



Exchange Report
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University of Mannheim, Germany

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Part I -- Monthly Activity Log

August 2017

"International Summer Academy", an intensive German language course was offered by the University of Mannheim for the exchange student. However, I missed the opportunity since I was working as an intern in August. I heard that besides the intensive language course, seminars about the culture and thinking of Germany might be provided. I arrived at the University of Mannheim on 22 Aug. The Palace was brilliant, which was one of the attractions in Mannheim. After the enrollment, I travelled to Heidelberg and Nuremberg.



Mannheim



Heidelberg



Nuremberg

September 2017

The semester started in September. In this month, I did not travel to other places since I want to settle down myself for my life in Mannheim first. One special event held in September, which was the Schloss Festival. The museum inside the Palace, University of Mannheim opened for the visitors for free and there were lots of different performance, such as band show, fireworks and orchestra. There was also a sports day in September. I tried some new sports here, such as Lacrosse.



Lacrosse



University of Mannheim, Palace



Dining Room, Palace



Opera Performance

October 2017

Apart from the normal classes, I watched a live football match, which was the FIFA World Cup Qualification, Germany vs Azerbaijan. The atmosphere inside the stadium was so hot. Since Germany was the home team, Germans were so excited in cheering their country team. I had 2 examinations in October. After the examination of Behavior Finance, I visited the Neuschwanstein Castle near Füssen, which was the most famous attraction in Germany and Zugspitze, the highest mountain in Germany (2969m) in weekend. The Neuschwanstein Castle was so beautiful. And Zugspitze was the first snow mountain I stepped on. 31 October and 1 November were holidays for the Day of Reformation and All Saints Day. With the holidays and weekend, the I travelled to Paris, Mont St. Michel in France. The architectures in Paris were so grand, like the Eiffel Tower and Arc de Triomphe. I also had an international dinner with students from all around the world.



International Dinner



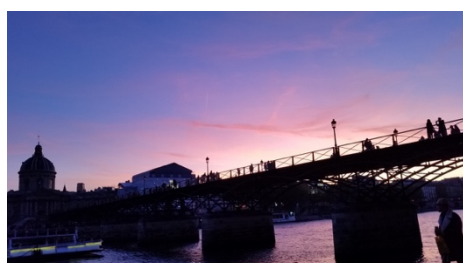
Neuschwanstein Castle



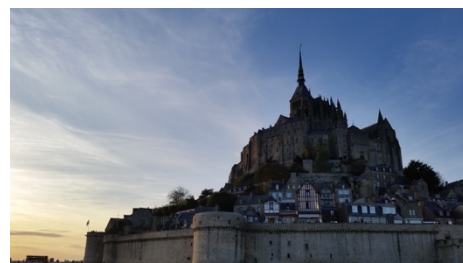
FIFA Qualification



Zugspitze



Passerelle des Arts, Paris



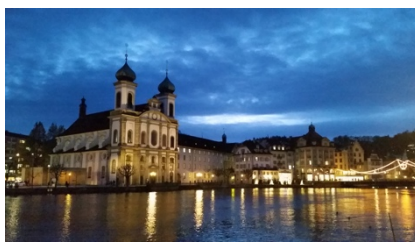
Mont St. Michel

November 2017

In November, I travelled to Berlin and Switzerland. Berlin was the capital of Germany but the cost of eating out was even cheaper than in Mannheim. The Berlin Wall was in the East Side Gallery, which was an open gallery in Berlin. The paintings on the Wall were so special and symbolized kinds of thinking and dream at that time. In late November, I travelled to Zurich, Luzern and Interlaken in Switzerland. The natural sceneries were brilliant. Snow mountains, lake and chalets constructed a beautiful picture. I had stepped on Jungfrau, the highest mountain in Europe too. On top of the mountain, there was -22°C and because of the bad weather, I could not take a beautiful picture for Jungfrau. Pilatus in Luzern was also a beautiful snow mountain. And one of the most memorable thing was that the cost of living in Switzerland was so much higher than Germany. Some local people shared to me that they would drive to the nearest city in Germany to buy the necessities.



Berlin Wall



Luzern

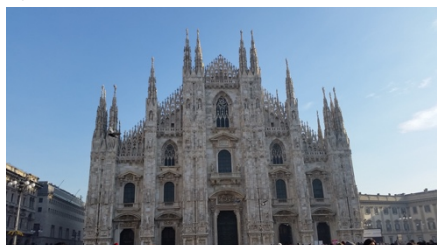


Jungfraubahn

December 2017

Examination period started from early December. I had 3 final examinations, which were FIN365 Risk Management and Financial Institutions, FIN 401 Corporate Finance and Applied Multivariate Statistics. During the exam period, I had still travelled to London. The cost of eating out was similar to Hong Kong, which was a lot cheaper than other countries. Burger & Lobster was a great restaurant to eat the lobster. After the examination, I went to the famous Christmas Market in Nuremberg and Italy. I visit four cities of Italy, Milan, Venice, Florence and Rome. Among these four cities, I like Florence the most, the panoramic view of Florence was incredibly beautiful.

