

# Exchange Report

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2022-2023

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UNIVERSITY OF INNSBRUCK  
AUSTRIA

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# Monthly Activity Log

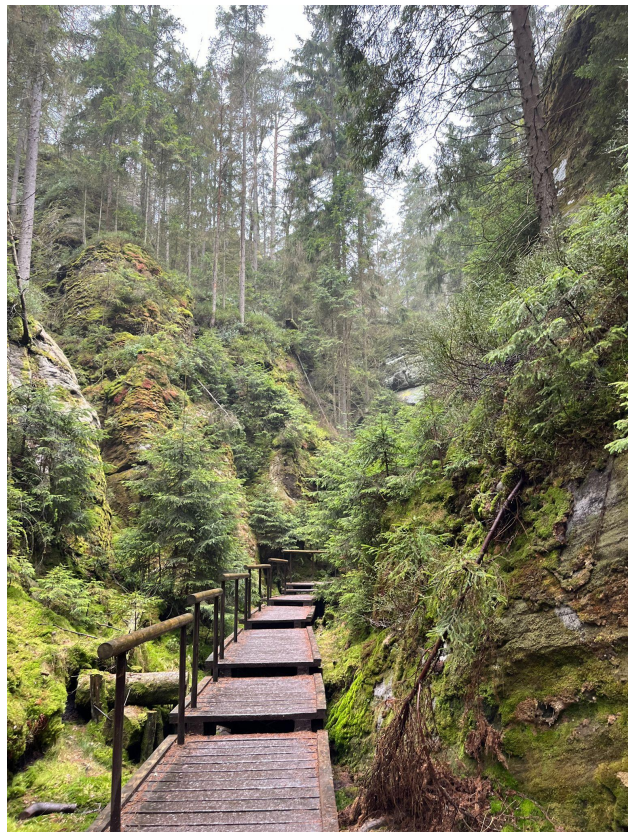


## MARCH

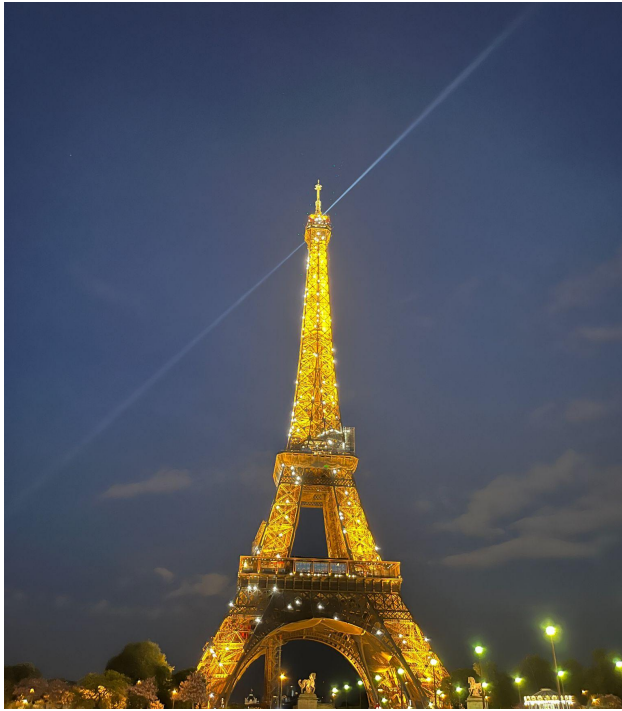
Upon my arrival in Innsbruck, I was awestruck by the breathtaking landscape of the Alps. Eager to begin my exchange program, I felt excited about the experiences that lay ahead. **The International Economic and Business Studies office, or IWW,** organized helpful orientation events that facilitated course registration and allowed me to make new friends. Following the registration process, I embarked on an unforgettable three-day skiing trip with my newfound friends. It was a fantastic way to kickstart my time in Innsbruck, and I also began my Economic Policy course towards the end of the month.

## APRIL

My second month in Europe was filled with excitement and activity. During the Easter holiday, I embarked on a memorable journey through central-eastern Europe, exploring Hungary, Croatia, and the Czech Republic. Additionally, I delved into the "International Marketing" course, which proved to be both challenging and enjoyable. The professor made the experience engaging and fun, making it a highly recommended course, particularly for those interested in B2B marketing.







## MAY

May turned out to be a demanding month in Innsbruck, as I juggled two presentations and a final exam. As the weather grew warmer, the snow on the mountains began to recede. Despite the stress, I managed to find solace in occasional trips to France and Spain, which provided much-needed relaxation. For anyone planning to travel around Europe, I must say that May is undoubtedly the best time to do so – remember to plan ahead for the best experience!

