



Spring Term 2022-2023

**TSENG, Yung-Yi**

Prague University of Economics and Business (Czech Republic)



## Monthly Activity Log

### **February:**

I arrived in Prague on 1 Feb, before the orientation week. My buddy came to pick me up from Prague Airport. She guided me through the 3 transportation I will use the most in Prague, tram, bus, and metro, from the airport to the city center.

My buddy and I discussed and listed some to-do stuff before I arrived. She helped me settle down and introduced some places that I might be interested in Prague for the first day. (She told me about Manufactura - a body care shop most famous for its beer shampoo)



*My buddy and I at the airport*

The orientation week was conducted mostly online due to COVID. There were workshops about the Czech Republic, its language, and cultural differences, and some guides to help you register for your course. ESN (a student organization responsible for holding activities for exchange students) also organized a series of activities this week. I joined “Pub Crawl” (I would say it’s kind of an RPG game with LOTS OF alcohol involved) and met some new friends.

Meanwhile, I’ve also gone on a 3-day Moravia Trip with ESN. We went to Lednice to visit the castle, and Mikulov to go on a small hike for the city view. We also visited a stalactite cave. During this trip, I met a group of friends (from Slovenia, Hungary, Spain, Korea, and Mainland China) who became my best friends during this exchange program.

The semester started in mid-February adding a one-week add-drop period. I enrolled in a total of 6 courses. Apart from the academic part, I also visited some famous spots in Prague on the weekends, City Hall, National Museum, Beer Museum, Prague Castle, etc. I’ve also visited Český Krumlov and visited Milan and Venice, Italy (for the masked carnival) with my friends on weekends.



*Český Krumlov*



*ESN event - Pub Crawl*



*Italy, Venice*



*Moravia Trip with ESN*



## March:

Things went unexpectedly fast after the first month when everything became on track. My 2 flatmates and I celebrated my roommates' birthday in a Mexican Restaurant (Yes, she is from Mexico) On the weekend, the group friends met on the Moravia trip and I self-arranged a small one-day trip to Kutná Hora. We visited the Italian Palace and the famous ossuary, which is a UNESCO heritage site (it does not allow tourists to take any photos of the architecture).

This month, my roommate and some other international friends went to Bohemian Switzerland National Park for a big hike. We went to see the gorgeous geographic view and got lost in the woods for almost 3 hours (but it was fun)



*Trip to Kutná Hora with my friends*



*Bohemian Switzerland National Park*

I've also tried to "live as a local" this month by joining the body training studio at Olšanka Sports Centre (strongly recommend if you're a sporty person). I had yoga, aerobic training, body training, etc almost every week. (Details are in the General Information at the end of this paper) Also, I met some local friends in class who share a common interest, playing badminton, with me; thus, we would hang out for badminton matches in our leisure time.

During innovation week (the last week of March), my roommates and I went on a one-week trip to Italy. We visited Napoli, Matera, and Rome. I like the historical and significant scenery in Matera. The food in Italy was outstanding, pizza and pasta are a must here, and they are usually served in various flavors. For dessert lovers (especially



tiramisu), “Mr.100 Tiramisu” in Rome is a blast. It serves 100 kinds of tiramisu, the flavors range from fruity options to chocolate ones.



*Italy, Matera*

### **April:**

I visited a friend in the Netherlands during the first week of April. We went to the National Museum for the Vermeer Exhibition and the red-light street at night. She also brought me local must-eat street food, such as apple strudel, and chocolate cookies in Amsterdam. One of the newest facilities in Amsterdam is the Amsterdam Lookout, a swing on the skyscraper, which I would say is one of the most exciting stuff. Apart from the city center, we had a day trip to Zaandam and Giethoorn. (I highly recommend these places. If you're lucky, you could also sail a private boat on the river) Since April is the season for tulips, we visited Keukenhof for tulips and other various kinds of flowers. Moreover, my friend and I visited Bruges, Belgium. We tasted waffles and mussel dishes, which are both famous in Belgium and also visited some famous spots.



