

TILBURG UNIVERSITY THE NETHERLANDS



SPRING 2023 EXCHANGE REPORT
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MONTHLY ACTIVITIES LOG

JAN 2023

I arrived in the Netherlands on January 19 because the orientation day is on January 20. I hate carrying my luggage in the snow, yet I realized how lucky I was to have snow in the Netherlands! What a blessing! On the day of registration, I picked up my resident permit, checked into my dorm, and went to the university's booths. At one of the booths, I tasted the Stroopwafel, a well-known Dutch food. The following day, I participated in the city tour organized by ESN and made many new friends from Hong Kong as well as overseas. On the first day of the Lunar New Year, we shared hotpot and celebrated this Chinese festival with the international students.

In January, I travelled to Rotterdam, one of the largest cities in the Netherlands. Travel to the windmills and Cube House are a must for tourists!



FEB 2023

I travelled to three different countries in February with friends. The first is Belgium, where there are four must-try items: beers, chips, waffles, and chocolates. Furthermore, the locals advised us to try the mussels. They are tasty!!!

Sweden is the second country. Stockholm has a wide variety of activities, and Sweden was experiencing snowfall at the moment. We just walked around the city for a day and took pictures because the views are amazing.

Finland is the third country that I went in February. We explored Rovaniemi, which is located in northern Finland. It is a must to see the Santa Claus village and take photos with Santa Claus. There are many Cantonese speakers. Of course, the northernmost McDonald's is also a great place to get an ice cream when it's below -20°C .

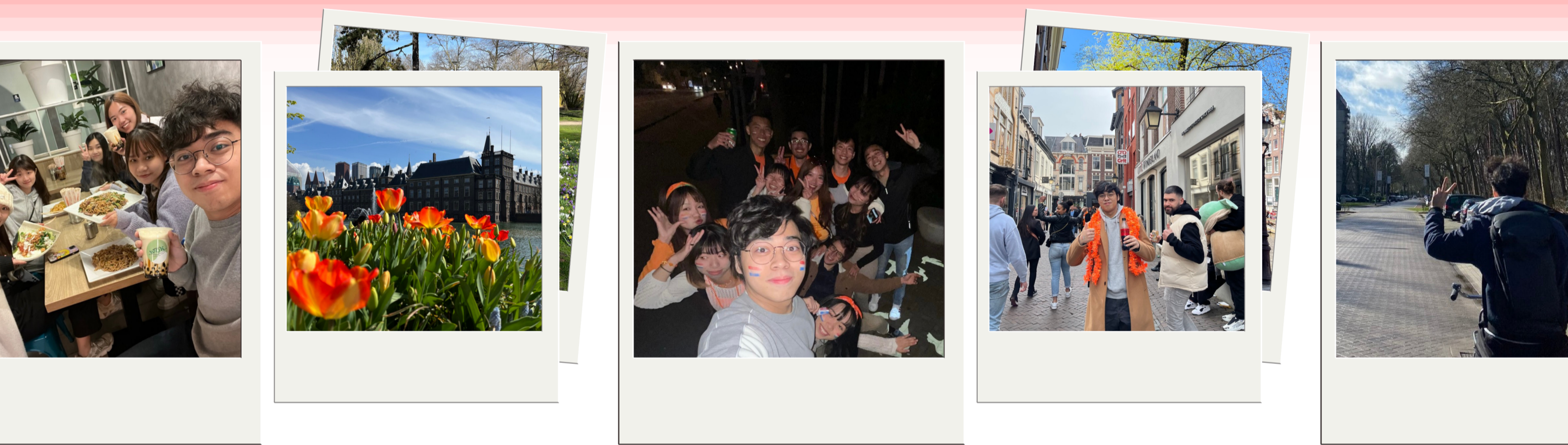
The mark as the kick-off of my study at Tilburg University: a presentation is due by the end of February, and it contributes to the final grade. During the Carnival week, my groupmate and I were working on the presentation. We received positive comments from the tutor during this, our first assessment at Tilburg University, even though we are unsure of how the instructor would grade us.



MAR 2023

My birthday is in early March, and my friends are celebrating by dining out for the first time in Tilburg. The best drink for me at the time was bubble tea. To find my friend who was also exchanging there in Utrecht, I travelled there. On that day, the Netherlands experienced its second and final snowfall of the year. There is a large Asian market there, so I brought plenty of "Indomie" (If you love Indomie as much as I do, you can just buy some there rather than bring it from Hong Kong~).