## JUNE

Time seemed to fly, and before I knew it, June had arrived. The first half of the month was dedicated to traveling, visiting friends in the UK, admiring Switzerland's stunning views, and celebrating a friend's birthday in the Czech Republic. Following my travels, I faced my "final final" exam, marking the end of my academic journey. IWW organized an ending section to guide us through the deregistration process and provide details about the Final exam arrangement. Saying goodbye to my friends, most of whom were leaving on June 30th, was heart-wrenching. Additionally, due to dormitory bookings, I had to move to another dorm on June 27th, making farewell even more challenging as some of us might never cross paths again.



## JULY

While the official exchange program ended in June, I decided to extend my stay and venture to Italy. The weather in southern Europe was oppressively hot, but surprisingly, Innsbruck remained comfortable and pleasant, allowing for relaxed exploration. Eventually, on July 24th, I bid farewell to Innsbruck and returned to Hong Kong, marking the end of my enriching exchange journey.



Farewell Lunch with my friends ;(



Beautiful views in Switzerland





# General Exchange Info

## Visa Procedure<sup>1</sup>

For study purposes in Austria, residents of Hong Kong or Macau are required to obtain a visa and/or residence permit. If your stay exceeds 90 days (out of 180 days) in Austria, you must apply for Visa D. To apply, you need to gather all the necessary documents, which can be found on the website of the Austrian General Consulate HK. It is essential to submit the visa application and all the required documents **in person** at least 3 weeks before your intended departure. The consulate officer is friendly and will review the documents for compliance with the requirements before submission. Please note that visa extensions are not possible in Austria, so it's important to plan your trip accordingly based on the visa period.

## Resident Permit

Upon your arrival in Austria, it is mandatory to register for the resident permit within three days. You should bring your passport and the registration form, known as "Meldezettel," which must be signed by your landlord or dorm manager. The registration process takes place at the Residents Registration Office (Rathaus), located at Maria-Theresien-Straße 15 (Rathausgalerie), 1st floor.

For students from EU/EEA member states and Switzerland, there are slightly different requirements, but they also need to apply for the resident permit. The registration process is generally quick and straightforward if there is not a large crowd.

More info can be found in:

<https://www.innsbruck.gv.at/en/leben/servicecenter/aufenthalt-staatsbuergerschaft>

## Orientation Activities

Various orientation activities are arranged by the university, IWW, and ESN (Erasmus Student Network). The orientation week commenced before the semester's official start, with the first section on February 28th. IWW conducted two mandatory introduction sessions, effectively explained by our coordinator Christoph. Additionally, a computer lab session was organized to familiarize us with course registration. ESN, a social club, regularly hosts numerous events for exchange students, offering a wonderful opportunity to make new friends and socialize. These activities contribute to a smooth and enjoyable transition into the academic and social life of the exchange program.

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<sup>1</sup> For the latest requirements, please refer to the info provided by the Austrian General Consulate

## International Activities & Services

As mentioned earlier, ESN plays a significant role in organizing various activities throughout the semester. These exciting events encompass hiking, 2-day trips to Italy, parties, and paragliding, among others. Engaging in these activities not only allows you to explore the surrounding areas but also presents excellent opportunities to forge new friendships with fellow participants. ESN's diverse offerings add a sense of adventure and camaraderie to your exchange experience, making it all the more memorable and enriching.

## Accommodation

OeAD student housing serves as a non-profit provider of student residences, catering to both international and national students, accommodating around 12,000 students annually across Austria. Booking for accommodations can be done through their website, or alternatively, you can directly contact accommodation providers like home4students without paying a booking fee. Due to high demand for housing in Innsbruck, it's crucial to book your accommodation as early as possible. For the summer semester, it is recommended to book around **six months ahead**, ideally in **September for Summer Semester 2023**.

During my 5-month exchange in Innsbruck, I resided at Rössl in der Au, Höttinger Au 34, from late February to June, and later moved to Technikerstrasse in July. Rössl in der Au boasts an excellent location, just a 10-minute walk from the city center and a 15-20 minute walk from the SOWi Building (Campus for Business Students). The residence offers shared kitchens and common areas on each floor. To maintain cleanliness, all residents are required to collaborate on a schedule and take turns cleaning the recycle bins.

## Course Registration

The course registration system in Innsbruck can be somewhat complex. Unlike many universities in Europe that use ECTS credits, here, a typical semester involves taking 30 ECTS credits. Most courses, referred to as modules, are worth 7.5 credits each (language courses being 5 credits). These courses are usually divided into two parts: 1 lecture and 1 interactive session, or 2 interactive parts.

