

Exchange Report
Tilburg University
Fall Semester, 2007

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Introduction

Tilburg University, founded in 1927, is a fully accredited government financed university with almost 10,000 students. Tilburg university specialises in the social sciences and humanities. It is also successful in internationalisation---every year, there are 750 international students from 65 countries studying there, which creates a good platform for cultural interaction. Tilburg is a real student town, offering many facilities. The university itself also offers many different facilities such as a highly sophisticated library system, convenient computer facilities, a Student Center and a sports centre which provide students with the opportunity to relax and to enjoy different aspects of culture.

Visa Requirement

If you hold an HKSAR passport, you are required to apply for a residence permit for entering the Netherlands for more than 3 months. Before departure, you are required by the school to apply for a visa called MVV which is valid for 3 months. Upon arrival, you have to report to the City Hall and apply for a residence permit using the MVV. Issuing a residence permit takes 3 months' time, before the issuance, MVV also acts as a residence permit. When your MVV expires but the residence permit is not received, you may be questioned by the custom officer when you are back from trips. But such situation is not so serious, just explain the real case.

Semester Period

27st August 2007 to mid January 2008. Exam period lasts from early-December 2007 to mid-January 2008. Orientation started one week before the formal school days. I arrived at Tilburg on 17th August.

Local Weather

The weather in Tilburg is cool in late summer and cold but mild in winter. In summer, the temperature is around 15 degree Celsius, but it is quite rainy so that you will need a rain coat as you ride a bicycle every day. In winter it would be around 5 degree Celsius, but you may feel like 10 degree Celsius and it seldom snows.

Accommodation

There is a Housing Company which provides accommodation services for exchange students. Soon after Tilburg University accepts you, you would be asked whether you need the school to arrange hostel for you. If you would like to, you will be assigned to one of the four areas of accommodation. Monthly rent and location differ between different areas, while the nearer the hostel is to the school, the higher the rent is. On average it is around 300 euros per month. You will need to pay by credit card upon the first payment.

It would be much cheaper if you rent houses through local people. It is difficult to have known local residents before arrival, but the Chinese Student Union (you may join after arrival) may send you emails about any special offer (e.g. to rent a house near a Chinese restaurant).

There will be more opportunities to meet foreign students while living in hostel provided by the school, therefore I chose to arrange my accommodation through the school.

Orientation and Activities

Few days before the school term starts, there are orientation program arranged by the school, which includes orientation talks, workshops, and an orientation camp. Students are divided into mentor groups with 10 international students and 3 local students. There will be mentor dinners and parties throughout the term. Group members take turns to cook for their groups and the whole group would go for party every Tuesday, and there would be trips organized by local student organizations. Except local orientation activities, a CUHK alumni living in Eindhoven, Mr. Leung, is also kind to help exchange students. During major Chinese festivals, he invited all Chinese exchange students in the Netherlands to have dinner in his home, which was an unforgettable night for us.

Although being a small city, Tilburg is the 6th largest city in the Netherlands. There are several pubs, a shopping street, a "Grass Company" which sells drugs, and several restaurants, including Chinese and Turkish restaurants. Tilburg, and, the Netherlands, is also a convenient location for travelling. You may take bus to Belgium, train to Germany, or take a plane in either Amsterdam or Rotterdam or even Eindhoven.

Courses

Although it is able for UST students to transfer credits, no accounting courses of CUHK could be transferred from Tilburg University. However, many Economics courses could be transferred. Any interested students who minors in Economics could contact me for further information.

Courses I have taken are as follow:

1. Dutch Culture --- an interesting course from which you can know more about the social structure, major festival, social norm and history of the Netherlands.
2. International Relations --- a course about Cold War, which content is rather difficult, but only an essay is required to pass the course.
3. Economics of the EU --- a course in which you can know more about the EU, make presentations and to debate with international students in a competitive atmosphere.

Expenditure

Air Ticket	HKD\$7,000
Daily expenses	HKD\$15,000
Accommodation	HKD\$16,000
Insurance	HKD\$2,000
<u>Travelling</u>	<u>HKD\$40,000 (It depends)</u>
Total	HKD80,000

Things to Bring

Passport

ATM cards

Copies of important documents, i.e. insurance policy, passport, HKID card, etc.

Laptop

Socket Adaptors

Digital Camera

Jackets, Scarf, gloves, thick socks, raincoat

Medicine

Stationery

Cell phone

Final Thought and Reminder

The Netherlands is a small, peaceful and clean country. Although there are less tourist attractions than France, Germany, the UK, etc, it is a good place to live in as locals always welcome foreigners due to their history, and most people speak English well. Being located in the central of west Europe, it is also a good base for travelling. Yes, travelling is extremely important during exchange, which enriches your experience and changes your mind.