
Immersion in Different Cultures - Exchange in University of Louvain, Belgium

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My Blog

I met many exchange students coming from other places in Europe and South America. I went travelling with them to Copenhagen and did cycling around the cities. I enjoyed playing soccer with friends in the university and they were really good.

My Pre-departure Checklist

The university residence was found to be full, and I and my Hong Kong buddies had to rent a suitable apartment off-campus. We finally located a suitable one from the reference residence list provided by the university. It took some time to choose the best one.

The visa application for entering Belgium is not too complicated; however, it costs you some charges. You also have to complete a body check at the reference clinic (around \$1500 HKD).

Just Arrived...

In the beginning, I lived in a short-term hostel of the Erasmus Institution, which allowed only three days' stay. Erasmus Institution is a Student Society across different European universities mainly serving exchange students by organizing them activities like orientation, excursions and city tours, parties, and is responsible for some other welfare issues of exchange students. I finally chose to live in my relative's house afterward in Northern Belgium. However, it took me almost three hours to arrive there!

Orientation

I joined the Erasmus Institution and the gym only. I did not join any academic orientations because I could not locate one. I made friends in the orientations, and found people around were very helpful. The members in the Erasmus parties rendered a lot of useful advice on my study plan.

My Place

The dormitory was dusty even I did cleaning every day. It was really close to the school. I just had to walk for ten to fifteen minutes to arrive at the lecture rooms.

It made my life easy as the apartment was well equipped with some daily stuff and utensils like pans, forks, and knives, etc..

My First Class

My first class was held in a small room. Students there were really concentrated in the class. They wrote down notes all the time. No one was busy playing with their smart phones.

Also, they welcomed questions from the professors. They did not mind if they did them wrong. I truly admire their attitude for that is real 'learning'.

People I Met

I made around five to seven local friends there. Just a few of them were met in classes. As students were too concentrated in classes, they spared no room to make friends.

As I was in the CityU soccer team before, I felt extremely glad to have met one of the players of the Belgium Premier League and Belgium National Youth team. He was friendly and it was nice to know him.

Out of Classroom

There were lots of activities outside classrooms. The Erasmus institution offered trips to some landmarks in Belgium, and organized dinners/pubs for exchange students to mingle.

Money

I planned carefully about expenses. I bought food from supermarkets and cooked always. If I wanted to travel, I would search for the lowest price for air tickets and hostels.

For transport, we as students could apply for concessionary tickets.

Goodbye

I felt sad to say goodbye to my friends. I remembered the moment we said goodbye in the train station. Friendships were precious and we promised each other to meet again in somewhere during summer.

One of the most rewarding was the road trip from Sweden to Norway. We drove a car and the scenes all along were amazing and the most beautiful I have ever seen.

Home Sweet Home

I like European food, and surely I also like my mum's dishes. They are the most delicious food in the world.

I enjoyed the time living alone and have become more independent.

Sharing

Exchange students should try to make friends of different nations but not restricted to Hong Kong or Asian friends. Making European and American friends would give you different perspectives in thinking. They always love to explore new knowledge and things. They like talking rather than texting. Sometimes they thought you were funny but you would not understand why. It is really interesting to know about different cultures to broaden one's horizon.

Overall Rating

4 out of 5