The first block of the spring semester was over by the end of March. The Block 3 courses' final examinations begin. Every day, we went to the library to study. A fun fact is, like me, the majority of students who studied until the library closed at 12 a.m. were Asian. During the exam period, the library is crowded, so it would be ideal to make a reservation for a seat. I paid for the membership of the University Sport Centre and go to the gym because it is too stressful to study the examinations days and nights.



APR 2023

I travelled to Amsterdam to start my April. We went to the Heineken Museum to learn how beer is made and learn the Dutch culture for beer. We ate Siu Mei rice in Amsterdam, and it is a good solution for my homesickness!!! The staff welcomed us in Cantonese!! I felt like I was in Hong Kong.

We went to Denmark and Norway after the exam period. Denmark is one of the happiest countries, and we experienced it as well. We had been to Copenhagen and Aarhus. Unfortunately, the time we were there is Easter. Most of the shops and restaurants were closed during the public holiday. But still, we walk around the city and enjoy how they live in this city. When we were in Oslo, Norway, we visited a few museums: arts, culture, and history of Vikings. Salmon is also famous to have a taste.

During April, I was working hard on my assignments and studies during weekdays, and I was traveling on the weekends. I had been to the Hague, and Amsterdam for tourist spots. Peace Palace is the spot that I wish to visit a lot since secondary school. It is so beautiful, but there are sad histories behind it. I also went to Albert Cuypmarkt and tasted Dutch food like Haring and apple pie.

King's Day is a Dutch festival that celebrates the birthday of the King of the Netherlands. People usually have parties the night before, and it is called King's Night. Dutch people are partying for 24 hours on that day. They are in orange and holding a beer. Every city will have its own way to celebrate, and we went to Utrecht for the flea market. People will sell something that they are not needed anymore.

MAY 2023

The United Kingdom is also one of the most memorable trips on this exchange. We were there when King Charles III having his coronation ceremony. Many people are celebrating this, and we went to Hyde Park to watch the live of the coronation ceremony. We feel sad as we cannot get into the parade route to see the King's face. We went to Edinburgh and London. The two places are very different. Edinburgh is more relaxing while London is kind of a Hong Kong as there are many Cantonese speakers and Hong Kong-style restaurants. I found the feeling of backing home there.

Although I didn't have enough time to go to the capital city of Germany, I went to Aachen, a German city near the Netherlands. I visited the church there and tried a cup of beer. After a few hours, I travelled back to the Netherlands and climbed up to Vaals, the highest hill in the Netherlands. At the top of Vaals, the Drielandenpunt can be found. It is the intersection point of the border of the Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium.

By the end of May, we had a short trip to Ireland. We tasted Guinness beer, Irish Coffee, and other famous Irish dishes. The sunset in Phoenix Park is remarkable. It is good to end all my trips during this exchange with a full English breakfast with the cutest latte.



JUN 2023

June is the saddest month for me as I am ending my exchange this month. But due to the exams, I have no time to explore other parts of the Netherlands anymore. Instead, I tried to make more good memories with both my Hong Kong and international friends in Tilburg. We went to the library to do revision till 12am together and dining out as well. Since it is hard to see each other again as we are in different countries, and we cannot have this kind of relaxing life again, we cherish every moment we meet each other. The exams went good, and I passed all of the courses, which is a surprise for me as there are indeed a high failure rate for the courses. Friends farewelled me, and I did enjoy my one last night in Tilburg.

To sum up, this is my great pleasure to have a chance to exchange. This does let me explore a lot and boarded my horizon. I think exchange is a must for university students as we can learn the cultural difference, and how different is the education system of different countries. This exchange does make me to grow up as well. I learnt how to take care myself for five months, handling all the daily stuff, and taking care of myself.



GENERAL STUDY ABROAD INFORMATION

VISA PROCEDURES

For the exchange in the Netherlands, you have to apply for a Dutch resident permit. The university will arrange their immigration coordinators to walk you through each step of applying for the permit. The university will gather the required documents and the €207 application fee for IND, and they will aid you in giving them all to the IND.

After your school has submitted your visa application, you need to apply on your own for the MVV, a 90-day visa that allows you to enter the Netherlands prior the distribution of the resident permit. You can apply earlier to ensure that you receive the MVV before your departure because the MVV appointments tend to be extremely busy in the late-December. The MVV takes 1-2 weeks to process.

Your residence permit can be obtained through the university once you have arrived in the Netherlands. Furthermore, you should schedule an appointment with the city hall to register as a citizen to obtain a BSN number for your bank account.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The closest housing from the university is Professor Verbernelaan ("Verbs"), which is recommended by the school. There are approximately 170 exchange students that can reside in Verbs, which has two buildings for exchange students, hence there are few rooms available. There is enough privacy because the rooms are single rooms. The kitchen and bathrooms are shared. You can chat with other international students while you are dining in the kitchen.

