



UNIVERSITY OF MANNHEIM  
EXCHANGE REPORT  
SPRING 2018



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## Part 1 Monthly Activity Log

- February 2018



The campus of university of Mannheim – a historical castle, winter 2018

This was my first time leaving Asia. I still remembered how excited and meanwhile, anxious I was when I said goodbye to my parents in Hong Kong international airport. Thinking like ‘how can I possibly survive given that I completely have no idea about any German’, I was already stood at Frankfurt airport. When I was heading to train station, I asked a courteous man about the location of train station to Mannheim, which there are multiple train stations for different destinations. Surprisingly, the guy doesn't have any idea about ‘Mannheim’. To be honest, this was my first impression about Mannheim – a small city in the middle of nowhere. I tried to figure out the path by myself. Fortunately, I met a girl from China who is also a student from University of Mannheim. She offered me help and really patiently introduced everything about Mannheim to me. I am so grateful that I met such a helpful people when I been to an unfamiliar place in the first time.

When I arrived Mannheim station, my hospitable exchange buddy from university of Mannheim picked me up and helped me carry my suitcases and settle down in my accommodation. He also showed me around our ‘castle campus’ and offered me a nice breakfast in the canteen of our school. Here I want to say a big thank to the exchange buddy program organized by HKUST, this compulsory buddy program gave me a chance to meet the student from university of Mannheim, we helped each other and developed a solid friendship. Here is my first tip, if you are the future exchange student, try to make good use of this chance to keep contact with your buddy, offered them help during their stay in Hong Kong, which they will give you a helping hand when you in turn go to their university for exchange.

After two weeks, I have already get used to the pace of living in Mannheim. It is a quiet and boring city with no many entertainments in evening, which completely differs from the large cities in Asia. Frankly speaking, I am not a fan of such living style, which made me bored and easily sitting in my room all day long because there is no much I can do in the city. My second tip is thinking carefully what you need and your preference, if you want to hang out with friends, meet people from different background, try something new, and experience

glamorous lifestyle, then probably Mannheim is not your best choice. For me, there will be many more choices out there which will make me more enjoy my exchange life. But every experience is unique, learn how to deal with my emotion, how to be responsible to my decision, and how to make something resembling lemonade given I already had a sour lemon. Above are what I learned from this experience.



Celebrating Lunar New Year with friends from Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong, February 2018



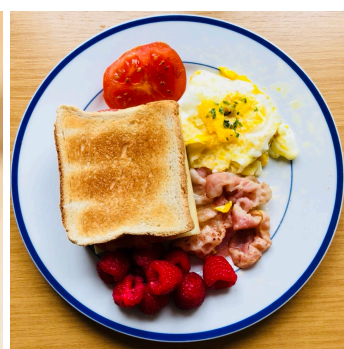
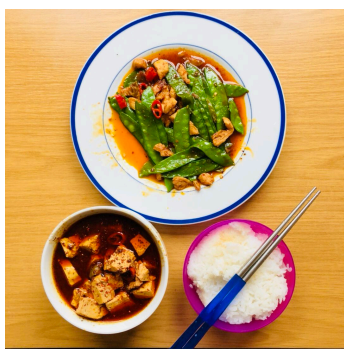
First time had Bak kut the hot pot in such a special day, February 2018



Pigeons in front of a fast food shop in Mannheim, February 2018

### - March 2018

I cooked a lot started from this month, which I could take benefit from the relatively low living cost in Mannheim. Cooking is a rewarding experience for me. I felt so contented when every time I started from scratch, made myself an enjoyable meal, which I never believed that I have such excellent cooking skills. Unexpectedly, there are some great Chinese supermarket where I could have many choices of traditional Chinese ingredients and spices. Since I am a crazy addict of spicy food, I was able to cook many authentic spicy foods and shared with my lovely flat mates.



Some dishes cooked by me, 2018

### - April 2018

I did a lot of traveling this month during the ester holiday, which I have been to five countries in this period. Each country has its uniqueness. For instance, I was impressed by the spectacular mountains and fairy tale villages in Norway; the hospitable local folks in Turkey; the historical architectures in Paris... But my most favourite country must be England.



Frankly speaking, language barrier plays a huge part in my traveling experience. It is not easy to order Macdonell in Germany since the ordering staff couldn't understand how to speak number in English. On the other hand, the services in London was perfect to me. Probably because I could understand everything they said. Indeed, communication and interaction with local folks allow me to have more cultural exchange, which I lacked such opportunities in Germany.



