



MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

EXCHANGE REPORT

SPRING 2017

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MONTHLY ACTIVITY LOG

January

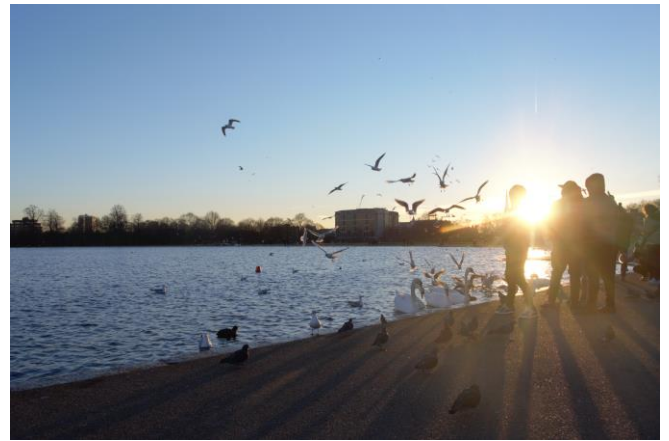
London | Brighton

As school starts in February and I had nothing else to do in Hong Kong, I went to UK for travelling before heading to the Netherlands. That was my first time in UK and I was so excited to see all the famous attractions in London like the Big Ben, Tower Bridge and British Museum. I also tried many of the famous restaurants like Burger & Lobster and Flat Iron, as well as the street food in Borough Market. London is a must-go if you haven't been there before.

After spending 1 week there I went to Brighton. It is a lovely small city along the sea with great seafood. I was able to get free accommodation in both places because of my friends studying there, a good trick that can help save you some money. At the end of the month I flew from London to Amsterdam to officially kick off my exchange journey.



Westminster Bridge, London



Kensington Gardens, London

February

Brussels | Bruges | Amsterdam | Munich

School started in early February after two days of orientation. I met most of the new friends during this month through orientation, the Buddy programme, and lessons. This is also the time when I started to adapt to the learning system in this school. Since I only enrolled 1 course for Period 4, I had enough time spared for travelling and exploring the city of Maastricht. Together with other exchange-mates from HKUST, I went to Belgium for a weekend trip. We spent a day in Brussels and another day in Bruges. The waffles, beer and fries in Brussels were wonderful. As a beer lover, I bought some beer glasses back to Hong Kong. Bruges is a small town with well-preserved architecture from the medieval ages. We joined a free city tour to learn about the history and enjoyed 3 big pots of mussels for lunch. They cook mussels with curry, garlic or white wine there, and it was super delicious, a must-try.

The week after the Belgium trip I went to Amsterdam with my friend who went to exchange in France. We went to the famous attractions of Sex Museum, Red Light District and Heineken Experience. The Netherlands is one of the freest countries in the world, and Amsterdam is the essence of Holland. If you are coming to Maastricht for exchange, do spare some time to visit Amsterdam as it is quite different from Maastricht, and there are so many interesting things to explore in the capital.

Later in the month came the Carnival. It is an annual festival in the southern part of Netherlands, and you can find parties everywhere during the week in big southern cities like Eindhoven and Maastricht. People all dress up crazy and drink a lot to celebrate it. However, instead of staying in Maastricht, I went to Munich to catch up with a friend I met last semester during his exchange in HKUST.

It was really fun to exchange our roles of visitor and local in that way and let him bring me around the city, a kind of hospitality I provided him back in Hong Kong. We didn't go to the prestigious Neuschwanstein Castle as I have been there before. Instead, we went to the mountainous region in Garmisch-Partenkirchen which is near the Alps and did a short hike up the snow-

capped hills. The scenery was amazing and we enjoyed a local Apple Strudel and a Bavarian beer at the peak despite the coldness. We spent the rest of the time exploring the city of Munich.



