

EXCHANGE REPORT

Nova School of Business and Economics, Lisbon, Portugal

Natalie Ho

BBA (Economics and Marketing)



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Part I Activity Log

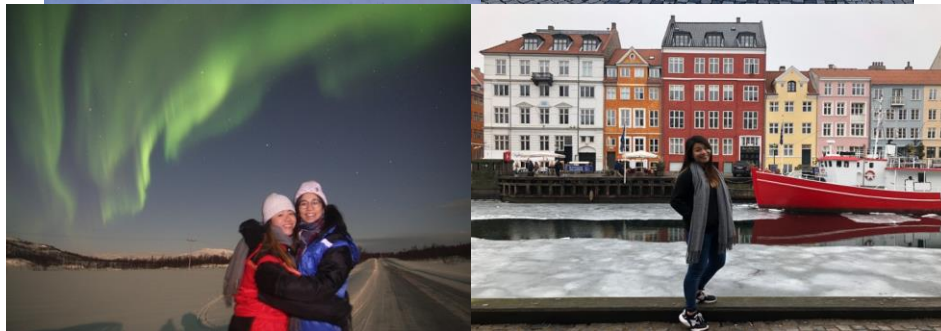
February

Arriving about 2 days before the orientation day, I dealt with jetlag and room cleaning. As there was no direct flight from Hong Kong to Lisbon, so I transited my flight in London and it took me around 20 hours for all these transportations. After the rest, I went to the orientation activities. As I am the only student from HK, I took baby steps to talk with my new friends. I reached my neighbours in the dormitory, talked with some Chinese and Singaporean. Sooner, in other orientation activities, I met other international people from surfing day or welcoming dinner. A week later, I started school and hung out with my classmates a bit. Explored Lisbon, Belem and Cascais. But the weather is super cold that swimming is not possible.



March

After receiving the courses schedules and syllabus, I knew which of my courses take attendance. I calculated carefully and go on a 20 days trip to Stockholm in Sweden, Tromso in Norway, Budapest in Hungary and Copenhagen in Denmark. It was very cool to travel in Nordic countries but also a bit tiring for this long journey. The highlight was the aurora in Norway and the Chainsmokers concert in Denmark. These countries were still snowing and I enjoyed it a lot.



