers). I have not really been to Munich before, so I stayed there for 1 day and left via Munich airport on 18th Jul. I had a stopover in Beijing so I ate Peking Duck before I left.



Vienna at night



Golden Hall Vienna



Schönbrunn Palace



Horse riding experience in Czech Republic



Cesky Krumlov



Zell Am See near Innsbruck

TIPS

- It is important that you read/browse through all the courses in the catalogue, as the course Intercultural Communications was transferred only as a common course by previous exchange students. However, I decided to try to submit it as a Marketing elective, in which I succeeded.
- If your glasses are broken here, you can buy a pair at Fielmann, which was only under 50 Euros.
- If your mobile phone is broken here, you should buy a new one outside Innsbruck because buying here is very expensive (100 Euros for a second-hand iPhone 4). I bought one in the Netherlands for 70 Euros.
- It is better to go skiing during March-April, but you can still ski till the middle of June.
- If you want the Intercultural Communications textbook (required), please ask me.
- During 8pm to 4am, there is a service called Frauen taxi which you can go anywhere for 5 Euros only.

Visa Procedures

The visa procedures are not complicated as compared to applying US visas. Also, the environment is friendlier compared to the US Embassy. If you are on a hurry on the day of applying visa, make sure you arrive at 8:30-8:45 before the opening at 9am, so that you can be the first in the queue. It is required to have accommodation for the whole period and the return flight booked. Make sure you apply your visa 3 weeks before, as it is possible that it coincides with the Lunar New Year holiday. Once you have your visa granted, you do not need to bring the whole set of documents to Austria. My advice is to stay as long as you can, because exchange may be the only time in your life that can be so carefree.

Documents required:

Application form, One passport-size photo, Valid passport, HKID card, HK Student Card, Birth certificate, Proof of financial means of your parents (recent bank statement), Supporting letter from HKUST, Letter of Acceptance from University of Innsbruck, Proof of Accommodation (rental contract), Flight ticket (round trip), Travel Insurance

One extra set of copy is also needed.

International Services & Activities

Make sure you join the ESN. If there is an overnight trip to live in an alm (a wooden house on the mountain), you should sign up as early as you can because there are only 5 places. ESN organizes activities every month. It is a very good platform to meet new friends. I remember my team won the city hunt and got 50 Euros coupon for beers. If you wish to, you can also bring a Hong Kong flag and some Hong Kong food to attend the International Party.

Accommodation

The only hostel is called Jugendherberge, which locates at the far end of the city. It was cold and creepy. Luckily, my buddy drove me there when I arrived at night. At first, I was contented with this hostel because I felt that 27 Euros was reasonable, but my buddy told me that 27 Euros are considered as expensive in this kind of hostel with dim light and no elevators. Hence, I recommend that you either take a direct night train from somewhere else and arrive in the morning in Innsbruck, or you book a hostel in Munich. You can then take a Flixbus for 2 hours in the morning, so that you can do the registration in the afternoon. Remember, it is important to arrive in the morning if you want to skip one night in Innsbruck, or else everything will be closed. Their office hours are usually till 3pm. Also, if you want to enjoy lower prices in Munich hostels, you should book at least 1 month earlier. (The price difference can be as huge as $32-15=17$ Euros)

I live in Panorama. When I first moved in, it was like a ghost town and I was afraid that it would remain the same for the rest of the half year. It got better later and I made some friends (Local friends like to live there). If you like quiet, I recommend you live in this dorm. Or else, I cannot see any benefit for living here because: it has no night bus to go back, it is quiet, there is no one to help and it is far away from the city centre. I would recommend you live in Hottinger Au if you are outgoing or the Hauptbahnhof (main station) if you travel a lot. Of course, there are also downsides for these 2 dorms.

Hottinger Au can be really noisy because there are parties every night and the kitchen is dirty and full of empty wine bottles, while the Hauptbahnhof can be a bit more dangerous because there are often many people wandering around Hauptbahnhof with unknown intentions.

Courses Registration

The course registration system is different from HKUST. As my buddy has exchanged in HKUST, she said it is more complicated. However, if you have listened to Christoph's introduction, everything will become clearer. We have double points than normal students (2000 points), so it is not difficult to get in a course at all. However, sometimes courses will be clashed and you cannot take both under certain circumstances. Be sure you prepare your schedule well as there will be a session discussing your own class schedule. If you are using iPhones/Mac Books, you can import the calendar. If not (like me), you can type your schedule on a word document. If you can register 2 courses with some overlaps which is allowed under certain circumstances (you will know what I mean), make sure you write an email to professors and tell them in advance. This is considered as basic etiquette in Austria.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

The teaching and assessment methods are similar to HKUST. However, most of my friends exchanging in Europe would agree that the amount of readings and academic writing each week is much higher than in UST. Be sure that you know how to do proper citation. The research paper database in UST is very useful, because most of your classmates do not have such a comprehensive database in their home universities.