It's essential to note that the **lecture part requires you to register for the final exam yourself**, which takes place during the **final exam weeks** held after all classes have concluded (in my case, from 1st July to 14th July). As for interactive parts, the exam day will be announced by the lecturer in advance if applicable.

Additionally, there's an important distinction with **blocked modules**, which are intensive courses during the semester, yet they offer the same number of ECTS credits as regular courses.

\*Lecture parts are marked with VO/VO2, Interactive parts are marked with PS/SE/VU/UE

## Teaching and Assessment Method

In Europe, the teaching methods may differ slightly from what you are accustomed to. In Marketing courses, the assessment methods are quite similar, involving group presentations, reports, class participation, and a final exam, which may also include case study reports. On the other hand, Economics courses in Innsbruck take a somewhat different approach. While there are numerous homework assignments and exercises at HKUST, the University of Innsbruck emphasizes more on discussions and group work.

In the Economics course, the grading is based on class participation, group presentations, and the final exam results. What sets the students in Innsbruck apart is their active engagement in class, contributing to more extensive discussions and lively exchanges of ideas. This dynamic and participatory approach to learning enriches the academic experience and fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

## Sports & Recreation Facilities

The university offers sports courses where students can pay to learn new activities like yoga, and these courses can also earn you credits. For sports facilities, some dormitories have their own gymnasium, which is free for residents. If you prefer more extensive facilities, there are private gyms in the city, but they might require signing a long contract. Additionally, the city has swimming pools where you can pay to enjoy the services.

What captivates exchange students the most are the skiing opportunities during winter and spring in Innsbruck. The city is surrounded by numerous skiing resorts, catering to both beginners and experienced skiers. Skiing schools in Innsbruck provide easy access to experienced coaches.

Apart from sports, the city's center offers a vibrant nightlife with a multitude of bars and pubs. Don't hesitate to join the parties and experience the lively atmosphere. There's something for everyone in Innsbruck, making it an ideal destination for an unforgettable exchange experience.

**\*It is recommended to ski before April since the snow starts to melt afterwards.**



## Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

Austria is part of the Eurozone and utilizes the Euro as its official currency. However, neighboring countries such as Hungary and Czech Republic do not use the Euro, so it's important to be prepared if you plan to visit these places.

For exchange students, having a banking account is highly recommended. Personally, I applied for a bank account through Revolut, an online bank that operates in Europe. This account also offers currency transfer within the account, which proves incredibly convenient while traveling in countries that have not adopted the Euro. Moreover, if you have a physical card, you can also withdraw cash when needed\*.

### Expenses

Accommodation expenses (double room)	~300 euros (monthly)
Traveling expenses	500-1500 euros (monthly) *Depends on your number of journeys and way of traveling, average cost for a 7-days trip is 600 euros
Living expenses	~300-400 euros (monthly) *The amount applies if you are staying in innsbruck the whole time and you cook yourself
Air Ticket (HKG->FRA->INN, return, Lufthansa)	~6000 HKD *The price is low because I bought it during the pandemic, keep an eye on the ticket price as it fluctuate a lot

\*ATM withdrawals are free up to a limit of 200 euros, and currency exchange is also free for amounts up to 1000 euros.

\*\*It's worth noting that the euro exchange rate fluctuated between 7.7 to 8.8 from August 2022 to July 2023. Keeping an eye on the rate fluctuations and taking advantage of favorable rates is advisable when exchanging HKD to EUR or vice versa. This way, you can optimize your currency conversions for better value.

## Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

While the University of Innsbruck may not have many social clubs, you can still participate in ESN activities and parties organized by international students for socializing and networking. These events offer a great chance to make new friends and expand your social circle.

## Health & Safety

There is a hospital available for medical needs near the main campus. If you require a doctor's assistance, reach out to the host coordinator, who will help you find suitable medical care. Additionally, if you only need basic medicine or pills, you can visit the local 'Apotheke.' It's advisable to bring some common medicines from HK for your convenience.

Innsbruck is known for being a safe city, and there's no need to worry about criminal activities. With a peaceful environment, you can explore and enjoy your time in Innsbruck with a sense of security.

## Food

In Innsbruck, you'll find a wide variety of restaurants offering diverse cuisines, including Japanese, Thai, Chinese, Italian, and traditional Austrian dishes. For budget-friendly options, Kebab is a popular choice, offering a meal for around 6 euros. Cooking your meals can also be an excellent way to save money during your stay.

When dining out, expect main dishes to cost around 15-25 euros, with drinks adding an additional 3-8 euros. Tipping is customary, but it's entirely acceptable if you choose not to do so.