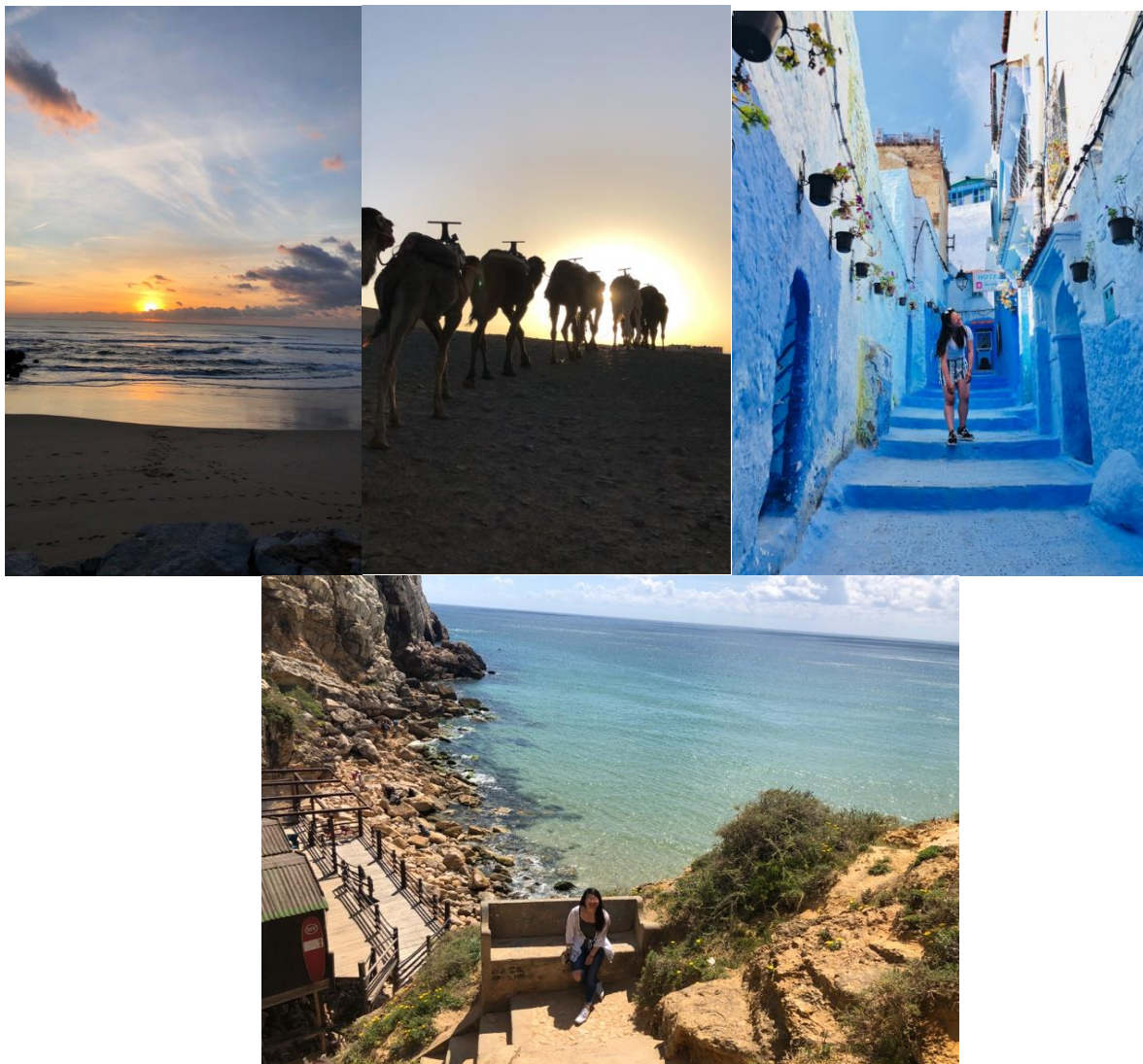
April

Mid-term period lies in this month. There was quite a lot of presentation and mid-term or essay to submit. When all those academic events were over, I went to Spain for 2 weeks. I feel like small cities have a more diversify and interesting vibes that is why I strongly recommend people to go to Cordoba and Malaga. After the trip I reflected a lot, I do not want my exchange to be only travelling with my close friend, so I stopped travelling a bit and stayed in Lisbon to meet other exchange students.



May

In May where everyone seems to be more relax and carefree, I joined a trip of ELL to Algarve which is the southern part of Portugal, it was amazing and very astonishing. The nature views are wonderful and it was such a once in a lifetime experience. After the 4 days trip with Algarve I go back to school a bit and then I travelled to Morocco. It was in the top of my checklist of my exchange must-do activity. I feel like exploring the world is a “yolo” thing and must do it when one is young. It is so challenging for a granny to go on a 2 hour camel ride and stay in the very cold desert.



June

No more classes in this period as it is the final exams month. I have 4 exams and a few final report due this month. It was not very busy but quite stressful. I managed to have a 4 days trip to Azores, a group of island that belongs to Portugal and is famous for its natural scenic view. I failed one of my final exam which was told after a week I took it and I went to the resit exam which I eventually passed.



Part II *General Exchange Information*

a) visa procedures

Portuguese visa application is a long process and takes up a lot of time. As there are no Portuguese consulates in Hong Kong, one must go to Macau or some other consulate in China. My personal experience was to search for the entire list of documents required to apply for the visa, bring them all to the Macau consulate in person, then I also paid that day. I go back to Hong Kong Police headquarters in Wan Chai to get the Certificate of No Criminal Conviction. The Hong Kong Police will send it to them within a week directly. At the meantime, you should keep in touch with the Macau Portuguese consulate to see if they have received it or not and the documents are accepted or not. I tried to reach them by phone call, email or Facebook inbox. They never answer phone calls, emails very occasionally and Facebook inbox was quite speedy. However, in Facebook inbox they can answer you some general questions like if the email addresses you sent are correct or not but not specific progress of your visa application. When the visa is ready, they said they will contact me however, I received no phone call 10 days before my departure, so I contact them literally every day and went to Macau to pick it up 4 days before my flight. That lady said they intended to give the visa not too early before the departure, so you need to take the initiative to urge for the visa.

b) orientation activities

The orientation day was held on the 8th of February and it lasted around half a day. There was a welcoming section in which a school officer delivered a general background of NOVA and NOVA School of Business and Economics. He also introduced the fellow student-led international office to us. They are very helpful and organised a lot of activities for us. There were booths outside the auditorium, not to promote various clubs, but some practical information like setting up sim card, join Erasmus Life Lisboa, finding a residence etc. Those were external parties trying to offer some help outside of social life. They also have a school international office run by student union holding other orientation activities which you could register and pay for. The office organised surfing day the next day, Belem tour, welcoming dinner etc. you should pay as soon as possible to secure your place and socialise with others.

c) international services and activities

The International office will be organising various activities for exchange students throughout the semester. In their calendar launched, you can find boat party, beach day, surfing etc. Outside of NOVA, there are 2 cross-university large student organisation. Namely Erasmus Student Network Lisboa (ESN) and Erasmus Life Lisboa (ELL). I think joining one of them is enough.

d) accommodations

I lived in the campus dormitory. There were 3 and I lived in Alfredo de Sousa. However, NOVA is moving to a new campus in Carcavelos (which is not the centre of Lisbon). So my residence will be demolished. I have heard that the new campus will have residence close to it at 450 euro. However, if you go back to the residence after a drink with you friend is impossible as the last train from Lisbon to Carcavelos is 1:30am and the next train is 5:30 am. Portuguese practice are to have dinner at 9pm or later and have a drink at 12am.

e) course registration

In about November, NOVA will sent their exchange in student the courses information to register courses in Netpa(not Moddle-another system like canvas). There were 2 rounds of add-drop period, one in about December, and the other after you start school within 3 days. The maximum credits for one to take is 32 ECTS, where 2 ECTS equal to 1 credit.

f) teaching & assessment methods

Nova SBE only offer 2 majors, Economics and Management. They have some marketing course but are for master students. So I studied 3 economics course and 1 common core. Below are the 4 courses that I took with a brief description. The good thing of Nova or Portuguese university is that they have resit exam, so even you under perform for mid-term or final exam, you can take the resit exam which count 100% of the final grade.

