



NEOMA Business School (Rouen Campus), France
Spring Term 2022-23
NG, Pui Ka (Economics & Finance, Year 3)

Monthly Activity Log

December

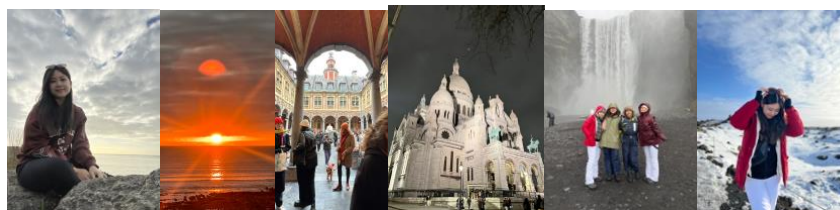
- 23rd-27th @Barcelona: I travelled from Hong Kong to Barcelona with a stop in Frankfurt. weather was nice, I had amazing food and visited some of the best architecture.
- 27th-31st @Paris: Took a plane from Barcelona to Paris. Went to the famous landmarks and watch the football game PSG vs Strasbourg, saw Mbappé and Neymar.

January



- The earliest check in day was on the 2nd. Try to take a photo of the room before cleaning and setting up so that you can recover it when you leave. Went to Ikea and Carrefour to buy utensils and necessities. Joined almost every parties/gatherings and met a lot of people. Make sure you know someone who speaks French so that you can seek help easier.
- Had a few day trips to Paris for winter sales shopping. France have a winter sales when a lot of shops would have 50%-80% discount. Grab the opportunities if you want to buy something
- 17th-20th went to Nice. It was the first time for me to experience uncertainty in France. My train to Nice got delayed for 2 hours, and got cancelled after boarding as there was a leftover baggage. So lucky got some nice French was helping out. I had to stay in a hotel at 2am, then had to wake up at 5am to catch the train to Marseille and then transit to Nice. During the transit, I didn't make it as the train did not accept me. I had to take another train to Toulon and then to Nice. The entire trip got postponed for more than 5 hours. I learned and got used to all the sudden changes in Europe (very common).
- Went to Mont Saint Michel with Erasmus Fun. Also went to Le Havre for a day trip. It was pretty dead unfortunately as it was not the peak season and the weather was also not helping. However, there was a huge mall there and I was able to do some shopping.

February



- Went to La Rochelle alone for a few days as I had a long weekend in the first week. Enjoyed this port city so much. Visited the aquarium and the famous towers. Was also

able to see the sunsets. Near La Rochelle, there is an island called Île de Ré. Usually it is super beautiful and crowded during peak seasons because local French love having holiday there. However, it was very dead during non-peak season. I walked the entire day on the beach.

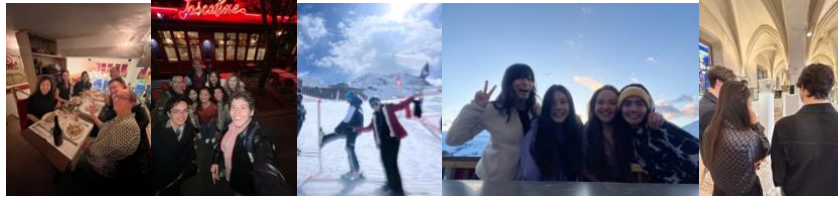
- Went to Brussels with my friend. We had amazing time there while enjoying the food (mussels, waffles, chocolates) and architecture. I definitely recommend going to Brussels, especially if you are a girl. It is worth going not just for the food and museums, but also human beauty there.
- Visited Lille right after Brussels (very close to Brussels). Lille is a student city and it is very lively at night. The architecture is just so beautiful. As it is very walkable, my suggestion is to explore the city on foot.
- Spent a weekend with my friend in Paris (got free apartment to stay)
- During the spring break, I went to Iceland with my friends. Had my 21st birthday in Iceland. Iceland was all about the nature, the view and liquorice flavoured ice-cream. I also tried sharks. (famous food in Iceland) Food is super expensive in Iceland so we cooked Ramen in the hostel for two nights. Living in a hostel also allow me to meet and talk to people from around the world. I wanted to see the northern lights, but we were not lucky enough to see them clearly.
- When I headed back to Rouen, my backpack got stolen on the train from Paris to Rouen. I was lucky that all my important documents were with me. I had to go to the police station. However, they told me they are closed at 5:30pm on Sunday and I had to file an online report and go another day. When I went to the station the next day, the lady did not speak English and I spent 3 hours to go through the report slowly with her. At that point, I knew clearly that my backpack would never be found, and all I wanted was a report form from the police so that I could claim for insurance. The entire experience was ridiculously annoying and complicated. However, my learning was always sleep while holding your personal belongings and definitely purchase an insurance policy.

