

I'm taking this opportunity to reflect on my exchange experience in Germany. It has been a life-changing journey that has shaped me in more ways than I could have imagined.

Living in Germany has been an eye-opener in many ways, particularly when it comes to understanding their "work hard, play hard" culture. I observed how some of the top students would begin their studies as early as 8 AM, work diligently throughout the day, and then, by around 7 PM, head to the local pub or bar to unwind with friends. This balance between focused work and genuine relaxation was something I admired deeply. It made me realize the importance of enjoying life while still being productive.

One of the greatest gifts of this exchange has been the chance to meet and connect with people from all over the world. I was lucky enough to make friends from France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Italy. While I sometimes doubted my English skills, worrying that I might not be able to communicate effectively (especially since I hadn't taken the IELTS exam), I found that my English was good enough to build strong relationships. This opportunity to connect with others from different cultures has been one of the most rewarding aspects of the exchange.

The cultural exchanges, however, were not without challenges. There were moments of culture shock, but these only added to the richness of my experience. From partying until late with new friends, hiking in beautiful landscapes, and cooking dinners together, to playing pool at the student pub and trying foods from different countries, every experience broadened my perspective. These moments also made me reflect on my own identity and the unique aspects of Hong Kong culture that I could share with others. It wasn't something I thought about often back home, but being abroad made me more aware of the cultural strengths of Hong Kong, such as its food, diversity, and vibrant city life.

Traveling became an essential part of my exchange as well. During these five months, I visited 15 countries and over 30 cities. While some of my fellow exchange students may have travelled to even more places, I treasure each of my own experiences. These trips have broadened my worldview and given me a deeper appreciation for different cultures, histories, and lifestyles. They also made me reflect on my own roots, and I've come to realize that, despite how amazing Europe is, Hong Kong is the place that suits me best. I've gained a renewed appreciation for my home's dynamic pace, opportunities, and familiar comforts.

Overall, this exchange journey has been transformative. It pushed me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to grow in ways I never expected. I've learned to appreciate different cultures, developed a stronger sense of independence, and gained more confidence in myself. The friendships I've made and the experiences I've had will stay with me forever, and I'm returning home with not only memories but also a broader perspective on life. This exchange has truly been one of the most impactful periods of my life, shaping who I am today and influencing how I see the world.