



Exchange Report | Spring 2022-23

Tilburg University - Netherlands

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Monthly Activity Log

January

I arrived Netherlands on 21 January, the first day of the orientation program. On the registration day, student representatives from ESN will pick you up at Tilburg University station and carry your luggage to your housing. I joined ESN for a tour around Tilburg city center which we walked around the city. After a week of settling down and meeting new friends, I got Covid-19 and did a self-quarantine.

February

School commences in February. Workload is relatively light so I went to discover other cities in Netherlands with friends I met in my housing. I travelled to Breda and the Hague. In mid Feb, exchange students from Hong Kong got together for a hotpot night since we miss Asian food a lot.



March

I did not have mid-terms yet so I traveled to Iceland trying to catch the aurora. I went to Decathlon to get supplies for my Iceland trip. Unfortunately, the Icelandic weather is horrible and I had been brutalized by the storm. Hence, I did not catch northern light. Yet, Iceland is still one of the must-go and the scenery is spectacular and breathtaking. At end of month, I went to Rome at end of the month. Italy is slight warmer than Netherlands so I wore my summer clothes. I had lots of gelatos there. Given the nice weather, I suggest going Italy during this period of time.

April

April was a super hectic month for me. I traveled to Austria, Hungary, France and Poland after finishing my exams. I also got to see Keshi's concert, which was super lit and cool. On April 27, there is a holiday called King's day where everyone dresses in Orange. I went to Amsterdam to celebrate.

May

I went to Kpop night at Amsterdam organized by Jin entertainment and had a lot fun with my friends. Netherlands is renowned for its flowers so I went to the tulip barn for some tulips. In mid-May, I visited Switzerland and I adore it more than any other countries I have visited. The weather is super nice and I got to experience paragliding. Since I got a exam in end of May, I decided to stay at Tilburg to study. During these few weeks, my floormates prepared their home dishes for us to taste. I am fed well with taros, Hainanese chicken rice and goulash soup.



June

It is June and it is time to say goodbye. We had a floor party to farewell one of our floormates. The sun sets super late in summer and it is very pretty. Most of my exams are scheduled in June, so I spent my remaining days at Tilburg studying. The library is as crowded as HKUST and you would have to reserve a study place in advance. After the exam, I went to Amsterdam to spend my last night with my friends.



General exchange info

Visa procedures

The university will assist you for application of long-stay visa (MVV) and you will be contacted by the immigration coordinators by email. You will be informed about procedures and supporting documents you need to supply so they can apply for the visa on your behalf. The visa application fee is 192 euro. Once the documents are approved, the officer will send you an invitation to make an in-person appointment with the Consulate of the Netherlands. Planning your time ahead is advised since the consulate has limited timeslots for booking. I would recommend booking the appointment at least 2 weeks before your departure.

Orientation activities

During TOP week, ESN will organize a series of orientation activities. Students will be divided into groups with mentors from ESN. I did not join as it was originally supposed to be hosted online, but I would recommend it as you got to meet other exchange students as I heard from my friends.

International Services and Activities

I*ESN is the main international student organization which organizes activities and events for both local and non-local students. They hold a lot of events and parties throughout the year and they got their own bar – Carpe Noctem. You can pay for their membership to join their events at a discounted price.

Accommodations

Most of the exchange students live in Professor Verbernelaan, which is a 10-minute walk from the university. An email will be sent containing the details of renting a room. There are 5 buildings and there are 5 floors in each building. Around 15 students share a floor with 2 toilets and 3 bathrooms. You should reserve a room as soon as the reservation systems opens as rooms are limited. Accommodation costs around 360+ euros per month. I suggest living in the 4th building as laundry is downstairs so you do not have to carry your clothes all the way from other buildings. It may be noisier and there are more parties on the lower floors, but climbing the stairs up and down can be exhausting. Some of the floors also includes bicycle sheds. All in all, you can meet a lot of friends in Verbs but the soundproof is terrible.

Course registration

Osiris is used in Tilburg university for course registration where you can review course information including syllabus, timetable, course outcomes, etc. Prior to course registration, exchange students are required to submit a proposed study plan on Mobility and you can only register for a course after it is approved on Mobility. Some courses have prerequisites and have to be approved by the course coordinator. Course registration in Tilburg University is very flexible, you can submit the plan and change the plan anytime so you can enroll even courses have started (except for language courses). It is also acceptable to register courses that have time conflicts.

