

Exchange Report

ESSEC, France

ESSEC Business School



SONIA LAU
FALL 2022

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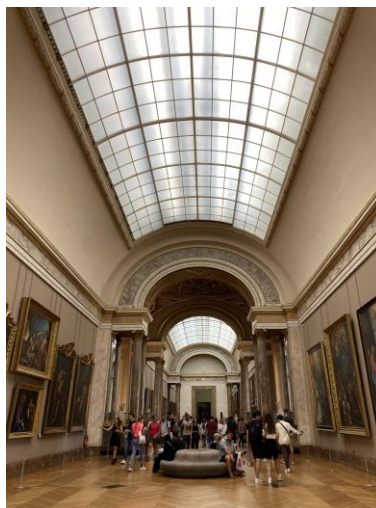
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MONTHLY LOG

September 2022

The moment when I arrived Paris, I was expecting it to be the same as what I see on the show Emily in Paris. I was so wrong, even though Cergy is only 50 minutes away from Paris city center, it is so different from the romantic city that I envisioned. It is definitely more dangerous compared to the Paris city center areas as Cergy has one of the highest crime rates in France. Despite that, I have made friends throughout various exchange student orientation and welcoming events, we explored the city together. We visited the Eiffel tower, Louvre, and enjoyed French pastries on our day offs.



October 2022

As the courses I took were more project-based rather than examination-based, October was my busiest month. Numerous individual report and group presentations have to be completed. On top of that, there were also a lot of quizzes that took place during this month. Thankfully, I planned out my time and was able to complete all assignments and have ample time to revise for midterm exams and regular quizzes for all my courses. I was also able to squeeze in time to explore other European countries and regions in France during my day offs and mid-term break. My most memorable moments were seeing the Northern lights in Iceland and visiting prestigious chateaus in Bordeaux.



November 2022

With final presentations, reports and exams coming up, November is filled with even more stress. Even though there were a lot of work to be completed, I was able to squeeze in a few trips. My favorite country has to be Italy, as food is the key to my heart, and all my meals in Italy were superb. From pizzas from Rome to steaks from Florence to gelatos in Milan, everything was well-made and delicious. Besides, I also explored Paris further by watching ballet at the Palais Garnier. It was extremely different from Hong Kong, as the intricate and grandeur interior and exterior designs are superior to the typical theatre halls we see here in Hong Kong.



December 2022

Since, I do not have any final exams, my last day of school was on the first of December. However, I had two final exams that day and it was extremely stressful. I struggled with my French exam the most, as the language itself is very different from English and Chinese. Having one more week before I go back to Hong Kong, I had farewell meals with the friends I met here, explored the different Christmas markets in Paris, and went on a ski trip in Tignes (another commune in France).



GENERAL EXCHANGE INFO

Visa Procedures

ESSEC provided a letter of acceptance for visa procedures. This was sent to us automatically, so if you do not have it remember to reach out to ESSEC as your student visa is highly dependent on this letter. Apart from this, filling in the application form online in the Consulate General of France website is required. After this has been completed, you will need to schedule an interview with Campus France via email. In the interview, he/she will ask you general questions on your CV and ask why you chose France for your exchange studies. When you pass the interview with Campus France, you will then need to make an appointment with the Consulate. It is difficult to make an appointment, so definitely to apply early and check the website for appointments frequently to make sure that you have ample time prior your visit to France.

Orientation, International Services & Activities

An official orientation will be held a few days before school starts. Besides the official orientation, the school's student council often hosts many activities to allow exchange students to mingle with one another and blend into the ESSEC culture, which consists of a lot of parties. Another student association called MELT also hosts weekly activities to introduce France to exchange students. There are also trips to nearby countries at an affordable price available for students to explore.

Accommodations

All accommodations are off-campus and some are quite far away from the school. I lived in Le Port, which is around 15 minutes walking distance from the school and nearby RER station (train that gets you to Paris city center). However, it is a pretty dangerous area, so I would recommend future exchange students to live outside of Cergy and on the RER A line. Areas include: Maisons Laffitte, Sartrouville, Nanterre Prefecture, and La Defense. These areas are safer and is within 40 minutes from the ESSEC campus.