-1114 Global Economics 2

(transferred as ECON4000 level electives)

This is a course all about Exchange Rate, not very easy but the midterm take up 50% and final exam take up the other 50%(non-cumulative).

- 1200 Principles of management
(transferred as common core)

It was a junior course for Nova freshmen. The content was general and workload is not heavy.

-1212 Global Business Environment
(transferred as ECON4000 level electives)

In Nova, it is a course for management student instead of economics student. 2 essays and one final exam composing the 100% of the course.

-1306 Econometrics
(transferred as ECON3334 econometrics)

Nova student said it is the hardest course in Nova. The professor is very qualified, one mid-term and one final exams which is open book open computer. It is still very hard and there is a group project using Stata.

g) sports and recreation facilities

Aforementioned Nova is changing its campus from the coming semester onward. For my semester, there is no gym facilities but a running track next to the university. It guides one to a natural park that feels like a urban forest. ELL card have partnership with a gym offering a deal of 40 euros for 3 months.

h) finance & banking (including currency / expenses)

Inside the residence, there was a ATM which makes it very convenient to withdraw money. I did not set up a Portugese bank account as it is more expensive to do international transaction in sending money from Hong Kong to Portugal than directly withdraw from debit card. Eating out a time is about 5-10 euro, metro is 27.55 euro for one whole month, rent for mine is 225 euro living in a single room. With air ticket about 800euro, the entire exchange I spent about 40000hkd excluding travel.

i) social clubs/networking opportunities

ESN activity is less about partying and might occasionally have some voluntary services. The biggest advantage to pay 20 euro to join their membership is a 15% discount for Ryanair ticket. As for ELL it has trips to Porto, Coimbra etc.. and also free entry to a particular club every night before 1:30am/2am. But most of the time, I network and interact with other students in a place call Barrio Alto, it is a bar street that only have Erasmus student.

j) health & safety

There is no medical clinic in Nova like HKUST, but there is a hospital nearby the campus which Nova has an agreement. It calls SAMS Clinical Centre and the consultation fee excluding the prescription is €30.

Lisbon has low chance of terrorists' attack, it is not as dangerous as people was saying online, but in touristic spots, one should beware of pickpockets.

k) food

Compare to other European countries, having dinner in Lisbon is not that unaffordable. It is about 4-10 euro for a full set dinner including drinks. The good thing of Portugal dining is also they do not charge covert so the price is more easily measurable. Pastel de Nata is a must eat in Lisbon, they always eat it as an afternoon snacks with a small cup of coffee. Toast in Lisbon are also very good, crispy and delicious.

l) transportation

You should go to the university office on your first day or orientation day to get a form there in applying for the student metro card. Then submit to the station Marques de Pombal. 2 days later you can get it back from the same place. Than you can use the card to take all tram, bus and metro with 27.55 euro per month. Train to Carcavelos and Cascais is excluded, but one way ticket is 1.5 euro so doing a card is cost efficient.

m) climate

Everyone says Lisbon is very sunny, however this year it is an exception. The weather was quite fluctuating, not hot at all even in may I was still wearing long sleeves clothes. One more thing is that they do not have air conditioner in most of the places, so one should be prepared for it.

n) communication

Portugal speaks Portuguese and most of the Portuguese do not speak English. However with youngsters, they speak good English and they are very helpful in helping you if you encountered language difficulties.

o) cautionary measures

As foreigner looking person to them, it is not a good idea to walk alone at night in the street after 3am. One should stay alert and be careful of robbers. Just do not interact with them and share no eye contacts. Stay alert and stay open minded to meet more people.

Part III *Checklist*

- Passport
- Passport (copy version)
- NOVA acceptance letter
- Insurance card or proof
- Cash
- Credit and/or debit card (remember to activate overseas withdrawal function)
- Socket extension
- Socket adapters
- Laptop
- Medicines
- Clothes for cold and hot weather
- Personal blanket or pillow
- Fan
- Passport photos for application of metro card

Last but not least, going on exchange especially Portugal is the most unregrettable decision that I have ever made. Lisbon is underrated that I had so much fun. Of course, after all the city or the university is just a platform for you to cultivate bonds with other international students, it is up to you to maintain the lifelong friendship with them. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me through any channel.