Delirium Café, Brussels



Amsterdam

March

Reykjavik | Many spots in Iceland | Berlin | Cologne | Paris | Lille

I went to Iceland in the first week of March during the Carnival holiday. It was such a dream come true to be able to visit the place. The scenery in Iceland looked like nothing I had ever seen before, it felt like standing on another planet. Although the expense in Iceland was extremely high and it was freezing every day, it totally counts and I was also fortunate enough to witness the Northern Light. Do remember to book everything well in advance if you are planning to travel there, as flight and accommodation prices could go up quickly, and a lot.

During the month, I went to 2 German cities – Berlin and Cologne separately. Cologne is a beautiful city and it is not far from Maastricht. The Köln Dom (Cathedral of Cologne) is magnificent and you can walk all the stairs up to the top to get a bird eye view of the city with an affordable student fare. The chocolate museum of Lindt is also interesting if you are a chocolate lover. I also tried the roasted pig knuckle there and it couldn't be more delicious. Berlin being the capital of Germany is a blend of old and new. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, DDR Museum (a museum of Cold War history), Brandenburg Gate and Berlin Wall are all famous attractions I went to, and they all didn't disappoint me.

During the month I have also been to France. Although I have been to Paris before, it still impressed me a lot when I visited the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and Palace of Versailles again. By the way European students get free entry to many attractions in France including the Palace of Versailles so don't miss the chance!

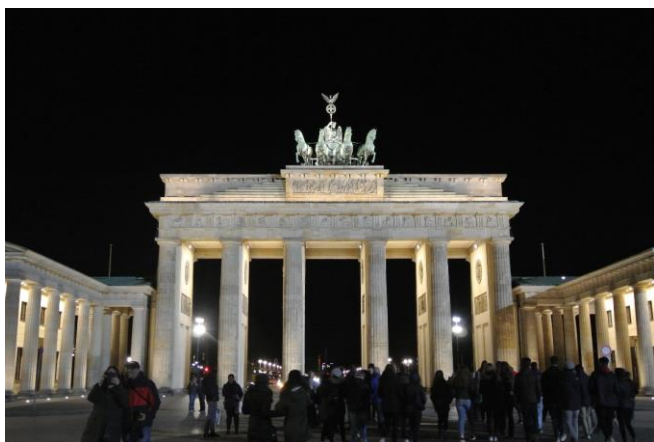
March was also a busy month for studies as there were a lot of assignments and projects. Luckily I only had 1 course but still we had project meetings few times a week, meaning that you would have to plan your schedule well.



Iceland



Northern Light in Iceland



Brandenburg Gate, Berlin



The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin



Köln Dom (view at the top), Cologne



The Louvre, Paris

April

Barcelona | Budapest | Vienna | Salzburg | Hallstatt | Cesky Krumlov | Prague | Lisse (Keukenhof)

The first week of April was the exam period. After my only exam on Apr 7, my 10-day period break started and I went to Barcelona. It was a city with a strong spirit and very good climate. According to my friend who went exchange there, only 1 or 2 days out of a whole month are rainy in general. The most unforgettable experience I gained there was to have watched a live match of FC Barcelona at Camp Nou Stadium. No words can describe my excitement of watching the real Messi scoring at the match.

After my Barcelona trip I went to Central Europe visiting multiple cities. Particularly I recommend Budapest as the prices were really affordable and the attractions were all very nice photo-taking spots. I visited the Beethoven museum in Vienna and the most famous café in the city. Salzburg and Hallstatt are also spectacular mountain and lake side cities. Cesky Krumlov is a tiny fairy tale town in Czech Republic and Prague is great for its food and bars.

In late April school started again and this time I enrolled 2 courses so there was more workload. During the weekend, I went to visit the Keukenhof in Lisse. It is the most famous tulip garden in the Netherlands, and every year between March and May visitors from all over the world come to appreciate the vast fields of colourful tulips, the national flower of the Netherlands, so don't miss it!