Teaching and Assessment methods

The workload is not heavy compared to HKUST but the exams are not easy. Hence, you should also study as they have a resit culture. The passing grade is 6 out of 10.

Finance and Banking

Exchange students are required to transfer around 6500 euros prior to their arrival. Once you have opened your bank account, the money will be transferred back to your account. You can only open a bank account once you have your IND. Therefore, you should bring some cash in case of emergency. I opened bank accounts for both ABN AMRO and Revolut. I recommend Revolut as the account opening process is much faster and the exchange fee across currencies are cheaper.

Climate

I reside in Netherlands during January to June and the weather is quite nice in Tilburg. I would say Netherlands is not as cold as I imagine and it gets pretty hot in summer.

Health & Safety

As far as I know, seeing a doctor in Tilburg is not as convenient as in Hong Kong. If you are living in a student hostel, flu is pretty common so you should bring some pills with you. In terms of safety, Tilburg is pretty safe but I do not suggest to wander around in mid-night as the streets are quiet.

Food

If you are a person who loves to eat, you may be disappointed by the limited choices of restaurant around the university. There is a fast food restaurant, a Café and a canteen around the university. So, I normally cook myself three dishes a day. If you want to dine out, there are many choices near the city center. There is a small supermarket (Albert Heijn) and a large supermarket (Jumbo) around the area. Make sure you scan the bonus cards for

discounts. On Saturdays, there is a weekend market where you can buy fresh foods at a cheap price.

Transportation

The Dutch mainly transport by bikes. There is a store around the university that you can rent from but I rent mine from Swapfiets. You should be aware if the bike you rent have hand brakes as the bike I rent did not have and incidents happened. Always keep to the right and be cautious when you cycle. Also, do not forget to lock your bike as there are a lot of bike thieves. Overall, I do not think having a bike is necessary as most of the places I go is in walking distance unless you cycle to the city center a lot. In addition to bikes, trains and buses are also an option. I mostly transport by train for intercity trips. Yet, the transportation fee is much more expensive comparing to Hong Kong. You can purchase a OV Chipkaart (similar to Octopus) for discounted price. Personally, I did not buy the card as I found it is cheaper to travel with joint journey off peak discount. You can download NS (train) and 9292(travel planner) from app store.

Communication

The Dutch are not reluctant to speak English and they have very high English proficiency. Communication is never a problem in Netherlands. For telecommunication, I subscribed from Lebara. I got a free sim from the ESN welcome package where you can top up using it. The plan covers most of the parts in Europe and it costs 10 euros for 5 GB data with unlimited calls and texts.

Sports and Recreation Facilities

The sports center is a 5-minute walk from Professor Verbelaans/10-minute walk from the University. With around 22 euro per month, you can work out at the gym and enjoy a wide range of sports classes including horseriding, pole dancing, boxing and many more. The sports center is one of my favorite place and I recommend trying jumping fitness or insanity (if you want to challenge yourself).

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

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Cautionary measures

Do not use your phone while cycling and turn on both the front and back light of your bike at night as the fine is quite heavy.

Items to Bring (and where you can find if you did not bring it over)

1. Clothes
2. Flip Flops (Primark)
3. Sunglasses (Primark)
4. Toothbrush (Primark and Kruidvat)
5. Medicine
6. Towel (Primark)
7. Shampoo, Conditioner, Shower Gel (Primark/ Kruidvat/Albert Heijn/Jumbo)
8. Hairdryer (Mediamart)
9. Sunscreen
10. Travel Adaptor
11. Laptop
12. Tissue
13. Money
14. Umbrella

Useful Links and Contacts

1. Tilburg University Facilities Booking
<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/students/studying/campus/make-room-reservations>
2. Tilburg University Printing Instructions
<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/students/studying/campus/print>
3. Tilburg University Sports Center
<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/campus/sports-center>
4. NS Train Website
<https://www.ns.nl/en>
5. Tilburg University Accommodation
<http://www.yourroomintilburg.com/>
6. Lebara Mobile service
<https://mobile.lebara.com/nl/en/sim-only?duration=24&internetLimit=5&unlimited=true>
7. Osiris course registration
<https://uvt.osiris-student.nl/>