Milan



Windsor Castle



Part II -- General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

The Visa application was not that difficult as mentioned by others. Prepared and hand-in all the required materials for the application, the application is simple. The proof of the financial support might be the most annoying item but it was still simple if your parents were available to go with you and sign the certificate of guarantee for you. Remember to ask the host university for the proof of the English courses provision once you got the contact of your exchange coordinator, ask SFAO to issue the insurance certificate for your exchange period and ask SBM Office for the proof of English level and continuing study at HKUST after return.

Orientation Activities

Orientation Week was from the late August to early September. There were a campus tour, a orientation session held by the department about course registration and important information regarding the academic study, another orientation sessions held by the international office and Studierendenwerk about the legal matter and German study organization, residence matter and important contacts and there was a welcome reception for the international students to enjoy snacks and refreshments in a relaxed atmosphere. Various welcoming parties held by VISUM, the student union of the University of Mannheim, students could participate in the parties with fare.

International Services & Activities

University of Mannheim provides international services and many cultural activities for exchange students to participate in and the priorities are given to the students who registered for the cultural courses. The activities might include visiting the Nazi Museum, the central bank and stock exchange in Frankfurt.

Accommodations

Only off-campus dormitories or private rental housing were available when studied at University of Mannheim. Although Ulmenweg 55 was the furthest dormitory from the university, I think it was the best destination for living as it was convenient and safe when you went back to Ulmenweg at night as bus/tram stop was just next to the House 1 and House 2. I lived in House 1 during my exchange, there would be cleaners to clean the common floor, toilets and bathroom regularly. House 1 contained the laundry and it was near the 2 supermarket, Netto and Lidl and also near the bus and tram stop. Taking Bus 60 or Tram 4/4A from university to Ulmenweg took around 20 minutes.

Course Registration

Course Catalog was posted on the webpage of the international office of the University of Mannheim. Students had to send a list of courses to the department's exchange coordinator at the beginning of the semester. For most of the business and economics courses, only examination registration was required, remember to register for the exam during the registration period.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

Workload from the study in University of Mannheim was so much lower than that from HKUST. Among my 5 courses, only 1 course contained the weekly assignment. Some of the courses were 100% based on the final exam. And thus self-learning was important as no practices were given by the professors.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

Many sports clubs were provided by the university. Students who interested in sports could participate in their favorite sports or learn new sports but those facilities were probably off-campus, such as gym was located in D7.

Finance and Banking

The expenses will depend on your living style and travels during exchange. For the whole semester, I spent around HK\$ 50,000. Be aware that Heng Seng Bank card to take out money through Union pay was available in the ATM of Commerz Bank. Bank of China card was only able to take 200 EUR per transaction in Sparkasse Bank. Credit Card was important for the online transactions for booking accommodation, train, bus or flight. It was better for you to prepare one for your travel.

Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities

VISUM, the student union, would organized lots of activities throughout the whole semester. You could participate in their events if you want to meet new friends and understand more about their culture by direct conversation with the international students.

Health and Safety

Bring some medicine in case of you might sick during the exchange. I think Mannheim was a safe city but still be aware of your phone and money.

Food

Eating out was expensive in Mannheim. The on-campus cafeteria and canteen were relatively cheaper but not tasted very good. Therefore, I cooked for myself mostly. Every items in supermarket were cheap, such as 3 pizzas in a box only cost for EUR 1.3. I recommend students cook for yourselves and save for the travelling. You could enjoy more cuisines when you travelled to other cities/countries.

Transportation

Before the enrollment, students had to pay for every single travel, which cost EUR 2.5 each. After the enrollment for the University of Mannheim, students were able to buy the semester ticket with the Student ID, which cost for EUR 165, for the 6-month local transportation, which also included the entire eastern VRN region. Using the university email (Mannheim one) to register for the VRN bike, students could use the rental bike service for free for the first 30 minutes.

Climate

The climate is quite hot until the late September in Mannheim. And the temperature might be down to -1°C in November and December. There would be snowing in winter but since everywhere had the heaters, just be careful and wear more clothes when you were in outdoor.

Communication

In some restaurants and supermarkets, only German menu and description were provided. Google translate would be your greater helper on this issue. Also, their staff might not know English too. Learn some basic German if you have time.

Part III -- Items to Bring

- Passport, admission letter, insurance
- Medicine
- Sufficient amount of cash
- Clothing for both summer and winter
- Small size suitcase/backpack for travelling
- Portable charge and its cables
- plug board
- Credit card, Debit Card

Part IV -- Useful Links and Contacts

Course Catalog

https://www2.uni-mannheim.de/io/english/incoming_exchange_students/course_catalogues/course_catalogue_spring_semester_2018/index.html

University of Mannheim -- International Office

<https://www2.uni-mannheim.de/io/english/startpage/index.html>

Visa Affair, German Consulate General Hong Kong

<http://www.hongkong.diplo.de/Vertretung/hongkong/en/03Info/Visum/visa.html>