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# UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS PRAGUE

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Disregard all other universities you may be thinking of and go to Prague for Exchange. Here's a quick video I made of my travel adventures! Hope it makes you want to go to Europe and travel to the most beautiful places in the world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGcfLvLEb5g>

Now that you've seen what my life was like on exchange, go on to read the report and let it convince you to go to VSE, Prague. I was one of the 400 exchange students who had the time of their life during exchange in Prague.

## Monthly Activity Log

### *February*

I arrived in Prague on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. My buddy picked me up at the airport and we took the public transportation to the dormitory which was a great introduction to the enormous public transportation network of Prague. Experienced my first snow ever on the very first day which was an amazing experience for the first 5 minutes after which I started missing the HK heat. On the first night, I went out with many international students who turned out to be my closest friends. I completed the orientation activities during the first week of school. I then travelled to Vienna on the weekend with friends I met during the orientation activities. 2 weeks after that trip, I signed up for a trip organized by the buddy system to Krakow (Poland). The temperature was -13 degree Celsius so I wore a ton of layers. We went to the Auschwitz camp which was a horrifying but an insightful experience.



### *March*

I went for my first ever ice hockey game and it was a terrific experience because of the atmosphere. I went to Dresden (Germany) and Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic) for day trips since the bus rides there were probably shorter than the time it would take you to go from HKUST to Tung Chung by public transport. During the week, I continued to explore Prague. I planned a trip to Budapest (Hungary) from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>. After a fantastic weekend trip to Budapest, I embarked

on a road trip with 4 other friends to Croatia and Slovenia. I had the opportunity to go to the locations in Croatia where 'Game of Thrones' was filmed. We went to the most beautiful places (Dubrovnik, Split, Lake Bled). Since the university had an Easter break, we spent 8 days on the road and had the best experience of driving around Europe.



## April

I finally opened my notes in April because I had an econometrics midterm. After spending an entire weekend to learn what was taught in 2 months, I cruised through the midterm because other VSE exams are quite easy compared to HKUST exams. A day after my midterm, I went to Spain from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> with my sister. I travelled to Madrid, Toledo, and Barcelona. After 2 months in the cold, it was great to be in a warm country. After returning from Spain, I did some course work before going to Italy the next weekend. I planned this trip with a friend from HKUST. We went to Milan, Florence, and Rome. We walked 15km every day for 6 days and ate pizza, pasta, and gelato every chance we got.



## May

I went for a skydiving trip organized by the buddy system. Jumping from a plane at a height of 15,000 feet is an unbelievable experience. I finally had to take a break from travelling since final exams were approaching. Exchange students have the option to take the exams during the last week of classes. However, I chose to spread out my exams across 3 weeks to give me more time to revise. I spent most of my time this month exploring Prague and revising. Many of my friends left to go back home so it was a sad month of saying bye to new friends!

## June

Spent my last few days going to my favorite spots in Prague and saying my goodbyes to all the friends I made. I finally left Prague on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

## General Information

### 1. Visa Procedures

This was the most challenging bit of the exchange experience. I grew up in Thailand, hold an Indian passport and was applying for a visa in Hong Kong. Thus, I needed to get non-criminal record checks from each of those countries. Thus, make sure to do this as soon as possible since the HK police take about 3 weeks, and your respective countries may take even longer. After you receive the acceptance letter from VSE and the non-criminal records, call the Czech consulate and book an appointment. The visa application generally takes 8 weeks, but I wrote a request letter to expedite the process. Therefore, I received the visa in 3 weeks. The consulate does not keep your passport during the visa application, so you are free to travel. You will need to buy insurance when you go to the consulate to collect the visa. I bought Maxima insurance which was relatively inexpensive.

### 2. Cash

During my first week in Prague, I withdrew money from my HK Bank of China account, so I received Czech Koruna directly. The bank charges you a transaction fee of about 40 HKD every transaction, so it is wise to withdraw a large amount initially. I chose to open a student account in KB bank. The bank only requires your passport and acceptance letter from VSE in Czech. My dad transferred all the money needed for 4 months to my account in Prague so this saved me from transaction costs every time I withdrew money from the atm.