I've also traveled to Munich with my other 2 Taiwanese friends. We chose to pay a visit to the BMW museum for the first day (it is educational and fancy) and had a feast in one of the most festive restaurants in Munich. The next morning, we took an early train to Konigsee to enjoy nature. I recommend this place a lot. You could see the splendid natural scenery when you're on the boat. After a short boat trip, my friends and I went for a small hike in the valley, where waterfalls plunged. Afterward, we headed to Innsbruck, Austria. The first place we stopped was the Swarovski Museum. It was incredible to see the biggest diamonds in the world, the garments as well as accessories with diamonds made by the company, and other related showpieces. The Alps Zoo was our last destination for the short trip, which was famous for its located altitude.

I discovered some more local spots during this month. My roommate and I went to Letenske Sady (highly recommend: a big park on a hill in the city center) for a walk and some video shooting. You can see the gorgeous city view (including the Charles Bridge from the top). Vrch Zizkov, another park near VSE, is where I used to go for a walk and bike rides. In spring, there are lots of flowers blooming by the path. Last but not least, my friends and I visited Karlovy Vary, well-known for its edible hot spring. (I heard that it's not as tasty as tap water) We went for a small hike to the top of the hills to see the whole view of the town.



*Amsterdam Lookout (Recommended)*



*Trip to Munich*



## **May & June:**

I would say May is the most hectic month of the whole semester for me: preparing for final papers, final exams, and some other personal stuff. It was an emotionally tough time for me since I started to realize that the clock is ticking at a rapid speed, and I'm going to say goodbye to all the friends I've met in this wonderful land.

My friends and I went to the KTV. It was my first time singing with Koreans (who chose a lot of BTS, and Blackpink songs to sing), Spanish (she recommended so many high school musical music and theme songs from the movie Mamma Mia), Slovenian, and Hungarian. There were not many cultural barriers or age gaps when choosing which song to sing, and we all enjoyed most of the time.

I also took my roommate to experience her first local fitness class. We were really glad that the instructor spoke English for us, the only two internationals in the class, after explaining to the others.

After my final exams, I began my "one-month" Europe trip" with my mom. We visited Salzburg (Mozart's hometown), Switzerland (Luzern, Grindelwald, Jungfrauoch, Belinzona), South of France (Nice, Avignon, and Provence), Vienna, and lastly Budapest. It was a fruitful experience.

I left Prague on 15th June and continued my life in Taiwan.



*Spring in Prague*



*Luzern, Switzerland*





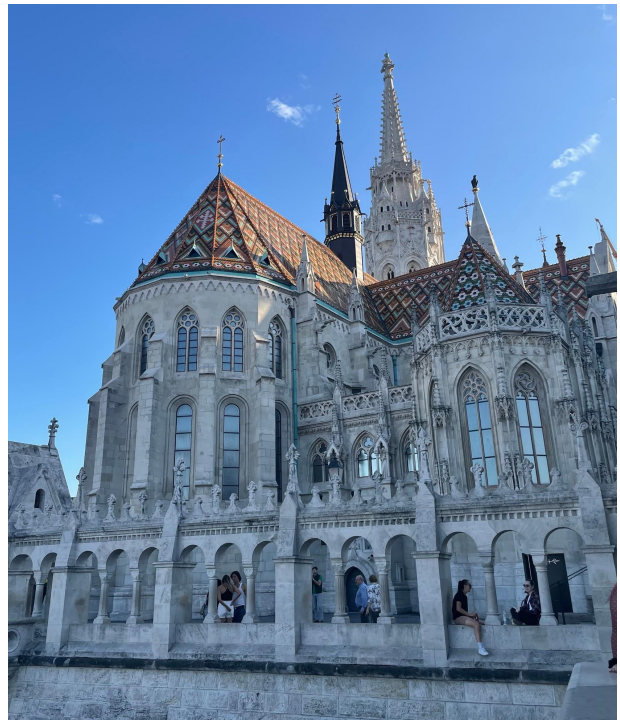
*Hiking in Switzerland*



*France, Nice*



*Austria, Vienna (Golden Hall)*



*Hungary, Budapest (Fisherman's Bastion)*



## **General Study Abroad Information**

### **Visa Procedure:**

The time length of applying for your visa varies on your nationality (for me, I need to apply for the CNCC from both the Taiwanese police and the Hong Kong police), but generally, I would say start it as soon as possible since it usually takes a lot of time to process.