Also, the attendance requirement is very strict for PS components. You can only miss one class, or else you will get a fail grade. For VO components, it is not compulsory to attend, but I still recommend you go unless you are very confident that you can pass the course.

Classes are small with only around 20 people. Participation is needed, but they will not quantify it as marks like UST. Below are the courses my friends/I took. Although some of them did not appear in the course equivalence database because I did not take some of them in the end, I have consulted the credit transfer department and the course equivalence to UST courses is valid.

Course	Instructor	Work-load (/5)	Difficulty (/5)	Course in UST	Comments
124081 Joint Study - German as a Foreign Language I (partly A1)	Hohenauer-Todd T.	1	1	LANG 1320	If you have taken some German before, this course should not be difficult at all. You can only miss 3 lessons. The atmosphere was good and the teacher was very encouraging. It was not difficult to get the highest grade.
433023-24 International Management: International Human	Auer M., Marek D., Mölk A.	3	3	MGMT 4000-Level (4 credits)	We only needed to attend lessons on Mondays. The assignments included a presentation and a 5-page written research report per person. The difficult point in this course was that the terms can be easily mixed up and

Resource Management					some time was needed to differentiate them all. (e.g. Geocentric, Ethnocentric)
434450-51 International Management: Intercultural Communication	Kitzelm ann E.	3-5	2	MARK 4000-Level Special Topics (4-5 credits)	We only needed to hand in a weekly group assignment with some research. However, when it approached the end, we needed to write a 12-16-page country profile and additional assignment if we wished to receive 10 ECTs in total, so the workload was huge at the end of the semester. There was a refugee project which was not compulsory if we wrote reports instead.
434455-56 International Management: International Marketing	Mentz J.	5	3	MARK 4000-Level (4 credits)	This was a block course taught by a professor outside. The schedule was packed that lectures were from 9-6 every day in two weeks. In the end, the professor provided many breaks so as to make the lessons shorter, but please be, at least, mentally prepared that the whole course is 2-3 weeks long. Assignments included a mid-term, case studies presentations and a takeaway 72-hour final exam.
436210-11 Strategy-, Information- and Value-Creation-Processes	Hemetsberger A., Wege rer P., Pirker C.	4	3-4	MARK 4000-Level (4 credits)	The course was supervised by a top Marketing professor, so the content and the quality was better organized. However, there were many ways of assessment like assignments, case studies, presentations and research papers regularly. This was the only course that local students were of the most of the class.
436236-37 International Management: Corporate Strategy and Sustainability	Neumann K.	4	3	MGMT 3170 (3 credits)	The professor was appointed to the university lately. She was reasonably demanding, at the same time, flexible. Assignments included weekly readings, case studies and final paper with 3000 words per group. The whole course finished within 1-1.5 months.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

You can join some sports class by Sports University (same university as Innsbruck University) at <https://usi.uibk.ac.at/usi/page>. Please note that the registration usually ends early (before 5th March). Sometimes, they offer interesting courses like snowshoeing, skiing, sailing in Italy and mountain biking. I was interested in all of these but could not join because my classes clashed with their courses.

In winter, Innsbruck is suitable for all kinds of winter sports like skiing, snowshoeing, sledding and snowboarding. In summer, you can try mountain biking, hiking and jogging.

Most of your local classmates will be skiers or even skiing teachers. I haven't skied before, but with the encouragement of my buddy, I started this sport. It is recommended that you take courses for 3+ days

consecutively, or else you will easily forget the skills. I took a 5-day course and managed to ski. It was worth it because the tuition was only around HKD\$100 per hour if you searched for cheap ski schools thoroughly. Also, if you buy a ski pass for over 6 days, the average entrance fee is cheaper. You can enjoy discounts only as a local resident, but not as a student. So, if you bring friends over who are exchanging in another country, they cannot enjoy the discount. Some of the other exchange students refused to attend lessons because they think it was expensive, but if you compare it with learning piano or private tutoring lessons in Hong Kong, which can easily cost HKD\$200 per hour, the price is economical. Also, learning with teachers is better ski with a good posture to prevent injury.