Camp Nou Stadium, Barcelona



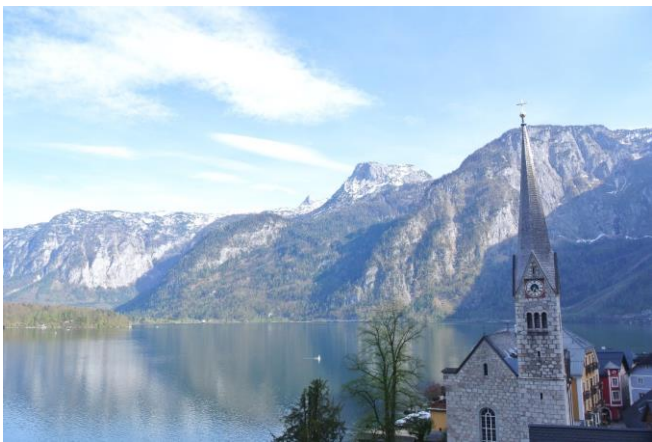
Hungarian Parliament Building, Budapest



Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna



Salzburg



Hallstatt



Cesky Krumlov



Prague



Keukenhof, Lisse

May

Rimini | San Marino | Bologna | Krakow | Zaanse Schans

The first week of May was holiday again so I went to Italy for solo travelling. I was a bit tired of visiting major cities and capitals so I picked some small cities this time. Rimini is the biggest beach city in Italy for summer vacations but it was not yet summer so it was very quiet without many tourists. I really enjoyed walking along the long beach and taking photos there. Near Rimini is San Marino, the third smallest country in Europe. It is located at the top of a hill and it is the perfect place for getting a bird-eye view of Italy. The historic towers there were also amazing and I did a short hike there to watch the sunset. Afterwards I went to Bologna, which is famous for its food. It is an old city with its historic architecture well preserved. I tried the local Cappuccino, Tortellini Bolognese (Italian style small wontons) and Mortadella (a kind of ham sandwich) there and they were all very satisfying.

Later, I went to Krakow in Poland. Although I haven't been to Warsaw, Krakow impressed me as a very prosperous city with a sense of peace and happiness. I went to the Auschwitz concentration camp nearby and learned an important and unforgettable lesson of Nazi history, highly recommended. I also joined a tour to a salt mine near Krakow where I got to walk down to the huge underground salt mine and admire the amazing and complex structures inside.

During most of the time in May I was busy in doing projects and preparing for lessons so there was not much travelling. However, that also allowed me to stay in the Netherlands and explore nearby places like the city of Maastricht, Roermond Designer Outlet and Zaanse Schans. Zaanse Schans is a place north of Amsterdam and famous for its windmill village. This is where you will find the typical scenery on a Dutch postcard, with around 10 windmills at one spot. It is a relatively comprehensive tourist spot and I was able to buy some great souvenirs there.



The beach in Rimini



A random street in Rimini



San Marino



Zaanse Schans



Bologna



Auschwitz concentration camp

June

Many spots in Malta | Marseille | Toulouse | Bordeaux

It was exam week again in June, and the time for farewell with the friends I made here. Before exams, I went to Malta, a Mediterranean country. It was summer time and Malta is one of the best places to enjoy the beach and sunshine. During the 4 days spent there, I went to the city centre of Valletta, the Gozo and Comino islands, and the Dingli Cliffs. I highly recommend the Comino Island, where a blue lagoon is located and you will fall in love with it if you love sunbathing and swimming. Along the hiking track at Dingli is the wonderful view of the Mediterranean Sea and the Dingli Cliffs. I also visited the Hagar Qim, historic temples built by people 5000 years ago.