You could take reference from the following paragraphs for the visa application procedure for Hong Kong:

1. Write an email to the Czech embassy, stating that you would like to apply for a Certificate of No Criminal Conviction (CNCC) from the Hong Kong Police. (Their official website provides very detailed instructions for the email format.) The embassy responds fast, they would tell you about the next steps (bring cash to take the request letter)
2. Book a timeslot for CNCC (you may need to book this in advance. The spots are limited per day): on the appointed day, bring the prepared documents and application fee to the Hong Kong Police Office. The whole procedure (mostly, waiting time) takes around 1 month. The police would send the CNCC to the Czech embassy, which would contact you to retrieve the VISA document.
3. Buy your insurance from the designated company (the Czech embassy will let you know)

### **Orientation Activities**

The orientation activities are mostly held by ESN, and I highly recommend you join the activities. These events allow you to meet more international friends as well as to know more about the Czech culture itself. For example, I participated in “Pub Crawl” (in which we went to many pubs in Prague, and had many team-bonding games). There were also other activities, such as the “Manufactura workshop”, “Dinner in the Dark”, etc.

I heard that the activities every semester would change. Grasp the opportunity and make more friends!

### **International Services and Activities**

Normally, every exchange student should be paired up with one local buddy, who will be responsible for various duties: pick-up from the airport, settling down in the dorms, and helping you out if you have any questions.

The school itself is quite helpful, too. The staff is very nice, and they usually quickly reply to your email/inquiries. If you need any support, do not hesitate to contact them!



## Accommodations

VSE provides exchange students dormitories, where usually exchange students will be assigned to the same building. There will be two types of rooms: double room (2 people sharing a room, and 2 rooms sharing a common area) or single room (2 people sharing a common area). One special thing to notice is that when you are applying for your dorm space, you are required to choose the exact room number. (but not your roommate) I would strongly recommend choosing a double room, especially not with someone you know. It is an opportunity to make a life-long international friend.

Registering the accommodation will be conducted on ISKAM. You will need to pay a deposit of CZK 5000 when you complete the accommodation registration, which will be retrieved back after your semester. You do not need to bring your bed linens (included in the accommodation), and you could change them twice a week. There are study rooms (free, and required to book in advance), a gym, and other facilities in the dormitory. Last but not least, the location of the dormitory is quite good, with parks and supermarkets near it.

## Courses Registration

All course registration processes will be conducted on INSIS, and detailed instructions will be announced by the school's staff during the orientation week.

This semester, I registered 6 courses, listed the following:

- *IMT363 Financial Regulation and Risk Management (3 Credits)*  
It's a course about introducing financial risks (e.g., credit risk, market risk, and operational risk) and practical approaches used in financial regulation and risk management in financial institutions. The instructor was nice and informative, though some of his lectures may become a little theoretical. The workload is not too big as a 3 credit course. There was only 4 homework for the whole semester (counting 10%, 10%, 15%, and 15% of the total grade respectively) adding a final exam (close book and MCQ, counting 50% of the total grade). I would recommend this course if you are interested in financial risk management, and want to have an introductory course in it.
- *4EK601 Operation Research (3 Credits)*  
The course covers a broad range of operational research fields, including linear programming, optimization problems, project management (CPM, PERT methods), and inventory models. If you have taken ISOM 2700 from HKUST and have learned it well, then this course should not bring much burden on you. There were 2 assessment criteria for this course, a term paper and a final exam (a written



exam plus an oral exam). It was a morning class, but my instructor was trying to make the class interesting. She would prepare lots of practice questions for each chapter and discuss them in class. The exam wasn't difficult. Remember to do the practice questions and make sure you are familiar with all the basic concepts then you'll score well.

