

Exchange Report (Fall 2018)

Corvinus University of Budapest

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PART 1. Monthly Activity Log

August



Budapest

It was 9PM at night when I landed the Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport, on the 25th of August. Aeroflot, the Russian airlines I took, had told me they left my luggage in Moscow (where I had my transfer flight to Budapest). Hence, with just a backpack I carried, I took a taxi to the flat I rented near Corvinus. And without any pajamas or slippers, I managed to sleep through my first night in Europe, adjusting to the 6 hour time difference.

I purposely arrived a week earlier to familiarise myself with a new environment – the people (language & culture), the system (transport & banking), the time zone (my jet lag was not that bad). It was a perfect season for a riverside walk, the view of the Danube is mesmerising, and the sunset is even better if you watch from the Gellert hill. You would meet a lot of tourists, possibly from other European countries fishing for a new place to immigrate to. Talking to them really gives you a sense of the prevailing problems in the European society, from high income taxes in Northern Europe to the influx of refugees in Western Europe. Eastern European countries are cheaper to live in and sometimes considered safer. Hungary is one of them.

Lake Balaton, Paris, Vienna

I moved into a dormitory on the 2nd of September, and went shopping in IKEA (located in Örs Vezér tere) for bedsheets and pillows. My roommate is a Vietnamese student, she often borrows me her rice cooker. Eating out could be as pricey as in Hong Kong, hence I prefer to cook whenever I can.

Orientation Day was on the 3rd of September, Corvinus would hand you your student ID on that day (needed for monthly transportation pass, residence permit, library card). ESN Corvinus is a student group that offers guided tours and discounts (Ryanair) for exchange students. You can join their membership on that day. I find it a bit pricey, but I get to meet a lot of other exchange students. I joined a local tour to a small town in Hungary called Tihany (lavender heaven) and had hot springs in Lake Balaton.

I only have classes on Monday and Wednesday. I travel every Thursday to Sunday. This month I flew to France, to find a friend who's exchanging in HEC Paris. I also took a Flixbus to visit Vienna, which is just a 3-hour bus ride away.

September



October



Munich, Frankfurt, Cologne, Berlin, Corfu, Athens

The immigration office starts coming to Corvinus in October to distribute the residence permits to students. Make sure you read your emails and communicate with your exchange coordinator. I applied my residence permit in HK, but it failed to provide my information to the immigration office here, and I had to wait two extra weeks to get my permit (it's important for your travels).

I visited a couple of German cities with a friend, and I would say the Oktoberfest, Berlin wall and Cologne Cathedral are really worth a visit. My favourite tourist destination is Corfu – a small island with 57 coastlines in Greece. My favourites were Agios Gordios and Palaiokastritsa. I stayed in an airbnb of local hosts with great hospitality. Athens is a little more dangerous, as I heard a couple of my guy friends got robbed. I was travelling alone and grateful it turned out fine.

I had a midterm and group presentations, as long as you manage your time well and contribute fairly, you shouldn't encounter any problem in your studies.



November

Iceland, Oslo, Copenhagen

This month I decided to head north and catch some northern lights. Unfortunately, I could not catch any during the 1.5 weeks I was in Iceland and Norway. I guess going earlier in the summer helps. But the secret lagoon, the waterfalls where you can see visible rainbows, and geysers are still worth a visit in Iceland. We also rode Icelandic horses, the cutest I've ever seen. If you go to Norway, I suggest you visit Tromsø or Bergen, for better view and northern lights. Denmark was remarkably cheaper than other northern European countries. I guess I spent around HKD12,000 during these 2 weeks of travel – the most expensive but worthwhile trip!

You might wonder whether I attended lessons at all. The answer is yes – I only skipped one class. This is because we have a mid-term break. Just make sure you don't forget your deadlines while you're travelling.

Prague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Delft, Bruges,

This is the month of farewell and enrolling for final exams – enroll on NEPTUNE and you can even choose to take your finals in January. I was always in building C's library, and I was done with finals on December 12.

For Christmas markets I really recommend going to Eastern European countries – I went to Budapest's, Vienna's and Prague's. Not only were they full of fairy lights and music, but also they were safer. If you had known of the 2018 shooting in Strasbourg France's Christmas market (where my friend was planning to visit originally), you understand what I'm saying. I came across demonstration in Budapest too, I guess paying attention to the news is the most important and necessary.