In mid-November, applications for Verbs open. Because the website is not operating very smoothly and the availability will be running out very soon, you will need to set aside some time for the application.

ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES

TOP week is an orientation program put on by a Tilburg University student organization. It lasts for three days and is full of activities with parties, movie nights, and city tours. This is the best chance to make friends from other nations at this event. Throughout TOP week, the university also offers a variety of introductory talks and welcoming workshops.

SOCIAL CLUBS & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

For international students, there is a student organization called ESN that provides a variety of activities. Every Tuesday and Thursday night, there are parties that are open to ESN members. If you want to take part in their activities, you can pay to become a member. In addition, open parties are held to jointly celebrate Dutch holidays.

SPORTS & RECREATION FACILITIES

The university's sports center, which is right next to the Verbs, offers a gym, a sauna, and a variety of courses. You receive two free trial memberships. After then, only those who paid for a membership will be able to use it. The cost of the six-month membership is €107.95, while the monthly pass is €24.95.

COURSE REGISTRATION

To allow the university to process and determine whether you are permitted to register for the courses, the proposed study plan should be submitted first. You can begin the process in late September and make changes up until the end of the exchange period. The only courses that can be registered for in OSIRIS are those that are approved for study in the study plan.

The Spring semester consists of two blocks. Block 3 begins on January 30, 2023, and depending on the school, course registration of Block 3 and Spring Semester begins on January 16, 2023. Block 4 begins in April, while registration for courses begins in late March.

TEACHING & ASSESSMENT METHODS

Tilburg University's courses are composed of lectures, tutorials, and office hours. Some of the courses, particularly the language classes, had attendance requirements of at least 80%, while others had none at all.

The syllabus lists the elements that make up the course grade. To pass the course, you must get at least 55%.

COMMUNICATION

The majority of the people in the Netherlands are able to understand and speak English, despite Dutch being the official language.

You will receive a sim card from the university in your orientation kits. Depending on your needs, you can activate and choose the data bundle plan.

FINANCE & BANKING

When applying for a visa, you must transfer about €4,800 to the university. As soon as you arrive in the Netherlands and register for a BSN number, you have to apply for a Dutch bank. The two Dutch banks that most exchange students will use are ABN AMRO and Revolut.

FOOD

Most exchange students cook in their dorms because eating out costs between €12 and €20 per meal. In the city, there are two supermarkets that are ubiquitous: Jumbo and Albert Heijn. There is also Asian market where you can purchase certain Asian ingredients.

TRANSPORTATION

In the city, biking is the most preferred mode of transportation. You can rent a bike from Unibike or Swapfiets, and if maintenance is needed, they will provide it. If you don't have a bike, your only option for getting to the city center is by bus.

The closest airport is Eindhoven Airport, and flights from here are probably operated by a low-cost airline. However, if you book the ticket that departs in the early morning, there might not be buses, which are the only option of transportation to get to the airport.

CLIMATE

Since there are only a few days that it snows in the Netherlands, I considered it a great blessing to have snow when I first arrive in Tilburg. However, the weather in the spring is unpredictable; it rained for an hour before turning sunny. The Netherlands became extremely hot starting in late May due to a heat wave. During the day, it is about 30°C, and at night, it is about 18°C. It is really hot because the rooms have no fans and air conditioners.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Tilburg University has no medical center or clinic. If necessary, you have to buy medicine from the pharmacy. You can get further information and assistance when you need it from the Tilburg University Study Abroad & Exchange Team. In addition, it is a requirement of the Dutch law that we were covered by health insurance while we were there.

The Netherlands is one of the safest countries in the world. While residing in Tilburg and other Dutch cities, you are secure. But keep in mind to take good care of your bike because it has been reported that a few bikes are stolen each year.

CAUTIONARY MEASURES

Although you are permitted to use Air Pods or other Bluetooth devices while cycling, you should be aware while cycling. You cannot use the phone and ride the bike at the same time. When biking at night, remember to turn on your front and rear lights.

ITEMS TO BRING

- Clothes for winter and summer
- Adaptors
- Router
- Lock
- Medicine
- Money
- Credit / Debit cards
- Laptop / iPad
- Hair Dryer
- Backpack

USEFUL LINKS AND CONTRACTS

- Mobility Online - For the proposed study plan and other pre-arrival procedures
<https://www.service4mobility.com/europe/LoginServlet>
- Osiris - Course Registration
<https://uvt.osiris-student.nl/>
- Canvas - Useful information and contracts for exchange students & Course Materials
<https://tilburguniversity.instructure.com/>