I concluded my exchange journey in France, visiting the southern cities this time. Marseille is the second largest city of France but it is very different from Paris. The sunshine and coastal view there was like nowhere else. Make sure you visit the Old Port, Basilique Notre-Dame de la Garde and Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations if you go to Marseille. At the end I went to Bordeaux, the heaven for wine lovers. I joined a wine tasting tour to some chateau in the prestigious wine region of St Emilion. Besides, the Arcachon Bay nearby is a famous place for oysters and I tried some of them in Bordeaux. The gastronomy there is simply incredible. Finally, I took one of the best photos of my exchange at the Le Miroir d'eau (Water Mirror), a must-go in Bordeaux.

I ended my half-year exchange and left Europe on Jun 15 to settle down in Hong Kong before starting my summer internship.



Comino Island, Malta



Malta



Old Port, Marseille



Le Miroir d'eau, Bordeaux



GENERAL EXCHANGE INFORMATION

Visa procedures

The visa office of UM helps exchange students apply for visa. You will receive all the necessary information and instructions from the office so simply follow them and make sure you submit the documents and visit the Dutch embassy on schedule. You are advised to act promptly once received the instructions as it takes time to complete all procedures, especially if you are planning to leave Hong Kong early like me.

Orientation activities

The official orientation lasted for 2 days. It mainly consists of presentations by the school, campus and city tours and sample sessions of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) system used in UM. Attendance is compulsory.

International services & activities

The ISN Maastricht hosts most of the international activities. Many of the exchange students register for an ESN Card, an international student card offering discounts for social events for international students, as well as corporate-sponsored discounts like Ryanair (budget airline) and McDonalds. You can do the registration at ISN office, which is conveniently located at G/F of the student dormitory, the ESN card costs EUR 19.5.

Personally I recommend you to get an ESN Card as a supplement to your UM student card because a common problem I encountered when traveling was that the UM student card was often not accepted as a valid card for student price reduction since there is no expiry date on it. For many times I was granted the discount only after showing the ESN card as it is an international student card.

Accommodations

Most of the exchange students live at the main UM guesthouse. There are 3 buildings there namely M-Building, P-Building and C-Building, all at the same spot and connected. I lived at the M-Building and would highly recommend it as it was newly renovated. It is also cheaper by registering at www.sshxl.nl without the registration fee that you would have to pay otherwise through the officially suggested site of www.maastrichthousing.nl.

The SSH Housing Office is just located at 2/F of M-Building and you can always seek assistance there as a resident of M-Building.

Course registration

You will receive all the necessary information and instructions regarding course registration before semester starts. There is no need to worry about not being able to enrol a class as there is no pre-set class size limit and quota. Therefore just check the course information online and decide on which courses you would like to take and enrol before the deadline.

One point to note is that there is no add-drop period in UM and once the enrolment period passed, it could be very difficult to drop a course so make sure you understand the requirements before enrolling a course. Also, you can only take a maximum of 2 courses per period. Therefore for most of us who study Period 4 and 5 but not 6 in spring semester, the maximum number of courses you can take is 4, which is less than the normal study load in HKUST.

Teaching & assessment methods

UM adopts the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) system. Basically, under this system there will be fewer lectures and more class discussions. Most classes are hosted in the form of a tutorial where students prepare for the materials (mainly textbook, readings and cases) before class and engage in discussions during class. Discussions are facilitated by a tutor, who is also the one to grade you. In every course you are usually required to host 1 or 2 PBL sessions, each lasts for 2 hours, meaning that you would have to prepare for a 2-hour presentation/discussion plan and lead other students in discussing the topic.

PBL can be a bit challenging especially for Asian students like us to adopt at first. My advice is that make sure you read through all the materials before each discussion and don't be afraid to engage in discussions. In many discussions there is no right or wrong answer so feel free to express your viewpoints even if they sound silly. The tutor will also observe whether you are proactive enough in determining your participation grade. If you are the one to host the PBL session, make sure you discuss

with your hosting teammate(s) and prepare for slides and other facilitating materials enough for the whole session in advance, and engage the class more during the PBL to create interactions.