In the city center, there is an outstanding Austrian restaurant that I highly recommend: 'Stiftskeller'

<https://goo.gl/maps/Lh2BXnZzt7hnf5F78>

## Transportation

Getting around Innsbruck and Tyrol is convenient, with various transportation options available such as buses, trams, trains, and bikes.

For public transport provided by VVT, you must purchase a ticket and validate it when using buses or trams. A single ticket costs 2.8 EUR, while an 8-journey ticket is priced at 16.1 EUR.

If you prefer unlimited travel within Innsbruck during the semester, you can opt for the semester ticket Tyrol (190.9 euros) or the semester ticket Innsbruck (145.7 euros). The Tyrol version allows you to access all public transport and local trains in the Tyrol region.

Additionally, NextBike offers a shared bike service, and University of Innsbruck students can enjoy the service for free for the first 30 minutes. For the latest pricing and discounts, please refer to the official site.

For those planning to explore Europe by train, consider purchasing the OBB Vorteils card Jugend card or the DB My BahnCard 25. These cards offer significant discounts for train travel, making them beneficial for your European adventures.

## Climate

In Innsbruck, the climate transforms from cold with occasional snow in March to mild and pleasant in April and May. June brings warmer temperatures and longer days, while July offers comfortably warm weather with occasional showers. This transition from winter to spring and summer creates a delightful atmosphere for exploring the city and its stunning surroundings.

\*Remember to bring both winter and summer clothes.

## Communication

In Austria, most Austrians speak fluent English, but keep in mind that many things, including government documents, are written in German. While knowing German is beneficial, it's not a requirement for living in Austria.

During my journey, I used the ThreeUK sim card, which I purchased six cards in Hong Kong, and used one per month. These cards offered 12GB data roaming in European zones, including Austria, and an additional 3GB in the UK. However, for better options and an Austrian phone number, consider purchasing a pay-as-you-go card from Hofer, a local supermarket. They offer a variety of data plans to choose from, making it more convenient for your stay in Austria.

## Cautionary Measures

In case of danger or emergency, dial the **Single European emergency number, 112**, for immediate help. Additionally, contact the host coordinator, who can assist in communicating with the local police or authorities, especially if they do not speak fluent English.

For frequent skiers, it's advisable to consider purchasing search and rescue insurance for added protection during your skiing adventures. This insurance provides valuable coverage at a low cost. The host coordinator will provide more information about this insurance during the introduction section, ensuring you are well-informed and prepared for any skiing-related incidents.



## Other Notes

Here's the list of tips for traveling in Europe:

1. Look at the tickets in Omio, then purchase the ticket through the train operator's official website/app for the best deals and convenience.
2. If traveling in Germany, plan ahead and reserve extra time for possible delays as DB (Germany Train Company) is known for occasional train delays and cancellations.
3. For UK travel, consider buying train tickets through TrainSplit, as it can offer more affordable options compared to other websites.
4. In France, take advantage of free entry to many attractions and museums for EU students, including exchange students. Remember to plan ahead, book attractions in advance, and show your resident permit (copy/photos are fine) and student ID card for free admission.
5. Traveling with friends can be both cheaper and more fun, as expenses can be shared among the group. Consider exploring Europe together to make the most of your experiences.

## Items To Bring

1. HKID
2. Passport
3. HKUST Student ID
4. Letter of Acceptance
5. Hall/ Accommodation Contract
6. Insurance Documents
7. Clothing
8. Laptops/Tablet computer
9. Chargers
10. Adapters
11. Medicines
12. Cash (EUR/HKD)
13. Credit cards
14. Power Banks
15. HK snacks (if necessary)
16. Rice cooker (if necessary)

## Things that you can either bring/buy there

1. Shoes (waterproof shoes/boots for winter snow)
2. Hairdryer
3. Skincare products
4. Cosmetics
5. Stationeries
6. Sunglasses (good for skiing and summer)
7. Hangers
8. Toothbrush, toothpaste, cups

## Useful Links and Contacts

Austria Consulate HK

<https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/austrian-general-consulate-hongkong/travels-to-austria/studying-in-austria/>

OEAD Innsbruck Page

<https://www.oeadstudenthousing.at/en/accommodation/innsbruck/>

Innsbruck Resident Permit

<https://www.innsbruck.gv.at/en/leben/servicecenter/aufenthalt-staatsbuergerschaft>

VVT (public transport in Tyrol)

[https://www.vvt.at/page.cfm?vpath=tickets&switchLocale=en\\_US](https://www.vvt.at/page.cfm?vpath=tickets&switchLocale=en_US)

OBB Vorteils card Jugend card

<https://www.oebb.at/en/tickets-kundenkarten/kundenkarten/vorteils card>

DB MyBahnCard 25

<https://www.bahn.com/en/offers/bahncard>