March



- Travelled to the UK by an 11 hours Flixbus from Paris. The journey was better than I thought even though it was a long ride. Passing through the border was annoying after Brexit, but at least I could walk around on the ferry. Visited my friends in London and Cambridge.
- Took a trip to Maastricht and Amsterdam with my friend. It was so good to see my Italian friends who I met in UST when they came for exchange last semester (my exchange buddy). Amsterdam was super fun. However, got sick after Amsterdam and needed 2 weeks to rest in Rouen.
- Spent most time in Rouen, having presentations and went ice skating. Had an overnight party in Paris for a weekend and it was extremely fun.
- Went to Annecy with my friends in the last week of March. Weather was so nice when we visited. Did some hike and walked around the lake. Also went to the church uphill and walked around the neighbourhood. Annecy is so pretty and is definitely a must-go place in France. The tap water there is so tasty.

April



- My family came to visit during Easter. I brought them around Paris and Rouen. We had dinner with my friends. I also went to Birmingham to visit my cousins with my family.
- Went back to Rouen for exams and headed to a skiing camp (UCPA) in Val Thorens. I strongly recommend going as it was very cheap (around 300 euros that includes accommodations, meals, classes and ski pass) I ended up spending an amazing week on the slopes and met friends that I still talk to regularly.
- Spent my last week in Rouen with friends. Went to the museum, parties and hang out with my friends one last time.

May



- Headed to Paris and left my big suitcase at a friend's place. Stayed in my friend's place in Paris and chilled around Paris. Also took a trip to Lyon. I think Lyon is a nice place to live as it is lively but not over-crowded. I truly enjoyed my time there.
- Started my travel before going back to Hong Kong: Lithuania (to visit my friend who is from Lithuania), Berlin, Prague, Lisbon, Albufeira and Barcelona.

General Study Abroad Information

1. Visa Procedures

A Campus France academic interview is required before going to the visa appointment. I have sent a few emails but received no replies. I then realized the interview could be scheduled through the link. The interview will cover some very basic questions such as why the school you chose, what study plan you have and how long will you stay there. I was also asked to have the hard copy of the acceptance and decision letters from NEOMA and HKUST respectively sent from both school to the Campus France officer through email. NEOMA and HKUST were both very helpful and efficient in handling the matter. Follow the steps and details in this link and everything should be fine

<https://www.hongkong.campusfrance.org/long-stay-student-visa-vls-ts-more-than-90-days>

For the visa appointment, I was well prepared with all the required documents from the website, but different officers have different standards so he might request for documents that you don't have in hand e.g. Hard copy of birth certificate and parent's passport copy. Therefore, be prepared to go to the embassy for at least 4 times (including picking the visa up).

2. Orientation Activities

There is an Orientation Day from the school on 7th of January for me. You would get NEOMA ISIC student card and some souvenirs from the school. I recommend downloading the ISIC app which provides different discounts for students. The orientation includes an informative talk, an interactive section, a school tour, and games with other international students by the Cultural Connection student representatives. It would be the first time you can meet other internationals formally. Then there was a welcome party at night where most exchange students went. I strongly recommend joining all social gatherings and parties in your first week so that you could meet more people and make new friends.

3. International Services & Activities

For any academic and administrative matters, contact the International Hub via email. They are very helpful and usually reply fast. I had some matter about choosing the programmes for study before departure and I called and emailed them directly. They were efficient and friendly.

Cultural Connection is a student society that organise activities for students. They had a few events within semester such as ice skating and party night. Erasmus Fun organises weekend trips such as Mont Saint Michel and Monet's Garden trips. They also have weekly and monthly parties for international students. You would meet other exchange and international students as well as some locals from universities in Rouen.

4. Accommodations

Housing insurance is required, and more information would be available after applying for the accommodation. Make sure you keep an eye on all emails from the school to register for student housing. I chose to live in BOIS, which is the most convenient and cheapest option for my semester (ANGO used to be the cheapest before). I was struggling to choose between

ANGO and BOIS. Below is a simple comparison between them. I am very satisfied with my choice of living in Bois, with cleaner and nicer room as well as more convenient location (and cheaper as well).