The grading system of UM basically consists of a scale from 0 to 10. The passing score is 5.5. Most students aim for a 7.5 to 9 as a good grade, don't expect more than 9 as sometimes professors/tutors just don't give that to anyone in the class. In general it is not very difficult to get a pass but requirements differ among courses so make sure you understand them thoroughly. In many cases, you have to pass EACH component of the grade to pass the course, meaning that you would still fail if you score full mark in examinations but fail in participation.

Full attendance of all lessons is expected but usually not mandatory. In general a minimum attendance rate of 75-80% is required, so you can only skip 1 or 2 sessions for each course. Again, this differs among courses so check the course books and the school calendar before planning your trips.

Below are the courses I have taken with some evaluations and comments:

Course code	Course name	Difficulty*	Workload*	Comment
EBC2068	Strategic Management of Technology and Innovation	★★★★★	★★★★★	It is a course with an intensive case approach. Each session involves applying theories and concepts from textbooks and readings in analysing and solving a case. There is also a graded case competition based on a case provided by Accenture. You will have quite some takeaways if you are new to the case analysis approach, but expect demanding workload and work quality, as well as strict grading.
EBC2072	System Analysis and Design	★★	★★	It is a fundamental course of information systems with a focus on system and data flow diagrams. The materials are not hard to master and the project is easy to complete in a team of 4.
EBC2088	Decision Support Systems and Business Modelling	★★★	★★★	It is similar to the programming courses in HKUST IS major. There are only a few lectures, no tutorials/PBL sessions and no exams. The only thing you have to do is to develop a decision support model with Excel VBA, in a team of 2, that meets all the requirements and a 20-page report explaining the model. It could be somewhat challenging to pick up if you have no prior knowledge in VBA, and even if you have it still takes a lot of time to complete.

*For difficulty and workload, a scale of 1 to 5 stars is used. 1 = lowest, 3 = average (similar to HKUST), 5 = highest

Sports and recreation activities

The sports facilities of UM are not free to use and in fact quite costly. However, you can play basketball and tennis for free at the courts next to the student accommodation buildings, with free equipment available for borrowing at the service counter.

Money

The currency in the Netherlands is euro. Most exchange students open a bank account at ING bank right after their arrival at Maastricht. There is a branch of ING very close to the student accommodation buildings that you can visit to open the account, with your letter of school enrolment, passport and mobile number ready.

The Netherlands is known as one of the most cashless countries, most of the time payments are made online or with debit cards. The mobile banking app of ING is also handy when you have to transfer among your friends. When travelling in Europe you can always use the ING debit card at card accepting merchants. Note that the card cannot be used for online debit card payments except iDeal (an online payment system for Dutch banks). Also, in some European countries cash is still the preferred payment method so do check in advance and bring enough cash. If you run out of cash, you can always withdraw euro at Euronet ATMs with 0% commission and charges (there is exchange rate arbitrage for foreign currencies).

Regarding the cost and expenses of my exchange, below is a summary for your reference:

Item	Amount (HK\$)
Air ticket	3,700
Visa	3,200
Insurance	2,000
Accommodation	18,200
Food and drinks	11,800
Travel	35,800
Daily transportation	800
Shopping/entertainment	4,000
Others	1,400
Total	80,900

Health & safety

The Netherlands, especially the city of Maastricht is very safe even at night. The Dutch are helpful and friendly so do seek help from them if you encounter any difficulty on the street. Do remember to lock your bike properly if you have one. Always beware of scammers and pickpockets when traveling in Europe.

There is a clinic at the student accommodation building. I have never visited it since I brought my own medicine and some Chinese herbs as well. I recommend you do the same just in case you get sick during exchange.

Food

Dining out at the Netherlands is not cheap. Most of the time during my stay in Maastricht I cook (sometimes with other exchange students), and that saves you a lot of money. There are plenty of supermarkets near the student accommodation buildings, the most popular ones namely Jumbo, Albert Heijn and ALDI. There is also a Chinese supermarket called Amazing Oriental (東方行) at the city centre, where you can find most of the stuff for cooking Cantonese or Chinese dishes.

