

EXCHANGE REPORT



UNIVERSITY OF
MANNHEIM,
GERMANY

YAU HIU MAN (IS & OM)
SPRING 2018 |

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Monthly Activity Log

February 2018

I arrived in Mannheim on 6th, through DB train from Frankfurt International airport. Once I arrived in Mannheim, I first went to the hall manager's office for the check in process. Then I took a rest and hanged around the city with my dorm mate. The next few days, I dealt with many stuffs such as the student enrolment in L1, get a resident permit in K7, open a bank account for the rental payment and also buy a semester ticket. I also joined some orientation parties organised by VISUM, an international student society. It was a great chance to meet friends from different countries. After settling down in Mannheim, I travelled with a new friend I met in the party to Paris. We visited Eiffel tower, Musée du Louvre, etc. After travel, most of the lessons started.



March 2018

In March, I decided to travel to Iceland and grab the final chance to watch the Aurora. I first went to Finland to meet up with my friend who was having her exchange in Finland and then we travelled to the Rovaniemi. We just stayed in Rovaniemi for two days to visit the Santa Claus Village. In Santa Claus Village, we saw an official Santa Claus, reindeer and Husky but the price for the reindeer ride or the husky ride is quite expensive so we decided not to try it. After visiting the Santa Claus Village, we went to Iceland and we joined a local tour there. It was more convenient to join a tour although it was quite expensive as the public transport there is not that accessible. Luckily, we saw an aurora at night although it was not so strong.



April 2018

April was a relatively intense month for me as I had one exam after the ester break. I basically used up my whole ester break for studying the exam. After the exam, I went to two towns in Poland, karków and Warsaw. Both towns are beautiful and the price level in Poland was relatively cheaper than most of the European countries.



May 2018

May came, the workload was reduced significantly as one of my courses had already ended. I travelled to Cologne, Brussel and Luxemburg with my friend by DB train and Flixbus. Flixbus can be considered as a cheaper way to travel around Europe but it would be quite tired as most of the journey took up to 5 hours or above. One week later, I also went to Hamburg for about two days. After some travels, I started to prepare one of my exam at end of the May.



June 2018

The last month of my exchange journey. After finished all the exam in June, I travelled around Europe with my family. We travelled Munich, Prague, Milan, Pairs, London and Frankfurt in three weeks. Before going back to Hong Kong, I have to first dis-enrol my student identity in L1, then deregister my resident permit in K7, checked out the dorm and also closed the bank account. Those stuffs may take up to 2- 3 days.



GENERAL EXCHANGE INFORMATION

Visa Procedures

The visa application is not complicated if you have handed in all the required materials. If you left one of the documents, they will not accept your application and you need to come another day. Therefore, you need to be well prepared for all the required materials. Once you get contacted by your host institution, you need to provide a proof of the English course provision. Then, you need to provide the insurance certificate. After handing in all your documents, it takes a month to process your visa.

Orientation Activities

The school provides a compulsory orientation which targets all the exchange students and it basically contains information about how to register for courses and your way around university. I think it is not extremely important and useful. If you already know the course registration, you can probably skip it. The school also offers an orientation for only the business students. I think this will be more useful than the one mentioned before as you can meet some friends which may have a same lesson with you.

International Services & Activity

VISUM is an international student society which will host several Stammtish every month that allows exchange students to meet each other. Apart from Stammtish, they will also organize some short trips which require registration at the international office. And they will send you an email every month.

Courses Registration

Some courses require you to register before the class using an online system called portal2. The lecture, tutorial session and also the exercise session are registered separately. Therefore, remember to register also the tutorial and exercise session. Some courses automatically register you as long as you show up for the first lesson. Bear in mind that you also need to register for the exam. If you forget to register for the exam, you need to pay 10 euro each course for the later registration.

Accommodations

Unlike UST, all dormitories in Mannheim are located off campus which may take either 15 minutes' walk or 20 minutes' tram. B7 is the closest dormitories to the university but with very limited vacancies so you need to be aware of the date of registration if you want to live in there. Ulmenweg can be considered as the farthest dormitories in Mannheim. The advantages of living in Ulmenweg are more cultural diversity as many exchange students from different countries live there and there are parties every week.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

Many courses in the university of Mannheim are 100% based on the final. Among the courses I took, they all rely on the final exam which without assignments, reports, group projects. But they include lectures, tutorials and exercise sessions that you need to attend. As not much practice is given to you, you need to study all the stuffs hard by yourself.

Transportation

You can buy a semester ticket which cost around EUR165 and valid from February to June. With this ticket, you can take train, bus or tram in Mannheim for unlimited times. This ticket is also available in some towns near Mannheim such as Heidelberg. Also, you may buy a Bahn card which offer you 25% or 50% off for Deutsche Bahn train.

Food

There are not much food choices in Mannheim but the price of the food is quite reasonable. There are two canteens in the university, EO café and Mensa. They offer student cheaper food but they only serve the breakfast and also lunch. There are also many döner shop and Turkish restaurants around the city especially around Marktplatz.

Communication

You can purchase sim card from many different telecommunication providers such as Vodafone, O2 and telekom.de. I purchased the EUR9.9/ month data plan from Vodafone and I think it is quite sufficient and convenient as I can charge my sim card and monitor my usage of data on their website or in their application.

Sport & Recreation Facility

The university has a gym room in the city centre which cost you a little. Also, the university has a cafe in L3 which allow student to relax after lessons.

Climate

The temperature is quite low in February and March which around 0-6 °C and it may snow. The temperature will get much higher starting from April. Also, the temperature difference within a day is quite large.

Finance & Baking

Open a bank account in Germany is quite easy. What you need to provide are your passport, your residence permits that you get from the K7. It is more convenient to have a German bank card as you can use the card in all the towns within Germany.

Social clubs and networking opportunity

There is an international student union called VISUM and they are responsible for organizing different activities every month which allows students to meet each other and experience the local culture. Also, there are parties every week in Ulmenweg and all students can join the parties although you are not live in there.

Health and Safety

There should be some clinics in Mannheim but I am not quite sure as I didn't get sick during my exchange. I think you can bring some medicine from Hong Kong in advance in case of you may get sick. I think Mannheim is a safe city but you still need to be aware of your personal belongings.

ITEMS TO BRING

- Personal document (Passport, housing contract, insurance certificate)
- Electrical adaptor
- Laptop, laptop charger
- Sufficient clothing
- Router (no WIFI provided in student dorm)
- Enough cash
- Credit card
- Backpack for travelling

USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

- University of Mannheim for incoming exchange students:
http://www.unimannheim.de/io/english/incoming_exchange_students/
- Visa affairs on the German Consulate General, Hong Kong website:
<http://www.hongkong.diplo.de/Vertretung/hongkong/en/03Info/Visum/visa.html>
- Course catalogue:
http://www2.uni-mannheim.de/io/english/incoming_exchange_students/course_catalogues/course_catalogue_spring_semester_2018/index.html
- Emergence contact: 112