

Hong Kong, where East meets West

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At the beginning of 2016 I was chosen to be one of the few going on exchange to the City University of Hong Kong. Last year I was, just as you, trying to find a destination for my exchange. During my time abroad I wanted to get an insight into a new culture, experience the Asian world and be able to travel. Going on exchange in Hong Kong, a city which has both its western and eastern influences, made this possible without experiencing too much of a culture shock. Hong Kong is an amazing city, it's very crowded and consists mostly of huge apartment buildings and shopping malls. On the mainland (Kowloon) the Chinese influences are the most visible, with its many markets and exotic street food. Hong Kong Island is most influenced by the western culture, many large companies are located here in impressive skyscrapers. However, Hong Kong also has a lot of possibilities for hiking, such as the Lion's Rock hike or Dragon Back hike which have spectacular views.



Preparation

After I got the confirmation from the ESE that I was accepted, I got an email from the inbound exchange coordinator from City University explaining all the steps you had to take. She was our contact person and you could email her about all the questions you had, which she replied to really quickly.

The university arranged the visa. You had to fill out several forms and provide several statements and then send it to Hong Kong, so you have to make sure you don't do this on the last day of the deadline, as the delivery time can be quite long.

You can apply for accommodation on campus, this costs between 700-1000 euros for the whole semester. This is a lot cheaper than if you have to rent a room, which is between 500-800 euros per month. The application for accommodation is also extensively explained by the exchange coordinator. I was lucky to get a place on campus, which saved me a lot of money and was very practical. However, not everyone applying for accommodation on campus is accepted as there are limited places. Your place is determined by lottery (not first come first serve, so it doesn't matter when you apply, as long as it is before the deadline) and around 60% gets accepted. The University also provides a lot of information and links on other housing possibilities around Hong Kong, specifically for students.

Next to this, you also have to choose your courses, on their website they have an extensive overview of the courses they offer. But don't worry about this too much yet, since the week before classes start and the first week of classes you are able to add or drop your courses. Most exchange students switch many courses in this time to create a schedule which only contains courses on for example Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. With this schedule it's much easier to travel to different countries, which many exchange students do.

Arrival

The week before classes start there is an introduction week in which the university and the exchange student association organize some fun and helpful activities. However, this week is not comparable

to the Eureka week. There is an information meeting which you are required to attend, and some fun activities like a trip to the Ikea, a campus tour and a day trip to visit some sights of Hong Kong. The University offers pick-up service from the airport to the campus, and it also provides explanation of how to get to campus via public transport. I planned to use the pick-up service, however I missed my time slot. At the pick-up point, I met another exchange student (with a local student) who also were too late, and because we didn't want to wait 2 hours for the next bus we decided to use public transport to get to the university. Because we had help from the local student this went quite good. However, if you decide to use the public transport on your own I would advise you to look up on the internet exactly what you have to do to get an octopus cars (ov-chip card). Because I had a room on campus I just had to check in by filling out some forms.

Courses

I had to take four courses, as each course is worth 6ECTS (3 Hong Kong credits)

Asia-Pacific Economies

This course looked at the economies of different Asia-pacific countries, and mostly focused on macroeconomic effects. The professor was very interesting, however he was very direct in his opinion and wasn't afraid to start a discussion with a student. The course consisted of 1 small assignment, 1 larger assignment where you had to make a risk analysis about a country of your choosing, and an exam. I really liked this course as it was something different from which I had had before and because you learned something about the history of multiple Asian countries. A small percent of your grade was for your class attendance (only for the tutorials), however it wasn't very difficult to have someone else sign your name.

Corporate Accounting

If you passed Intermediate accounting without too much trouble, this course is relatively easy. The classes are not very interesting but very straightforward. The course nicely complements the accounting you've already had, it recaps some subjects and teaches you new subjects that have the same level of difficulty. The course consists of a midterm, a case analysis and a final exam. For the case analysis, you will have to answer some question about the financial statements of a specific company. Class attendance is also checked, however it only counts for 5% of your final grade, so missing some classes is not a problem. The course wasn't very interesting, but relatively easy and didn't require much work, which left more time to travel or explore Hong Kong.