I also wanted to visit the Benelux countries – but I hadn't got enough time for Luxembourg. If you love seafood, you must try haring fish in the Netherlands! Try mussels in Belgium too. My most memorable things were fireworks and windmills. My favorite museum is the Anne Frank house – please do visit if you're going to Amsterdam.

December



January



Manchester, Liverpool, London, Barcelona, Milan, Innsbruck, Hallstatt, Salzburg, Krakow

I started off my 2019 with visiting a friend in Manchester, who brought me to see the docks and Beatles in Liverpool. If you're a football fan (I'm not) then make sure you don't miss out these places – because there aren't much of other things to do there. If you'd ever stomp upon London, I highly recommend you to join one of Strawberry tour's free walking tours, and don't miss out the flag on Buckingham Palace to see if the Queen is in town. The National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, City of London... I love London a lot.

My most memorable European architectures come from Barcelona, Spain. Antoni Gaudí, father of the Sagrada Família church and many modernism architectures, is the one name you cannot forget after you visit Barcelona. Even the Duomo di Milano cannot beat my love for the Sagrada Família. But make sure you try Tiramisu in Italy.

I went to the mountains and lakes of Austria, indescribably refreshing and out of the world. It's like Switzerland at a cheaper price – 50 euros to visit Innsbruck for 3 days (snow mountains, cable cars, traffic, Swarovski museum inclusive), that is ridiculously cheap. I'm a big fan of Julie Andrews, main actress of 'The Sound of Music' filmed in Salzburg. I then visited Krakow in Poland, and rode a flixbus back to Budapest. I checked out my dormitory and flew back to Hong Kong on the 25th of January.

PART 2. General Exchange Information

a. Visa Procedures



According to the HK Immigration Department, “HKSAR passport holders do not need a visa to the Schengen area for a stay up to 90 days in any 180-day period”. Hungary is one of them. But because we are staying for more than 90 days on an exchange, you have to apply a residence permit. Better apply it before you go on exchange, so once you arrive Budapest, you just have to pick it up in the office or at the times where the office visits Corvinus.

I basically called up the Consulate General of Hungary in Hong Kong and they asked me to leave them an email address. They then sent me steps to proceed with. It took a month for the whole process in HK to get done. What I was disappointed was that the office in Hungary had not gotten any information from the HK office, and I had to spend some extra time in Budapest to give my data, such as my fingerprints and my photo.



Email from the Consulate General of Hungary in HK wrote:

Documents needed to apply for a student residence permit:

- Consular fee €60 (please refer to the attached payment instruction)
- Filled in and signed application form for stay longer than 3 months ([please](#) find it attached)
- 1 color passport size photo (35-40mm width; not older than 6 months)
- Letter of acceptance from the host college
- Proof of paid tuitions
- Confirmation of dormitory placement/ apartment rental contract plus recent land deed of the apartment (the minimum requirement is the first two weeks of accommodation is booked)
- Medical and accident insurance for the duration of stay in Hungary
- Evidence of sufficient financial means during your stay in Hungary (present the bank statements of the past 6 months, not just the most recent one)
- Flight reservation
- Hong Kong ID Card
- Valid passport (excessing your stay in Hungary by at least 6 months)
- Letter of consent by the parents (if the applicant is under age)
- Interview with the Consul (by appointment, can be made by email)
- The application takes 30 days
- Remarks: a birth certificate is required to show the lineage if the applicant’s financial source is supported by his/ her parents

b. Orientation Activities

The rundown regarding orientation day was roughly the following:

3rd September 2018 (Monday), from 12:00 (arrival: 11:50)

- 12:10 - 12:15: Short film about famous Hungarian inventions
- 12:15 - 12:30: Introduction of Corvinus University of Budapest
- 12:30 - 12:45: Practical information for Exchange Students
- 12:45 - 12:55: NEPTUN information
- 12:55 - 13:05: MOODLE information
- 13:05 - 13:15: Introduction speech about the central library
- 13:15 - 13:25: Sport facilities in and around CUB
- 13:25 - 13:35: Introduction of ESN Corvinus
- 13:35 - 15:00: Central registration for all students



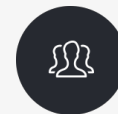
You will get your student ID (a piece of paper) there, for which you need to get the monthly student pass for travelling in Budapest. Make sure you bring it around with you, as you may get randomly checked by the BKK metro's staff of whether you are valid for a student pass or not. They don't accept your photo/electronic copies of the student ID. Keep the paper in your wallet. Otherwise you will get fined and they accept no explanations.