	ANGO	BOIS
price	248 Euros	235 Euros
Escalator	No	Yes
Size	9m ²	9m ²
Private bathroom	No	Yes
Private kitchen	Yes (1 stove and 1 sink)	No (shared kitchen like hall VII's common area)
Renovated	No	Yes
Larger table	Yes	No
Distance from school	15 min walk	5 min walk
Distance from bus stop	F2 (to Carrefour) and T1 (city centre) are the closest	F7 right in front of the residence (to Super U, city centre and train station), walk for 10 mins to F2 and F8, 15 mins to T1

5. Course Registration

NEOMA sent out more information about course registration in mid-November. Plan the courses you want to take ahead. Originally, I was told that I could choose some Undergraduate courses in the master programme, but it got cancelled at last. I had to call them and modify my choice of programme. The course registration was easy, and everything went smooth. Note that sometimes the website requires VPN (set the location as France) to work.

6. Teaching & Assessment Methods

I took 2 finance courses, 1 sustainable business course and 1 French culture course. The finance courses include mid-terms, assignments, and final exams. For sustainable business course, it is a mix of a group project, a final exam, and other smaller individual work. Exams are not stressful at all, I learned by myself for the finance courses, and did not even study hard for the sustainable business as it was open book. (I suggest you type out the key concepts though) French culture class has slightly heavier workload, two writing tasks and a presentation. However, you will ace the class as long as you complete the assignments. Attendance policy varies across different courses and my suggestion is to go to the first few classes and see if attendance is taken. It is very easy to pass tests and exams as a HKUST student. For me, I only expected a pass for spending minimal time and effort in academics but turned out having good grades.

7. Finance & Banking

You will need a French bank account to receive your housing deposit. The school will email you information on how to open a French bank (BNP Paribas). I personally think BNP Paribas is annoying to use (they send physical mail to confirm your mobile no. and send you code all the time) There is nothing much to do about it but be expected to check out your mailbox regularly. You also have to change passcode/ update mobile no. regularly. It

happened to me that I could not have access to my account after the exchange (to receive the deposit for housing) owing to expiration of phone no. confirmation. The only way they have to do it is to send physical mail to the housing residence that I used to live where I no longer have the access to the mailbox.

France and Europe are very cashless, I always use apple pay with my HSBC debit card. HSBC World Debit card and it is the easiest way I have observed so far (without transaction fee). I would still recommend bringing some euros in cash that would help to settle payments between your friends.

8. Climate

Rouen did not rain that much as I have expected but I would recommend a waterproof down jacket with a hood (people don't usually open the umbrella). I used my jacket almost every day during my exchange. In my semester, the weather in Rouen was still chilly and I did not have a chance to wear a t-shirt when going out. My suggestion is do not bring too many shorts and t-shirts but long sleeves, hoodies. Even later in May when I travelled in central Europe, I still wear thin long sleeves with a jacket.

9. Health & Safety

I have purchased the Travel Insurance Policy the Worldwide Standard Plan from HSBC covering one year of multiple travel in the world.

If you are sick, you can go to the clinic near Université de Rouen Normandie which is free by using our student card.

Rouen centre, Mont Saint Aignan are all very safe in general, I felt comfortable being alone almost everywhere. However, the neighbourhood on the other side of the river is more complicated and unsafe, especially at night. My friend's phone got robbed at night in that area. Plus, there is nothing much to see in that area, so it is not necessary to go.

10. Food

I usually buy groceries from the Big Carrefour in Mont Saint Aignan and cook during the week. I sometimes go out to eat with friends as well. During weekends, almost no restaurant in Rouen is open for dine-in dinners. Restaurants usually close after 3pm and reopen at 7pm. There is a variety of cuisine in Rouen. My favourite is Garden Restro, a buffet place in downtown with lots of options like oysters and sushi. (around 20 euros per person) Yugo which has Nikkei food is very yummy as well; Pascaline, a French restaurant where me and my friends always have is another recommendation, not too pricy and pretty local. There are also a few Asian mini supermarkets downtown, but I did not buy anything from there except for one hot pot night.

I bought a water filter just to make myself feel better for drinking tap water in Rouen after reading previous year's report (for placebo effect). I do drink tap water in other places and I did not encounter any problem so far. Water near the Alps is especially tasty (a bit sweet believe it or not)

11. Transportation

SNCF (travel to cities within France): In mid-November, around Black Friday, there's a sale for Carte Avantage Jenué (discount card to purchase train tickets) for 24.50 euros. Grab the chance to purchase it as you will save a lot of money after using this to purchase tickets. It is very worth it.