### 3. Course Registration

The registration is not on a first-come-first-served basis. You can add the Bachelor courses that you want to study in the system. If you want to enrol in Master courses, you must ask for approval from the professor of the course at VSE. You then must ask for approval for the course from your major department or Mr. Forrest. Then you have to send both the approvals from professors at VSE and HKUST to the exchange office at VSE. There are detailed instructions on VSE's website and the exchange office is quite helpful so email them if you have any queries.

#### 4. Accommodation

There are 2 main buildings you can stay in. Jarov 3 F or Jarov 3 G. While Jarov 3 G is newer than F, almost all of the exchange students stay in F. Thus, I would highly recommend you stay in Jarov 3 F so you can easily meet other exchange students and spend time together. I stayed in a double room. There was a common kitchen, bathroom, and toilet. You have to clean it yourself as the cleaner only comes once during the whole semester. Make sure to adhere to the rules of the dormitory and keep your apartment clean because the dormitory managers will fine you heavily for the smallest things.

#### 5. Orientation Activities

The orientation lasts for only 1 week. On the first day, you have to pick up important documents and your ID card. You can also register for the ESN card (highly recommended) which allows you to go for the events organized by the buddy system, attend weekly parties, and receive a discounted sim card. Your buddy will accompany you on the first day so I would recommend you register for the transportation card on the same day as it will be easier to do it with your buddy who can speak the language. The rest of the week there are lectures about 'culture shock'. 'Czech Republic', etc. You can also register for paid tours during the first week. The buddy system also organized an 'ice-breaking weekend' trip so students could get to know each other.

#### 6. International Service and Activities

The international students' office is quite helpful and prompt helping with queries. The buddy system is responsible for organizing most of the activities for exchange students. They organize parties every Tuesday in different clubs in Prague. Make sure to go for the parties because you can have a good time with your exchange friends and see new clubs every time. Would recommend buying the ESN + N2N card on the first day of orientation. You can get free admission to all the parties if you enter before 12 am.

#### 7. Teaching and Assessment Methods

I truly realized how tough HKUST was after studying in VSE. Despite travelling throughout the semester, I managed to get better grades in VSE than I ever did in HKUST. So, take it easy and do not worry too much about the courses.

- a) 1VF461 – Fiscal Policy (Highly Recommended)  
(100% Final)

If you have done a macroeconomics course, this course will be a piece of cake. Most of the course was about ISLM and ASAD and a little about taxation. The final exam was mainly about ISLM and ASAD. Therefore, you'll pass the course easily if you have a basic understanding of ISLM.

- b) 4EK610 – Introductory Econometrics (Recommended)  
(3 Assignments 30%, Midterm 20%, Final 50%)

This course was a little tough mainly because you had to learn basic programming (R studio). However, it is nothing that HKUST's students can't handle. The lectures and tutorials will help you

in solving the assignments. The tutorials and assignments covered all the programming scripts you needed for the final exam. The final was open book so you could refer to the script to solve the problems.

c) 2MO253 – Supply Chain Management (Highly Recommended)

This was the only interesting course out of the 4 courses I took. The professor was quite humorous and made the class interesting. You'll have to write a term paper, have active participation, and make a presentation on a case study.

d) 5IE470 – International Trade (Difficult)  
(100% Final)

This course was a little tough, especially because you probably wouldn't have learnt much about international trade before going on exchange. The content was all new for me so it took me a week to revise everything for the final exam. Thus, would recommend you to take this course if you believe you'll either focus on lectures or take the time to revise before exams.

8. Sports & Recreation Facilities

The dorm is right next to basketball, football, tennis, and volleyball courts. Thus, if you would like to use the facilities, it would cost you a mere 5-10 HKD/hour. There is also a gym in the building, but I never went so I cannot give my honest opinion on it.

9. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

The best way to meet other exchange students would be to go out as much as possible during the first month. The buddy system organizes weekly events called the 'Buddy Language Café'. A bunch of exchange students go there and discuss topics decided by the organizers.

10. Expenses (in HKD)

Flight	6,600
Visa Application (includes no-criminal record checks from 3 countries)	1,000
Accommodation (4 Months)	10,000
Cards	
- Student Card	100
- ESN + N2N card	200
- Transport Pass (4 months)	300
Insurance	1,000
Mobile Plan (4 months)	300
Travel Expenses	12,000
Living Expenses	11,000
Total	42,500

11. Health & Safety

Contrary to popular belief, I found Europe quite safe. Luckily, I was never pickpocketed or had anything stolen during exchange. I barely got sick during exchange and when I did, I had fever

medicines. Thus, I would recommend you take some important medicines because going to the doctor in Prague is quite expensive and there is no university clinic.