c. International Services & Activities

The Welcome Program of ESN Corvinus Student Organisation:

3rd September 2018 (Monday), from 18:45 pm

- 18.45 - 19.00: Meeting ([Main Building, Fővám tér 8](#))
- 19.00 - 19.15: Introduction of ESN, university tour and get-to-know each other games
- 19.15 - 19.45: ESN surprise
- 20.00 - 19.45: Welcome party



You will have a chance to meet a lot of people through the activities organised by the ESN throughout the semester, such as walking tours, short excursions to neighboring countries or cities, a lot of party and drinking. Make sure you ask to join their WhatsApp group to know what's going on. I had not fully utilised the ESN membership though I bought it. I could have flown more with Ryanair (where we have 15% discounts on flight tickets), and joined more parties where drinking is really cheap. But I am not a party person. The membership is about 4000HUF.

d. Accommodation

Corvinus may email you around the start of August regarding student dormitories/rental solutions. Flats in Budapest are about 350EUR per month, which is regarded affordable in European standard. However, dormitories are even much cheaper.

I was told that international students are not provided with the school dormitory, and I was in need of a residence proof for applying my residence permit, so I searched for a flat and signed a 5-month contract with the agent "Student Rental Solutions".

I still emailed the coordinator that I really wished to live in a dorm, and they eventually gave me the link to apply the dormitory and even gave me a place. Although it was really far from the school and city center, it was ten times cheaper, so I was still thankful. I then transferred my original rental contract to another person that I searched in Facebook's "Budapest Flats" group.



e. Course Registration

Here were some important dates for me:

Course registration starts: 10:00, 13th June 2018 (Hungarian time)

Course registration ends: 23:59, 15th June 2018 (Hungarian time)

Add-Drop period begins: 10:00, 4th September 2018 (Hungarian time)

Add-Drop period ends: 23:59, 16th September 2018 (Hungarian time)

Maximum 30 ECTS credits can be taken (6 ECTS per course). All the courses must be taken from your administrative and max. one course from another faculty.

My Courses	HKUST Equivalence	Pros	Cons
Business Ethics	MGMT2130: Business Ethics and Social Responsibility	Interactive, knowledgeable professor.	You must speak a lot for participation.
Business Intelligence	ISOM3360: Data Mining for Business Analytics	Practical data analytic tools to learn.	The teacher was quite laid back to teach.
Effective e-Business Management	ISOM3310: e-Business Management and Web Analytics	The grading is super lenient.	The teaching is quite monotone and boring.

f. Teaching and Assessment Methods

Local and ECTS Grading

Corvinus University (Local) Grading	Equivalent ECTS Grading
5 Jeles	A Excellent
4 Jó	B Good
3 Közepes	C Satisfactory
2 Elégséges	D / E Pass / Sufficient
1 Elégtelen	F Fail*
- Igazoltan nem jelent meg	JAFE Justified absence from exam*
- Nem vizsgázott	I Incomplete*
- Aláírva	S Signed*
- Megtagadva	R Refused*

* no credit

Definition of ECTS Grading Scale

A	Excellent	Outstanding performance with only minor errors
B	Good	Above the average standard but with some errors
C	Satisfactory	Generally good work with a number of notable errors
D / E	Pass / Sufficient	Passable performance, meeting the minimum criteria
F	Fail	Considerable further work is required
JAFE	Justified absence from exam	Justified absence from exam
I	Incomplete	No exam taken / Did not fulfil all course requirements
S	Signed	Completed practice / training
R	Refused	Did not complete practice / training

The professors' teaching styles vary, as you know. So make use of your add-drop period to search for a good professor's lesson. Midterms and final exams for my courses were really easy, and the final grading for the whole class is transparent. Most of the classmates get an A or B.



