

Exchange City University of Hong Kong 2015 – Thiemo Kerklaan

General information

First of all, I can definitely recommend an exchange to City University of Hong Kong. The past semester (end of August until the end of December) has been the best time of my life and it has been a mind changing experience. I did my exchange, as I mentioned above, at the City University of Hong Kong. I believe this is one of the eight universities in the city! I had never travelled to Asia before and Hong Kong was an amazing city to discover the Asian culture and furthermore a perfect travel hub. Hong Kong was a perfect mix of everything. The city is a combination of Asian and Western culture. On one hand you had the Chinese Mong Kok district while Hong Island, with all its skyscrapers, is more Western. Moreover, you had the vibrant city on one hand, while Hong Kong contains a lot of hiking paths and beautiful beaches on the other hand.

Preparation

A woman named Ada Kwok made the whole preparation part easy and clear. She is the exchange coordinator from the College of Business. You have to follow several steps in order to apply at the City University after your nomination by the ESE. Every time you have to fill in forms or do something online, you get informed by Ada and she explains you clearly which steps you have to undertake. First of all, you have to fill out an online application system. You have to submit an official grade transcript, which is your transcript from Osiris (make sure you got the university stamp and signature under your transcript as a proof). Furthermore, they ask you for basic stuff like a copy of your passport and a motivation letter. You will receive a package with hardcopy documents after you finished the online procedure. This package contains, among others, an application form for a student visa. The application for your visa basically consists of filling out the forms and it has to contain a letter of solvency. This means you need a signed letter from your bank which proves you own a certain amount of money. You sent the forms back to Ada and she will take care of the visa application. If you have any questions during the procedures, just ask Ada. She is very friendly and always replies quickly.

The application is not the only thing you have to do in advance, because you have to choose your courses. What I did was just picking six courses that seemed interesting to me. Don't worry too much about your courses because you can easily change them in your first week of the exchange. In my case, I only kept one course of the six courses I took at the beginning. I did this for various reasons. First of all, I was able to create a schedule which only contained courses on Monday and Tuesday and the other reason was the fact that I wanted to follow more finance related courses.

I applied on time for a room on campus, which can save you a lot of money (really a lot). Renting a room on campus will be like 600-1000 euro's for the whole semester, while living in the city will be like 500-800 euro's a month. Unfortunately, I didn't get a spot on campus which meant I had to look at something else. The College of Business will provide you with a list of off-campus accommodations and finally I found a place at Campus HK. These were service apartments in a nice four star hotel. The rooms and the facilities were great but the best thing to me was the fact that a lot of other students lived there as well.

Arrival

The introduction week was at the end of August. I went to my apartment since I didn't get a spot on campus. The first thing I mentioned was how easy it is to make new friends. No one knows anyone and everyone is open to you. In the first week various activities were organized by the exchange student club. There was a trip to IKEA to buy necessary stuff, a one day trip to Lantau Island and they will show you around at the university. I spend my first weeks basically on meeting new people, restructuring my schedule and explore the Hong Kong nightlife.

Courses

I took four different courses which gave me a total of 24 credits. What I experienced during the semester is the willingness of the professors to give the exchange students an easy time. I took courses of the most difficult (level 4) level but they were not that hard compared to the ESE. In Hong Kong, most lectures and tutorials are mandatory but this wasn't a big problem since I had only classes on Monday and Tuesday. I will explain my courses in more detail now:

Mergers and Acquisitions (6 ECTS)

This is one of the most challenging and difficult courses. But the fact that the topic is in my interests and the professor was very good didn't make it too difficult for me. The course consists of one tutorial and one lecture a week. During the lectures and tutorials, various exercises and theories about mergers and acquisitions will be explained. The most interesting part was a pitch book we had to write. You had to write a merger proposal of two existing companies in small groups. I learned a lot from this project since it contained a lot of calculations and theories we studied during the course.

Strategy and Policy (6 ECTS)

This course consists of only one lecture a week which was just great in my opinion. The course will start with a business game you have to play. You have to make various business decisions for a company and you have to compete against the other groups in your classroom. The game will be finished after a few weeks and from that point onwards the course will be more theoretical.

Security analyses and portfolio management (6 ECTS)

This was another finance related course I took. It consists of one lecture a week in which different financial theories will be explained. There was one project about optimization of the portfolio. Overall this course wasn't that difficult since the professor was very helpful and I recognized a lot of theories from the courses at the ESE.

Mandarin for Non-Chinese speakers (6 ECTS)

I took this course because I wanted to learn some basic Chinese and understand more about the culture. But be careful, since people in Hong Kong speak Cantonese, you cannot bring the Mandarin you learned in practice. Mandarin is very interesting but a lot of effort is asked if you really want to learn the language. The group was big which means the professor didn't have a lot of attention for you. Overall I didn't learn as much Mandarin as I had hoped in advance. However, I don't regret taking the courses since I met so many other exchange students here.

Finances

I told you Hong Kong contains everything which means you can spend as much as you want. The amount you spend really depends on your lifestyle. Do you buy Western food in expensive restaurants or do you prefer cheap Chinese street food? Another thing are the drinks in clubs. They will be between 8 and 12 euro's while you can easily go outside the club and drink beer on the streets which you buy in a 7-eleven. So the amount you spend depends on your way of living. Furthermore I travelled a lot during and after the semester which increased my costs significantly.

flight ticket AMS>HK	420
flight ticket BK>AMS	380
Rent	1800
Telephone	100
Books	25
travelling	2800
daily life	2000
	7500

Daily life

The university is located next to a giant shopping mall which you have to cross in order to get from the MTR to the university. Public transport is working very well and it helps you to explore all the sides of the city. Especially with your student octopus card (like the dutch ov-chipkaart), which gives you discount on your MTR fares. I had classes from Monday 2 pm until 10 pm and Tuesday from 12 pm to 6 pm. This gave me a lot of time to travel and do other things in Hong Kong. The temperature in Hong Kong is amazing and it didn't get below 20 degrees until December. This gives you the opportunity to hike in the mountains around the city, explore the city centre and party in the clubs and streets in LKF till late. What really surprised me was Hong Kong's nature and beaches. You can easily go to a peaceful place when you are done with the crowded city. Furthermore we partied a lot in Hong Kong. You have the ladies nights and Wednesday and Thursday in Wan Chai and LKF (party districts). This means drinks are for free for all the girls, which is unfair from a guy's perspective. And off course the party districts are filled with people on Fridays and Saturdays as well. Finally I recommend you to hire a boat with your friends and enjoy Hong Kongs good weather for the day.

Finally, I travelled a lot during my exchange. Flying from Hong Kong to other Asian countries is relatively cheap. Every other country was worth visiting since every country is in some way unique. During my exchange I ended up travelling to: Guilin, Beijing, The Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia and Macau.

I really had the time of my life and I strongly recommend choosing Hong Kong as your exchange destination. Feel free to ask me any questions if you have some.