Some of the exchange students bought cheap skiing equipment from flea markets, but I do not recommend that because usually those are broken or do not fit you. For each person, the sizes of shoes, lengths of ski poles and skis are different depending on your height. Also, I do not recommend you rent in Intersport shops on the mountain because it is really expensive (40 Euros) for just 1 day. You should find a cheaper shop (can be as cheap as 10 Euros per day for the whole set) and bring the equipment with you on the bus. There are some paid lockers in the Intersport shop that costs only HKD\$80 per day for ski shoes (you can also put the helmet inside together for HKD\$40), ski poles and skis (together for HKD\$40). I think this is worth it or else you would waste your strength carrying them for more than an hour before you start skiing. You should also bring water proof jacket, pants, gloves and sunglasses so that you can save those rental fees. (Must be water proof) Usually, only helmet, ski poles, shoes and skis are needed to rent.

Finance & Banking

I use Sparkasse (also known as Erste Bank, but it is different from the Sparkasse Bank in Germany). I would recommend Sparkasse, Bank of Austria or Raiffeisen because you can take out Euros in all ATMs in Europe for free. These 3 banks offer free accounts for students. One thing to note is that when you open the bank account, you need to have a local mobile phone number, as they will send you SMS when you do online transactions. Also, one obstacle I faced was that they insist me to provide a tax number or account, which I do not have. You just need to tell them honestly and they will still open the account for you.

Expenses

Item	HKD	EUR
Air tickets	4655	
Daily expenses		1500
Travelling (43 cities)		5400
Dorm 392*4		1568
Transportation in Innsbruck		130
Total		HKD \$76000

I did the money exchange when the rate was 8.3. Remember to do it when it is low enough, as I missed the chance when it was 8.1.

Health & Safety

Austria is very safe. Compared to my friends exchanging in France, where they would normally be back home at 7pm, you can walk alone in the middle of the night safely. Do have the mental preparation that there are only a few people on the streets at night at around 7-8pm. If you need to see a doctor or dentist, just tell Christoph and he can arrange an appointment for you.

Transportation

I recommend buying the semester ticket (129.5 Euros) if you live in Panorama. It is quite economical because it is only around HKD\$1000 per semester, while my travelling expenses are HKD\$500 per month if you think in this way. You can also use it to have some bus tours when you have time. If you live in Hottinger Au or Hauptbahnhof, then you may not need it. However, most of the time you need to walk.

Communication

The plan by Hofer supermarket is the most economical. The sim card is 2 Euros and 1GB of data is 10 Euros. You can top-up the account either by buying a 'Ladebon' (top-up card) from Hofer supermarket or online once you have the sim card. There is no length limit on using the sim card. You can buy at the Hofer supermarket.

Items to bring

- Acceptance Letter
- Adaptors (better with round shapes, or else cannot fit)
- Backpack
- Battery, USB
- Bed and pillow sheets (If you do not want to buy here)
- Body lotion and lipstick
- Camera
- Cash, ATM card, credit card
- Charger
- Clock (If you cannot manage your time well without a clock)
- Copies of passport and Visa
- Cup noodles or rice (Expensive to buy here in the Asian Market near main station)
- Cutlery (If you do not want to buy here)

- Folder
- Hairdryer
- Hat
- Hiking shoes (If you like hiking)
- Hong Kong flag and food
- Locks (I brought 2: 1 for my backpack, 1 for my suitcase)
- Mainland China Permit and Reminbi (If you need to switch planes in China)
- Medicine
- Mobile Phone and a spare one
- Notebook
- Passport and HKID
- Rubber bands and paper clips (Very important, as I always use them in Hong Kong)
- Seasoning (a little bit of salt, sugar and soya sauce)
- Ski jackets, pants, gloves and sunglasses
- Snacks (You still have something to eat when the supermarkets are closed)
- Stationery
- Table lamp (If you do not want to buy here)
- Umbrella
- Water bottle (for both warm and cold water) and kettle

Useful Links and Contacts

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

<https://ifuonline.uibk.ac.at/> For grades, course bookings and exam registration)

https://web-mail.uibk.ac.at/imp/login.php?new_lang=en_GB (For mail)

<http://innsbruck.esnaustria.org/> (Useful information about Innsbruck)

If more information is needed, get my contact from SBM Exchange Team by emailing at bmugexch@ust.hk.