## 12. Food

Restaurants in Prague are half the price compared to those in Hong Kong. So, you could eat outside easily without taking a hit on your budget. There is a stove in the apartment, so you can cook if you wish to. There is a supermarket 2 tram stops from the dorm. The huge one is Kaufland where I always went for groceries. There is also a Lidl near the dorm which has really good and cheap (15 hkd) hummus (be sure to try it). Czech cuisine is meat based so if you're a meat-eater, it is paradise. There is a pizza shop on every street, so you can never go hungry. One of my favorite restaurants is the Mexican food chain called 'Burrito Loco'. It is a 24-hour restaurant, so it would be the perfect snack after a night out.

## 13. Transportation

One of my favorite things about Prague was its extensive transportation network. With your travel pass, you could use the tram, bus, or train an unlimited number of times. The public transport is always on time and it is 24/7. Thus, I did not have to use the cab even once during my 4 months. You could even go to the airport using the public transport within an hour, which would otherwise cost you 200 hkd by cab. You have to buy a student pass for 3 months, then buy another pass for 1 month.

## 14. Climate

The weather is generally quite cold (below 0 degrees) in February. It starts to rise in March but expect it to be freezing until mid-April. Thus, buy good winter jackets and gloves so that you can enjoy exchange without becoming a popsicle. In May, it starts to get quite warm (25 degrees). Thus, you should pack a few summer clothes as well.

## 15. Communication

The old generation is quite rude because they don't like talking to foreigners since we don't speak Czech. However, the young generation is really nice and outgoing. Since you will be spending most of the time with exchange students, I would not worry about the language barrier too much. Google translate will be your best bet if your actions can't explain to a Czech person what you want.

## Useful Links

[www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com)

Please stay in hostels during your travels. It will be 1/10<sup>th</sup> the cost of staying in hotels and will actually be a fun experience because of the people you get to meet.

[www.GoEuro.com](http://www.GoEuro.com)

Buses and Trains are the best way to get around Europe. This is the best website for planning your mode of travel as it allows you to choose based on price and timings.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCt7oj318jVQi7vRbc1bNjJA> (Honest Prague Guide Videos)

This is a youtube channel by 2 young Czech guys who tell you everything you need to know about Prague. Make sure to watch it so you get to know a little bit about the country before you visit and plan your itinerary!

Travel Details	
February	Vienna, Krakow
March	Dresden, Karlovy Vary, Budapest, Slovenia
April	Croatia, Spain, Italy

#### Checklist of items

You can buy almost everything you want to in Prague, so do not overpack while going.

1. Utensils

Again, you can find these in Prague. However, if you have space, I would recommend you take a pan and a rice cooker.

2. Passport

Make sure to take your passport while visiting other countries even by bus or trains. They require a proof of identity and your school ID card is usually not sufficient.

3. Passport sized photos

You will need this while registering for the dormitory, student ID and the ESN card.

4. Adaptors

I would recommend getting an extension cord, so you can plug all your devices easily when you're in your room. Europe used plug type C, so make sure to buy the correct ones before leaving.

5. Medicines

Going to the doctor is quite expensive in Prague. Thus, pack some important medicines and consult google or your mom if you ever get sick.

6. Small travel bag

For week long trips, a suitcase is too big, and a backpack is too small. Therefore, I would recommend you buy a small but spacious bag. Certain flights are extremely strict about baggage size (RyanAir), so make sure the bag you carry meets the requirements or it could end up costing you 400 HKD.



## 7. DSLR or a phone with a good camera

What's the point of exchange if you can't click beautiful photos during your travels and post it on Instagram. Thus, make sure to have a good camera and a good friend who will take your photos.

## **FINALLY**

Please go to Prague for exchange. I can assure you that you will not regret it. It is the cheapest and most beautiful location for exchange. Its central location will let you travel with ease. There are 400 other exchange students every semester, so you will surely find a few friends you will bond with. Exchange semester has truly been the best semester of my university life and I will always cherish the memories I made. Please feel free to ask me any questions you may have. I can gladly talk about exchange for hours.