Course Registration

Exchange students were given priority to register into courses first. Therefore, I had no problem in registering into any of my courses. No pre-registration was needed, but if you would like to do French, a language test will be needed for students who already know French. If you are a beginner, sending an email to the teacher will be sufficient.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

Teachers at ESSEC are mainly French, but you can select courses that are taught in English. They are relatively chiller from course content to teaching style. They also engage with students a lot throughout the 3-hr lectures. Assessments are similar to HKUST, there are both individual and group presentations and reports. Also, multiple choice and open-ended questions in exams are also very common. All courses have different assessment methods, some are all hand-in assignments, where others are focused mainly on quizzes.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

Currently, ESSEC is building a sports and recreation facility, however when I was at ESSEC it was unavailable.

Finance and Banking

The expenses will depend on how often you plan to travel. The main currency used in France is EUR. For the whole semester, I spent EUR 11,000. I do not recommend opening a bank account there, as registering a world debit card from HSBC will be sufficient. There are quite a number of HSBC ATMs in the Paris city center. If not, you can still take-out money from other ATMs but with a small fee (usually within 5 EURs).

Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities

There were a lot of clubs available, but only for ESSEC students, so I was not a part of any of the clubs.

Health and Safety

ESSEC is located in one of the dangerous areas in France. Be sure to head to school with a friend, if not be aware of your surroundings at all times. I would recommend you to purchase a phone strap, and while you walk remember to hold your back close to you to prevent someone from stealing your belongings.

Food

I mostly ate lunches and dinners in a nearby mall called Centre Commercial Les 3 Fontaines. It is a shopping mall with a large supermarket, a lot of restaurants, and shops. It has a wide variety of cuisines as well, so I always eat at the mall. When I plan

to cook at my dorm, I usually purchase ingredients from Auchan (supermarket inside the mall), it has everything you need.

Transportation

I mainly travel by RER A, and the nearest station to school is Cergy Prefecture. When you arrive the Paris city center, you usually take the metro. As I had 3 suitcases, I took a taxi when I arrived, and it costs around 90 EURs from Charles De Gaulle to my dorm. Uber will usually be cheaper compared to taxis, so I would recommend you to take an Uber instead of cabbing.

Climate

It was quite warm when I arrived, but it quickly became cold in a week, so would say to pack more thick clothes and layering will be important because temperature at night times is way lower than mornings. There are also heaters indoors so thick jackets have to be removed if not you will be burning.

Communication

French is used day-to-day, but if you do not know French like me, remember to download google translate as it is extremely useful to get around.

Cautionary Measures

Be aware of your surroundings as there are many pickpockets in France.

Other Notes

There are train strikes all the time in France, remember to download citymapper and look at the train schedule. The trains are not like Hong Kong, it might take longer for it to arrive, so reserve enough time to travel to campus if you decide to live closer to the Paris city center. You usually get off Auber, Charles De Gaulle, and Chatlet Les Halles. These three are the main stations that will lead you to the Paris city center.

ITEMS TO BRING

- Short-sleeve tops
- Thin long-sleeve tops
- Thick sweatshirts and sweaters
- Thin jackets (hoodies, denim jacket, etc.)
- Thick jackets (puffer, parka, etc.)
- Laptop
- Charger (phone, laptop)
- Converter (HK to EU)
- Sneakers
- Phone strap (highly recommended)
- Backpack (unbranded, or cheap)
- Medicine
- Toiletries
- Bed sheets, blankets, pillows (optional)

USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

French Visa Application

Interview appointment email: campusfrancehkmacao@gmail.com

Visa application form and appointment: <https://hongkong.consulfrance.org/Applying-for-a-French-visa-in-Hong-Kong-and-Macau>

ESSEC (Academics)

Course List: <https://sites.google.com/a/essec.edu/bba-incoming-international-exchange/academic-info>

Email: bba-globaleducation@essec.edu

Contact Person: Mrs. Jessie LECONTE +33 (0)1 34 43 3297

ALEGESSEC (Housing)

alesgessec-gestion@essec.edu

+33 (0)1 34 20 60 00