



FALL EXCHANGE REPORT

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2017-2018 FALL SEMESTER

Monthly Activity Log

August 2017

We as non-EU students were required to arrive ESSEC on 28/8 or 29/8 to check-in our student dorm, me and another UST student landed Paris on 29/8. But it should be noted that for some reason this year's class starts later than previous years, so that we can arrive France later than other students who exchanged at ESSEC. Therefore, it is important to check if you have jobs in summer.

One incident right after we landed and arrived our dorm was that all of us were under the impression that we were supposed to pick up our key at the dorm. However, it was not the case. So please be noted that it is vital to ask especially when your dorm is Cergy Le Haut. (2 train stations away from campus)

On 31/8, there was a compulsory orientation session hosted by the school. It was a great opportunity to meet up with the fellow exchange students. On the same day, I was contacted by my exchange buddy via Facebook. From what I heard, not everyone has an exchange buddy, which would be something to bear in mind.

September 2017

Class starts on 5/9 so I went to a short trip to Belgium before school starts. I highly suggest going on a short trip to Belgium if you're exchanging in ESSEC, it will not break your bank, and it is very worthwhile to visit.

It is worth noticing that classes in ESSEC are very different from classes in UST. It can be seen from the first week of school. First, all of my classes were 3 hours long and 1 class per week. Classes also are in much smaller scale so active participation was required.

Apart from regular courses, I also registered a 2-day crash course. The class was almost a whole day long, so beware if you do not enjoy long classes.

September is also the month with loads of student gathering and parties, I have met a lot of friends in those events. There is this student association called MELT which organized a lot of activities for international students, so always check email and their Facebook page.



Consulate General of France in Hong Kong

For VISA Application, it is very important to first apply for academic interview before the visa application submission, or else it will never get through. It is also worth noticing that academic interview might take a long time to schedule.



Citymapper

Best App for transportation

Although Citymapper is not necessarily the most used application in Hong Kong since it does not provide real-time data, it is very popular in Europe. I highly suggest downloading this application for checking local transportation.

Monthly Activity Log

October 2017

After first month of class, I realized the workload of the courses that I have taken were not heavy at all, so I have decided to travel more and to travel further using my day-off and weekend. In fact, none of courses have mid-terms so but attendance was compulsory.

Therefore, I travelled to London to meet up with my friends who lived there. It was a great time. But one tip is that, I made a mistake for booking flights for this trip. But in fact if you can plan your trip way ahead, taking Eurostar is a much better experience. You can save a lot of time by cutting the check-in, the trip to the airport... Plus, you can access the Internet on the train.

Apart from London, I also went to Rouen which is a city in the Normandy region. Highlights from that trip was the carnival which we found out when we arrived. It was an amazing spontaneous trip.



In between late October and early November, there was a 1 week term break, so of course I did a lot of travelling using that time period.

Therefore, I do recommend saving some of your most wanted travel places using for this term break, since it was indeed quite long, and the weather was not too cold. But do keep in mind that airplane tickets might be more expensive during this time since a lot of students were on term break as well.

Also, one thing to notice is that, some crash courses were conducted during this term break which I did not enroll in. But I knew some exchange students who did and was disappointed that they still need to go to school during this break.

Monthly Activity Log



November 2017

I used this long term break to travel around Denmark, Sweden and Iceland. In fact, I spent most of my term break time in Iceland, around 10 days.

Among all places that I have travelled during this exchange, Iceland is easily my favorite destination. The scenery was breath-taking and one of a kind.

For the trip in Iceland, we were able to drive around the whole country in 10 days. But the weather was not ideal at all, since we have encountered multiple disastrous weather, so an experienced driver is very important. After this long trip, I returned to ESSEC to finish up some course work which included some

essays, presentations and 1 examination for my Communication class.

I would say November was overall the most hectic month in terms of school work, but it was still manageable.

General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

It was not a complicated process, but I suggest finishing this as early as possible. The situation that I encountered was that the consulate was under renovation at that time so the opening hours were shorter than before; therefore, it took a long time to schedule an appointment.