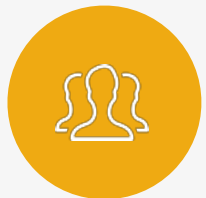
g. Sports and Recreation Facilities

Corvinus does not have a gym, but the dormitory I live in does. The school offers a lot of sports classes, even yoga and dance classes. They will introduce to you in the orientation day.



h. Finance and Banking

I opened my bank account with the OTP bank, and it was the biggest mistake I made. They charge huge interest rate and admin fees. Please change some euros before you leave HK, and change it to forints once you arrive Budapest. Otherwise, use a credit card.



i. Social Clubs and Networking

As mentioned previously, join ESN Student Organisation's activities to meet more people. You can always meet other tourists while you walk on the riverside of the Danube too!



j. Health and Safety

There are abundant pharmacies in Budapest at a reasonable price. I also visited a private clinic that I searched online. Their basic checkups are not expensive, compared to HK. I lived in district 10, considered more dangerous so I don't go home too late.



k. Food

I think you must try the goulash soup at "For Sale Pub", just opposite to the main building of our school. A nice Chinese restaurant is next to our school too. Otherwise, the canteen can be an affordable choice. I usually cook for myself.



l. Transportation

Transportation is about 100hkd per month, metro and bus and tram inclusive. Bus 100E to the airport is 30hkd. Otherwise you can take 200E to the airport with your student pass without extra charge too.



m. Climate

Walking along the Danube river at the end of August is quite cool. I once had only a short sleeve on and I almost caught a cold. Make sure you bring enough winter clothes or be prepared to buy big warm coats in Budapest (like I did). The temperature can be as cool as 10 degrees in Autumn, and -8 degrees with snow in Winter.



n. Communication

Speaking of telecommunications, I highly recommend buying your data sim card in Sham Shui Po. It costs around 290hkd for 12GB and it can be used in most European countries. Most of the young people in Hungary can speak English, but don't expect the older generation to do so (the BKK metro staff too). I think body language and google translation will help you a lot.



o. Cautionary Measures

Remember to keep up with the news. Protests, strikes and demonstrations can always happen, affecting your flights and travels, and sometimes your personal safety. I witnessed increasingly radical movements over the past few years, such as shooting and violent protests like the yellow vest movement in France. Do your best to avoid travelling to more dangerous places during festivals.



p. Other Notes

I only brought one big luggage, one backpack, and one small hand carry to Hungary. I usually only bring a backpack and a hand carry, for my travels. The key is to keep it minimalistic! I remember travelling in Amsterdam and Belgium for ten days with a friend who brought two big luggages, and there were a lot of stairs to walk. So don't make a fool out of yourself!

Here is my academic calendar for your reference, so you get the idea of some important dates:

ACADEMIC CALENDAR 2018/2019

Events	Dates
1st (Fall) semester	
Orientation Day*	September 3 (12:00)
Enrolment week	September 3 -7
First day to add and drop courses	September 4 (10:00)
Opening Ceremony (also for international students)	September 9 (14:30)
First day of classes	September 10
Last day to add and drop courses	September 16 (23:59)
Fall break	October 29 – November 4
CEMS Career Forum	November 9 – 10
Last day of classes	December 14
Exam period	December 17 – 21 and January 2 – 26

PART 3. Items to Bring

To-Bring-List

- HKID card, passport, documents needed for residence permit
- Euros and Credit card
- Boarding pass (printed or e-version)
- Sim card
- Electronics (laptop, phone, camera, battery, power bank)
- Charger, cables and international adapter
- Clothing (waterproof warm coats, swimsuits)
- Shoes (slippers and waterproof shoes/snow boots)
- First AID and medicine
- Skincare and hairbrush
- Water bottle
- Tissue and towels
- Earphone
- Neck pillow
- A schoolbag/ handbag
- Bedsheets and pillow case (if you live in dormitory)

To-NOT-Bring-List

- Rice cooker (buy it in Asian market there to save luggage space)
- Cooking utensils and pots (usually provided by the flat owners)
- Pillows and blankets (usually provided, or buy in IKEA)
- Bath products (I suggest buying in Europe, save luggage space)

PART 4. Useful Links and Contacts

1. Residence permit and visa matters:
 - i. <https://www.consulate-hongkong.com/city/Hungary-in-Hong-Kong>
 - ii. https://www.immd.gov.hk/pdf/Full_List_of_Visa-free_Access_or_Visa-on-arrival_for_HKSAR_Passport_en.pdf
2. Flats for rent in Budapest:
 - i. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1621259858185948/>
 - ii. <http://www.srs-budapest.hu/>
3. ESN Corvinus Student Organisation:
<https://www.facebook.com/esncorvinus/>
4. Courses and general information of Corvinus:
<http://corvinus.mobilitymanager.hu/student/>
5. Student information center of Corvinus:
https://neptun3r.web.uni-corvinus.hu/hallgatoi_1/login.aspx
6. HKUST Credit Transfer:
https://crtran.ust.hk/credit_instit



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