- **4SA431 Information System Management (3 Credits)**

I don't recommend taking this course unless you have no choice. If you are the latter kind of person, then read the following:

The instructor tried her best to make this course meaningful by providing abundant and broad information on "information system management", but I felt the contents were too conceptual and couldn't catch my attention. The instructor was also nice and she tried to make the course enjoyable by raising different discussions as well as asking students to make presentations of their studies about some topics before each class.

The workload was manageable if you have resources, but heavier than I thought. It contains a personal presentation on your research (which starts in the second week of the semester), a final term paper, and a final exam (closed book, and 5 written questions but requires a lot of memorizing all the contents for the whole semester.) I was very lost in the first few weeks, and quite desperate in the final exam period by struggling to memorize all the lecture contents. My advice is: find some friends to take this class together if you have no choice. Then you'll be able to do a cheat sheet with a friend for the final exam, which will lessen a lot of stress. For the presentation and term paper part, I would say pick something that may have a "new thing" in the topic and be mindful of the paper requirements that the instructor gave.

Though I scored 100 in the end, I felt I was suffering from this course by not receiving clear information from the instructor, and the exam itself was torturing as a 3-credit course.

- ***4ST441 Statistical Methods and Capital Markets (3 Credits)***

First of all, the instructor of this course is really interesting. His way of teaching is concise and clear, and he has a YouTube channel, where he would put his lecture videos onto it. While most courses do not have recordings for lecture videos, this is the only course where you could watch the contents over and over again. (I've already liked and subscribed lol)

Though it's a course for bachelor's and masters, my classmates were mostly (90%) master students, and most of them have some strong background in statistics or

quantitative finance. This course can be a little challenging if you have completely no idea about these 2 things. However, I would recommend it if you want to learn something useful and practical. The course contents include using EViews software to generate some graphs and tables and then do some analysis on them. You would be able to learn the full procedure of stock price prediction with autocorrelation, ARIMA models, and ARCH models. The lectures were well-structured and fruitful.

The evaluation criteria for this course were also pretty simple. There are no exams for this course, but you have to do a full analysis and prediction on a stock price (you could choose by yourself), using the methods or other methods you know, and present it to the whole class during the final exam period. The presentations of my classmates were pretty informative, and you could learn a lot from the others (the professionals).

- *4ST605 Statistics with R (3 Credits)*

Highly recommend this course though this is also a course full of master students. It's the most interesting and interactive course among all the courses I took. The instructor does not have a slide for each lecture, and he teaches by asking the students questions. The grading is a little tricky, which may favor students that have backgrounds in R programming. All homework, presentations, self-practices, and websites he recommended to take certificates are not mandatory. Your grade is counted by the effort you pay into the above voluntary work. There will also be some bonus points during class if you could answer his questions correctly and fast.

If you have taken ISOM 3390 from HKUST and have learned the contents well, then this course would be a piece of cake for you. If you don't know what R is, or have zero coding background, there is also no need to worry about getting bad grades in this course. You could attend all the classes, self-learning R by yourself on the websites he gave, and then do a highly original presentation on R and statistics during the semester then you should be able to get a good grade in this course – You get how much you've paid.

- *4ST630 Probability and Mathematical Statistics 2 (6 Credits)*

This is another master course that I would ask you to think twice before taking it. If you are considering doing a credit transfer in ISOM 3540 through this course, please do not expect it to have the similar difficulty of a 3000-level course from HKUST. This course is not suitable for these people: (1) not “outstanding” in theoretical math, and (2) having no idea what R programming is. The course contents are mainly math and R programming to do some calculations and simulations. It's a 5-star challenging course, yet intriguing and practical. It is evaluated by 2 criteria, 3 simulation homework (which are usually tough to solve),



and a final exam. For your reference, my professor told me that the usual average total grade is around 70 out of 100.

My classmates were all local master's students, who are required to take this course to fulfill their graduation requirement for the Department of Informatics and Statistics, and ALL of them have taken "Probability and Mathematical Statistics 1". (Some of them told me that these courses have nothing similar.) Thus, if you are still determined to take this course, then find a reliable partner to take this class with you, and ask the others for a past paper for the final exam.