I also made a mistake for not booking the academic interview and went straight to the VISA application. I ended up booking another interview session which postponed my whole application, and I received my VISA just 1 week before my flight.

2) Orientation Activities

Personally I think it is vital to go since it is the only chance you can meet all the exchange students; also, some of them are compulsory so make sure you mark that on your calendar.

3) International Services & Activities

MELT is the student group that organized a lot of international activities, including trips, gathering, parties... Some of the activities are what they called 'shotgun' which means they only have limited spaces.

Through those events, you will also get to meet some master students.

4) Accommodations

I picked Cergy Le Haut according to previous exchange reports. But if I were to choose again, I would not pick Cergy Le Haut.

Although it is a fairly new dorm, I do not think it is the best in terms of convenience. Other dorms were of walking distance from the school, but for Cergy Le Haut, you have to take the train.

5) Courses Registration

The course registration was simple to me, but they do not have a waitlist mechanism. So if

you really want to enroll in a course, you might need to check it from time to time.

6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

Syllabus and marking schemes were not elaborate; thus, it is important to take the initiative to ask the course conductor this information.

7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

The only sports facility I have used was the gym room in Cergy Le Haut, it was quite nice, and I rarely run into people there. But the equipment was fairly old.

8) Finance & Banking

For just basic expense in France, I spend around 700 euros at the very least which includes the accommodation, food, phone, transportation...

For cards, I strongly recommend to get a French bank card since it was very convenient. For some reason, my HK credit card did not work in some places in Europe which rendered me with no choice but to use cash or apply for a French card.

One point I believe is worth mentioning is that there is a capacity on your card. If you plan on making a lot of online purchase, be it flight tickets, accommodation... just make sure you raise your capacity since it was basically nothing when you use your card to pay your rent.

Also, to bear in mind that not everyone in the bank knows English so if you might need some help from your French friends in this regard.

9) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

I did not participate in any clubs, but I did realize that they always speak in French. Although all ESSEC students speak fairly good English, they almost never use English in Social Clubs or even Networking opportunities. Especially for most the job opportunities provided by ESSEC required a certain level of French proficiency.



Best App for International transportation

It has all you need, all transportation methods possible. This was what I used the most when I plan my trips. It also can save up your tickets and to be used as e-tickets. All in one app.



Most important club for us

MELT was a very important student association for me since I have met a lot of cool students though the events hosted by this association. They have regular gathering as well as occasional big events.



Retail Bank in France

This is the bank I used, the experience was decent. They do have an application for retail banking but it was in French. E-banking website was in French as well, but google translate helped a lot.

General Exchange Information

10) Health & Safety

Luckily I did not get sick, but in retrospect, it was important to bring at least some Panadol from Hong Kong.

Cergy is arguably not the safest neighborhood. There were several robberies when I was there, so it was very important to be extra careful, especially when most victims were Asians.

Later in the semester, some students set up a Facebook group to gather students to walk to the dorm together.

11) Food

Butter, baguette and wine. 3 most important food for me when I was in France. But in all seriousness, the baguette was exceptional in France.

12) Transportation

I recommend getting the Navigo card every month for transiting in Paris.

For international travelling, I use goeuro for most of my trip planning.

13) Climate

Honestly, Paris does not get extremely cold. But if you plan to travel to other places, regular clothes from HK are certainly not enough.

But there are loads of outlet villages in Paris and London, so I do recommend buying the clothes there if you need it.

14) Communication

I used the service provider--- Free, it is not the best, but you can use it everywhere in Europe for 20 euros a month.

But keep in mind, the plan did not include Switzerland. I did not notice it and ended up using 60 euros of data for a half-day use.

Things to Bring

- 1) Laptop
- 2) Calculators
- 3) HK debit card (VISA)
- 4) Converter
- 5) Clothes for all weather
- 6) Charger
- 7) Cash
- 8) Hair Conditioner
- 9) Swimsuit (if you plan to go to lagoon)
- 10) Contact lenses
- 11) Glasses/Sunglasses

Useful Links

Free Mobile <https://mobile.free.fr/moncompte/>

French Consulate <https://hongkong.consulfrance.org/>

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

Expedia <https://www.expedia.com/>

Myessec myessec.com