Snow mountains in Norway, March 2018



Peaceful village in Norway, March 2018



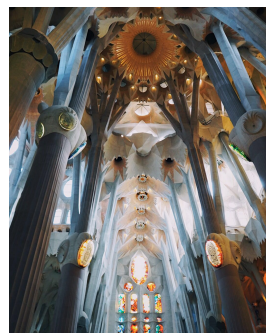
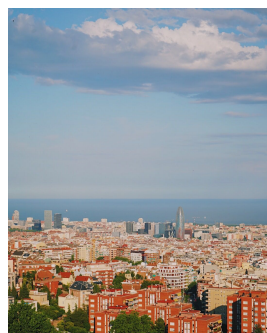
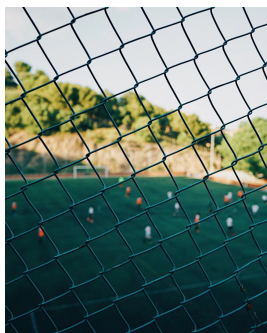
Stray Cats in Turkey, April 2018



Changing of the guard, April 2018

## - May 2018

My stay in Mannheim almost came to the end. I focused on lot on studying of final exams. The weather was becoming hotter, sometimes could reach over 30 Celsius degree. One tip for the final exam period is that get up earlier in the morning, arrive library in the university before 9am and pick a seat in the lowest floor. There are so many students waiting outside the entrance of library every single morning before 9am for a cool and comfortable environment to study.



Barcelona is my favourite city among all, with perfect combination of architectures, beaches, food and spectacular views, June 2018

## **Part 2 General Exchange Information**

### **- Visa Procedures**

All requirements for visa application could be found on the official website. Be careful with the financial proof documents, which requires at least three months saving amount. Make sure to apply for the visa as early as possible, and you may seek help from University of Mannheim to accelerate for the visa application process. When you receive the visa, double check to ensure the visa period is enough for you to stay one semester. Since my visa only allowed me to stay 3 months, but I applied for one semester and provide one-year financial proof, this issue caused me a lot of troubles since I need to extend my visa again in Germany.

### **- Orientation activities**

University of Mannheim provides a series of orientation activities at the beginning of semester. It is not mandatory, but a good way to meet other exchange students to explore the city together. Since I missed all the orientation activities due to my visa delay, I cannot have more comments on the quality of the events.

### **- International Services and Activities**

There is a Facebook group which is officially operated by university of Mannheim, where is a platform for the events announcement for exchange students. There are some cultural exchange events, such as explore Hamburg, local pub tours.

### **- Accommodation**

I lived in B7, which is the best student hall my exchange buddy recommended to me. It is close to the campus, so that I didn't buy transportation card which can cost you around 200 Euros per semester. I chose shared apartment which allows me to build up friendship with my flatmates by cooking and having fun with each other.

### **- Course Registration**

There is a system for students to browse all courses' information, but for most courses doesn't require pre-registration. It means you can go to attend the courses according to the schedule and decide if you want to drop or not. You can give up the course almost any time before final exam. The system and regulation are entirely different from what we have in HKUST. Pay attention to the deadline of registration of final exam.

### **- Teaching and assessment Methods**

The courses I took had final exam as the only assessment method, without any requirement about participation. There are no any interactions between professor and students. In my opinion, the professors still do not know the name of the vast majority of the students.

### **- Finance and the banking**

The expenses will depend on how frequent a student travel during exchange. The cost of living in Mannheim is relatively low compared to other big cities that I travelled in Europe. If you cooked by yourself, you will probably spend 50 euros or less per week. My overall expense is around 70000 HKD, with traveling more than 10 countries. Regarding the account opening, I chose Santander bank, the services were good, and staff can speak fluent English.

### **- Health and Safety**

Mannheim is relatively safe compared to some big cities in Europe. However, based on the experience of my friends, I do not recommend hanging out alone during night. There are still some strange people in the city.

### **- Food**

I always cooked by myself because the food in Germany is the worst among other countries in Europe. I did not finish a complete meal in Germany when I dined in restaurants during my stay in Germany, which explains how much I hated food in Germany.

### **- Transportation**

Since I lived in B7 as I mentioned above, I did not spend any money on transportation during my stay in Mannheim. I could simply walk to campus or city centre which only took me couple of minutes. If you live in other student halls, it would be better to purchase the transportation package with student discount in campus which costs around 200 euros or less for one semester.

### **- Climate**

Germany is getting hotter and hotter in recent years. Sometimes the temperature can climb up to 32 Celsius degree after May. In winter, it seldom snows in Mannheim because the weather is quite dry. But it can be really cold with temperature lower than 0 degree.

### **- Communication**

The English proficiency of people in Mannheim is quite poor which I did not expect before I go to Germany. Sometimes I encountered difficulties when I ordered food in restaurant because the staff could not understand the numbers in English. The services were quite poor in Germany, which I considered it is the worst in Europe. Probably because I can only speak English but not German. Local folks in Germany are not willing to speak English to you even though they can speak fluent English. The reason might be they are really proud of their culture and language, if you speak German with them, they will be very happy and provide better services because you are learning their language.

### **Part 3 Items to Bring**

✓	<b>Computer</b>
✓	<b>Passbook</b>
✓	<b>Jacket</b>
✓	<b>Charging Cables</b>
✓	<b>Camera</b>
✓	<b>Clothes for winter</b>
✓	<b>T shirt</b>
✓	<b>Medicine</b>
✓	<b>Stationary</b>

### **Part 4 Useful Links**

Personal information portal: <https://myunima.uni-mannheim.de/incomings/portal>

Course portal: <https://portal2.uni-mannheim.de/>

Course information page: <https://cas.uni-mannheim.de>

If more information is needed, get my contact from SBM Exchange Team by emailing at [bmugexch@ust.hk](mailto:bmugexch@ust.hk)