Transportation

In Maastricht

The city of Maastricht is not very big and most students go to school on foot or by bike. A normal walk from student accommodation hall to the School of Business and Economics building is around 25 minutes, 10 minutes by bike. You can buy a bike, like what I did, after your arrival and resell it before you leave. That does not cost a lot and can save you time in walking. Normally you won't have to take buses but if you have to, like during rainy days, most of the buses departing from the train station can bring you to the student accommodation hall.

To other places

NS Rail is the best method to travel between cities in the Netherlands. However, the official tickets are quite expensive. You can buy group tickets on Facebook instead which cost much less. Add yourself to the 2 groups "NS Group-tickets Amsterdam" and "NS Group Tickets Eindhoven/Maastricht" to be able to purchase group tickets (you need a Dutch bank account first as well). If you are travelling to other European cities, you can usually go by bus (e.g. FlixBus) or by flight (e.g. Ryanair). You can check the routes on the websites GoEuro and Skyscanner.

Climate

The weather in Maastricht is quite diverse. Sometimes it is really sunny and it can get very warm, while it can also be rainy or extremely windy at times. It is quite cold in February but it starts to get warmer from March onwards. In May and June it gets hot and it can be tough as there is no air-conditioning. My advice is, do bring lots of winter clothes and jackets (at least one being water- and wind-proof), but also don't forget the summer clothes, you will need them in May and June.

Communication

People in the Netherlands speak Dutch and most of the things are stated in Dutch only. No worries, however, the Dutch have a very high English literacy so if you don't understand just ask them.

For mobile communication, pre-paid SIM cards are included for free at the welcome packs provided by ISN and SSH offices. Simply top up online on the provider's (Lebara) website. However, you can also purchase a SIM card from international providers like Vodafone, which offers data roaming service in most European countries, so that you can still stay online while travelling.

Useful links

SBE Exchange Information: <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/education/exchange/sbe>

UM Student Portal: <https://login.maastrichtuniversity.nl/adfs/ls/>

UM WebMail:

<https://login.maastrichtuniversity.nl/adfs/ls/?wa=wsignin1.0&wtrealm=https%3a%2f%2fwebmail.maastrichtuniversity.nl%2fowa%2f&wctx=rm%3d0%26id%3dpassive%26ru%3d%252fowa%252f&wct=2017-01-08T15%3a54%3a00Z>

SSH Housing: <https://my.sshxl.nl/?contractnummer=1836426>

myPrint (printing service at school): <https://myprint.maastrichtuniversity.nl/RicohmyPrint/Login.aspx>

NS Rail: <http://www.ns.nl/en>

ESN Card: <https://esncard.org/>

Maastricht city guide: <http://mymaastricht.nl/>

GoEuro: <http://www.goeuro.com/>

Skyscanner: <https://www.skyscanner.com.hk/>



CHECKLIST

Bring

1. Daily necessities
2. Clothes (both winter and summer)
3. Jackets (at least 1 water- and/or wind-proof)
4. Thick jackets like those from Columbia and North Face (if you planning to visit Iceland in winter)
5. Suit (for interviews)
6. Cash and credit card (make sure you know the card PIN)
7. Passport and HKID (with copies)
8. Laptop
9. Electric converter/adaptor
10. Mini rice cooker
11. Medicine
12. Chopsticks
13. Sunglasses
14. Umbrella
15. USB mini fan
16. Books (you will have A LOT of free time)
17. Camera (and/or GoPro-type recorder)
18. Stationery
19. Bluetooth speaker

Don't bring

1. Pillows and bed stuff (order it from SSH)
2. Hong Kong food e.g. instant noodles except snacks (get it from Amazing Oriental)
3. Too many unnecessary stuff (as you will need some empty space for your new takeaways)

THE END



ENJOY YOUR EXCHANGE!