Urban Economics

This course focused on different microeconomic phenomena and how they affected cities and its structure. I choose this course because I like microeconomics but mostly because the focus was different from what I've had before. The classes were quite interesting, the professor mostly talked about different papers and used many examples from the region. However, it was very unclear what information would be useful for the exam. In the end, we had one tutorial from the TA, who would also make the exam, where he explained what kind of questions we would get (which were mostly mathematical). So not a lot of information from the lectures was actually required for the exam. Next to the final exam, you also had to make one assignment with a small group, which was completely open to your own interpretation. The course was interesting, but in the end I didn't really learn a lot.

Financial Management

This course is quite comparable to Finance 1, thus if you passed Finance, you won't have many problems with this course. The professor was really good and explained everything very thoroughly and clear. The course consisted of a midterm, a group homework, a group assignment and a final exam. The group homework was really easy and only took an hour. For the group assignment, we had to choose a company and value its stock. In the end, a recommendation had to be made to either buy or sell the stock. I chose this course because it seemed quite easy and it fitted in my schedule.

Finances

Living in Hong Kong can be quite expensive, but you can choose how expensive you want to make it. Most of the time I ate at the canteen at the University, which is not that expensive, or I went out for dinner. You can get relatively cheap food at Chinese restaurants, however if you want to go to a western restaurant the prices are even higher than in the Netherlands. I didn't cook that much as the supermarkets were relatively expensive, and cooking wouldn't be cheaper than eating at the university. Drinks in clubs are also a lot more expensive as in the Netherlands, however most exchange students get their drinks from the 7-eleven, which you can find anywhere.

Expenses	Euros
Plane tickets	900
Housing	760
Phone charges	100
Books	40
Transport (public transport in Hong Kong)	1000
Daily Life (incl. food, going out, small trips)	2700
Travelling	1500
Total	7000

Daily Life

The university is located relatively close to the center. There is an MTR (metro) station in the shopping mall next to the university, which makes it easy to travel around Hong Kong. As a student, you get a 50% discount for the MTR. There are many things you can do, such as visiting the Chinese markets and trying some streetfood, going out in LKF and Wan Chai (the party districts) and hiking or visiting the beach. Every Wednesday in Wan Chai and Thursday in LKF there is Ladies night, which means free entrance and (1 or more) free drinks for girls. One of my favorite things to do was going to Mr. Wongs, this is a Chinese restaurant where you can get unlimited food and beer for 60 HKD (7-8 euro's). Many exchange students come here to enjoy a nice meal, and have some drinks before going out. Because of the large crowds you mostly sit outside on tiny plastic chairs at makeshift tables, however this and the many exchange students makes the atmosphere amazing.



I planned my courses so that I would only have classes on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, to make it easier to travel. I traveled to Vietnam, Thailand, The Philippines, Taiwan and Guilin (China). Travelling during my exchange made the whole experience even better, there were always exchange students who wanted to travel with you and what better way to get to know new people than by experiencing new things together.

There are so many things to do and see, and I would recommend you to do as much as you can already at the beginning. There were a lot of activities in the end which I still wanted to do, but there simply wasn't any time left. Whereas at the beginning, there were whole days I wouldn't really do anything. For example, a fun thing to do in Hong Kong is to rent a boat with a large group of people for a day. At the beginning (the first time I participated in this organized activity) I thought there would be so many times more we would be able to do this. In the end this was the only time we did this, thus I'm very happy I decided to participate that time. So don't think 4 months are long, they will be over before you know it.

In conclusion, I would definitely recommend going on an exchange in Hong Kong!

I hope you got some new insights from reading this report, and are now as enthusiastic about Hong Kong as I am. Good luck with your exchange, and if you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me!