### **Finance and banking**

I applied for a student bank account in Raiffeisen Bank, which is one of the biggest banks in Middle and Eastern Europe. You could also find its branches in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, etc. The good part about applying for a local bank account is that you could use it wherever you go in Europe without paying an extra fee for a transaction. Also, Raiffeisen Bank provides students with 500 CZK cash rewards for a certain amount of payment by using their debit cards. The staff was really helpful, but they could be not as efficient as we expect. Some of my friends chose to use other banks, such as KB.

There are some other banking methods apart from applying for a debit card from the bank. You could also choose to apply for an account on Revolut or simply use your credit card to pay.

### **Health and Safety**

Prague is no doubt one of the safest cities in Europe. I've never been robbed or stolen while walking alone on the streets at night, and in fact, I felt quite safe. I got COVID-19 for the first time during the third week after I arrived. Other than COVID, I didn't have any illness or injuries during my exchange.

### **Food**

There is a wide diversity of food in Prague. There are Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Italian food, etc. I recommend Korean and Vietnamese cuisine particularly. If you're looking for traditional Czech food, I recommend fried cheese with chips and schnitzel. Some people recommend goulash (a type of broth soup with some bread dumplings), but I think it's not a must to try. If you are a vegetarian, Prague could be one of the nicest places for you. There are plenty of vegetarian restaurants and bentos in Prague, and more importantly, they taste good.

## **Transportation**

Transportation in Prague is very convenient. There are 3 main types of public transportation methods, the metro, the tram, and the bus. The most common one that you might use would be the tram. You could take the tram to almost everywhere in Prague, and you'll be taking it from the dorm to VSE definitely.

You can download an App called "Litacka". It is an app where you can purchase all the tickets and find your route to your destination. Also, you should be applying for your student version of the transportation card. It will save you a lot of transportation fees.

## **Communication**

Most people in the Czech Republic speak Czech (it is their official language), and the younger ones in Prague can speak good English. You can communicate in English with the locals in Prague. The only time I had some problems is when I wanted to buy some pills in the pharmacy, which the staff couldn't understand English. However, even though she couldn't understand, she was still trying to communicate with me through Google Translation. I believe that communication shouldn't be a problem in Prague.

On the other hand, there will also be German and Russian in most tourist destinations. Some Czech folks are also familiar with these languages.

## **Sports and Recreation Facilities**

As a sports lover, I usually go play badminton with my friends on weekdays at Olsanka Sports Center. I recommend this place. I would also go on aerobic sports classes and yoga classes on weekday nights. It's quite interesting to engage in these activities in Czech with the locals (mostly aged in their 30s to their 50s), and they are nice. I met one of the locals helping me to translate Czech into English on my first day of class, and the lecturer was also really helpful.

If you're finding some places that don't need to pay any fees, I recommend the parks in Prague. Several big parks in Prague has splendid view. You could rent a shared bicycle to discover the parks here. In spring, the flowers blossom, and everywhere looks like a masterpiece of nature.

## **Items to Bring**

Before you leave, please make sure that these stuff are packed in your luggage:

1. Passport and visa
2. Some documents that the school requires you to bring
3. Clothes (depends on which semester you'll be going there)



4. Personal items (e.g., nail scissors, sunglasses, slippers, hair dryer, etc.)
5. Utensils (some would have some cooking utensils left in the room, but in case you don't have one in your room and needs to go far away to IKEA to buy one, then just bring it by yourself. There's a shared kitchen in every room.)
6. Medicine

You do not have to bring your bed linens if you're staying in the VSE's dormitory. The school would provide you with one. You may not have to bring a lot of stuff since you can buy almost everything in Prague. Save your luggage space for souvenirs!

### **Useful links and contacts**

- You can find almost everything on the school's official website for exchange students: <https://exchange.vse.cz/students/accepted-students/>
- Be aware of the courses that you could choose in the semester: <https://exchange.vse.cz/students/accepted-students/course-registration/>
- Olsanka Sports Center (Registration Website): <https://www.hotelolsanka.cz/en/sport/>
- Litacka Official Website: <https://pidlitacka.cz/cs>

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any inquiries :) and good luck with your exchange!