I lived in the BOIS residence, so the school campus was just a 3-5-minute walk. To go to Carrefour, I can take either F8 or F2. To go to the gare (Rouen-Rive-Droite station) and the city centre, I take bus F7 right in front of my residence. Going to Paris and other French cities, I go by train from the Rouen-Rive-Droite station. Download the SNCF app to check train schedule and do the purchases.

Flixbus is a good way to travel from Paris to nearby countries e.g. the Netherlands. I took a Flixbus from Paris to Maastricht and an overnight bus ride to the London. For the Paris airports, always prioritize the Orly Airport or the Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport to save your energy and time. Even though Paris Beauvais Airport always has the cheapest flight options, it is very time-consuming and tiring.

12. Communication

I used "Free Mobile" with the most expensive package. Make sure to pay for the next month <https://mobile.free.fr/> or else they will stop your plan and you cannot use the number back. (It happened to me when I was in Brussels)

Learn basics like Bonjour, Merci, Bonne Journée, désolée, pardon... will help you to live in France.

13. Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is a gym room on campus, but it is with very few equipment. There is one gym in Crous, but you got to pay and it's not worth it.

In Rouen, I have been to an ice-skating rink, the cinema, shopping centre (Docks 76), the museum (Musée d'antiquités). There are a lot of night clubs and parties even during the week. (Erasmus Fun has weekly party) You always have something to do in Rouen with your friends.

14. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

Erasmus Fun Rouen is very reliable, they have weekly and monthly parties, as well as trips to other cities in France. I strongly recommend going to Mont Saint Michel with them as it is not convenient to go by yourself. You would also be able to meet lots of people in parties. I ended up meeting some of the most amazing people through parties.

15. Cautionary Measures

Be careful to travel alone, even with your friends, always have your belongings with you. Always have your passport attached to you during travels. It happened to me that my backpack got stolen when I took the train from Paris back to Rouen. I was too tired (did not sleep the previous night) and put my backpack in the inner seat while I was dozing off at the

aisle seat. It is gone when I woke up and no one could help me even the police. My iPad and souvenirs from Iceland were gone. I made my claim to the insurance and got most of the lost covered. However, it is very tiring to buy back the necessities, make calls and communicate with the police and insurance company. I am lucky that all the important documents were with me.

16. Other Notes

I strongly recommend only having one big and one small suitcase for your exchange. Traveling with a big suitcase is extremely exhausting, especially if you are going to Lisbon and Paris, expect some lost wheels and broken suitcases if your suitcase is over 20kg. Whenever I do trips fewer than 5 days, I would only bring a backpack. Pack wisely to go on exchange, pharmaceutical and beauty products could be skipped as France has everything you need (and with the best quality) eg buy cream/ moisturiser in France instead of bringing them. Bringing snacks is also unwise as you can find them in France. Pack the minimal and you will thank me later. I bought cheap pan and utensils in France and left them at my local friend's place before I left.

Be open-minded and try everything if possible. Even if you don't think you are going to like it, it is still good to have an experience. I tried a lot of things in my exchange and am so proud that I have stories to tell for life. Reach out to people, especially local French as they would not reach out to you. My friends always encourage me with a quote "You only live once". Do not have expectations when you leave for exchange but embrace all the possibilities when they come along.

I learned from previous reports to have more cross-border travel after my exchange. I do recommend travel to more cities in France during your stay as there are a lot to see and experience (every French city is different). It is definitely not enough to just got to Paris for your exchange in France. I only went to Iceland, the UK, Brussels, the Netherlands within my exchange period but 10 cities/places in France. Instead of going to a lot of cities and countries, I prefer spending more time in one place to truly visit the city.

French cities/towns I visited:	Countries I visited:
Paris	Spain
Rouen	France
Nice	Belgium
Mont Saint Michel	The Netherlands
Le Havre	United Kingdom
La Rochelle	Czech Republic
Lille	Germany
Annecy	Lithuania
Versailles	Portugal
Val Thorens	
Lyon	

17. Items to Bring

- Clothing
- Hard and soft copy of documents
- Some cash
- Laptop
- Travel adaptors
- Temporary mobile data card
- Medicine
- Water proof backpack
- Tote bag
- Sunglasses
- Locks x2 (for hostel's lockers and long travel journey): When I travelled from Paris to Barcelona, I locked both of my suitcases to the baggage rack

18. Useful Links and Contacts

<https://www.hongkong.campusfrance.org/long-stay-student-visa-vls-ts-more-than-90-days>
<https://neomascol.neoma-bs.fr/>
<https://courses.neoma-bs.fr/login/index.php>
<https://neoma.sharepoint.com/sites/myneomagora/EN>