



MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY,
NETHERLANDS

Fall, 2017

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EXCHANGE REPORT

PART 1 – MONTHLY ACTIVITY LOG

September 2017

I travelled with the other UST students to Maastricht and we arrived Maastricht in late August, 2017. Some of my friends registered for the ISN pick up service and the ambassadors picked us up in Maastricht Station. Period 1 started at 1st September and there were some orientation activities before the first day of school. One good thing to live in Maastricht is that it is close to Belgium and Germany. You can go to Belgium and Germany by train or bus. During the weekends and day-offs, I travelled to Ghent, Brussels, Amsterdam, Paris and Oktoberfest in Munich.



October 2017

I have got a lot of presentations in October and all the exams of period one were held in October so it was a very busy month. Nevertheless, we still wanted to utilize our day-offs and weekends to explore all around Europe so we often have to study during the trips. It was really tiring to study on the bus/train/plane but it was the price that we're willing to pay for travelling. I travelled to Brussels, Amsterdam, Croatia and Slovenia, Athens and Santorini in October.



November 2017

Period 2 started on the first day of November. I have registered a very difficult course called 'Game Theory & Economics' in period two and I was very stressful at that time. Studying in Maastricht University is never easy. Unlike other universities in Northern Europe, the passing rate could be lower than 50% in Maastricht. The workload was huge with a lot of presentations, readings (for marketing courses) and homework (for economic courses). I think it is much more stressful to study in Maastricht than in HKUST. During the weekends, I travelled to Oslo, Bergen, Hamburg, Berlin, Copenhagen, Lund. Again, I needed to study a lot during the trips.



December 2017

I went to London and Brighton in early December, after that it was the busiest period throughout my exchange journey. There were loads of presentations, homework and exams in mid-December. The semester finished right before Christmas and I travelled to Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Rome, Pisa, Venice, Milan and Barcelona before going back to Hong Kong. We also had a farewell party before the end of the semester and we went to the Christmas market in Maastricht.



PART II – GENERAL EXCHANGE INFORMATION

Visa Procedures

The visa procedures were quite simple. The Visa Office of Maastricht University will send you an email with clear instructions and the documents you needed for visa application. Just follow the instructions and you can always send email to the visa office if you have any questions. The application process takes quite a long time and you need to pay the visa fee, post the application form to the Visa Office and make an appointment with the Embassy in Hong Kong so it is better to apply it earlier.

Orientation Activities

The school will organise some mandatory orientation activities including the orientation day. All exchange students are required to participate. They talked about the basic rules of the university and introduced the city and the Dutch culture. They also toured us around the school and the city and explained the Problem Based learning system to us. Apart from the mandatory orientation day, there are also some voluntary orientation activities including late night parties, tours to the museum and Dutch dinner provided by the ISN.

International Services & Activities

As I know ISN provides a lot of international services and activities such as trips, parties, workshop, and dinners. Students can apply for an ISN card (17.5euro) to enjoy discounts for the above activities.

Accommodations

Unlike HKUST, there is no residence hall on campus, but there is a guesthouse near campus that welcomes exchange students. Most of the exchange students chose to live there as it is quite close to the University and the city centre (around 15mins walk to the business school and 20mins to the city centre). There are 3 main buildings in the Maastricht Guesthouse including M-building, P-building and C-building. They are all clustered together with the same lobby. Apart from the guesthouse you may also consider renting an apartment on the Maastricht Housing facebook page. There are a lot of choices provided and the rooms are usually nicer and cheaper than the rooms in guesthouse. I rented an apartment in with 2 of my friends (45mins walk to UM/city centre, 20mins by bus, 10-15mins by bike). The apartment was quite nice with a great balcony. It costed us around 10 euros per day per person.



Course Registration

There are two study periods for each semester and every exchange student can take up to 2 courses for each period. The University will send you a detailed email regarding course registration during early June. There is no quota for the classes and you do not need to fight for a seat. What you have to do is simply registering for the courses before deadline.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

In Maastricht, the education is based on the Problem-based Learning method. Students need to work in small groups and engage in hands-on training during the tutorial. They need to actively learn the course content first by reading the course materials on their own before the tutorial and the course content would be further discussed during the tutorial.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is a sport centre in Maastricht with facilities such as gym room and badminton court. Students need to pay a monthly fee in order to use those facilities.

Finance and Banking

It is very common to use online banking to e-payment in Maastricht. You can use e-payment everywhere even in the local markets. Thus, it is essential to create a local bank account. ING Bank is one of the popular choices.

Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities

The members of the social clubs and the sports teams will have some promotion on the orientation day. Most of them will provide leaflets for your reference and you can ask them for further information.

Health and Safety

There are quite a lot of clinics in the city centre. Remember to make an appointment before going to the clinic and bring your insurance documents with you as most of the clinic in Maastricht does not accept walk-in patients. For safety, I think Maastricht is a very safe place to stay in general. The only thing you need to be careful is that remember to lock your bike well especially in the parking areas near the Maastricht train station. One of my friends have lost his bike there at the first week.

Food

Dining-out is quite expensive in Maastricht which usually costs around 10 euros for lunch and 15 euros for dinner. The food provided in SBE canteen is cheaper, which is

around 5 euros per meal. There's a restaurant just next the SSC called 'The Lab' which provides simple lunch buffet at around 6 euros. There are also a lot of Michelin restaurants in Maastricht, especially in the area near the Maastricht train station. Japanese buffets are also available in Maastricht, it costs around 15-20 euros for lunch and 25-30 euros for dinner. However, drinks and sashimi are usually not included and you need to pay extra if you want to order drinks (including water) or sashimi. My flatmates and me usually cook for our own dinner at home. You may buy cheap food and ingredients in this two supermarket: Aldi and Jumbo. You may also buy Asian food and ingredients in the supermarket called Amazing-Oriental.

Transportation

In Netherlands, the cycling infrastructures such as cycle paths, cycle tracks and bicycle parking space were well established. The excellent cycling system, protected intersections and ample bicycle parking enabled the high frequency of bicycle travel by making cycling routes shorter, quicker and more direct than car routes. Second-handed bike could be bought through different related Facebook page. For the bike lock, you can find it in a lot of stores including Hema and Zemen. You may also buy the lock in the market on Friday at a cheaper price.

Climate

It was quite hot in late August and early September. While starting from mid-September the weather started to be cool and long-sleeves clothes are needed. Thus a few summer clothes would be enough. It was quite rare to see snow in Maastricht. As I remember there're only around 4-7 snowy days in Maastricht throughout my exchange period there.

Communication

I bought my sim card in Vodafone and it could be used in all places in Europe, which is quite convenient for travelling. They provided several monthly plans: 10 euros for 1GB; 15 euros for 2GB; 20 euros for 3GB. (they often have 0.5 extra GB for the 2GB plan and 1 extra GB for the 3GB plan)

Cautionary Measures

Remember to lock your bike; Don't travel right before exams as any flight delay will cause you a lot of troubles; Keep your passport well especially when you are travelling to places like Spain or Italy.

PART III – ITEMS TO BRING

Things to bring:

Adaptors	Hand-carry suitcase for short trips
Medicine	Travelling kit
Some cash	Security bag/ wallet
Credit card	Electronics

PART IV – USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

UM Student Portal

<https://studentportal.maastrichtuniversity.nl/>

Study Drive (Summaries of readings)

<https://www.studydrive.net/courses/maastricht-university/>

Maastricht University Ricoh my print

<https://myprint.maastrichtuniversity.nl/RicohmyPrint/Login.aspx>