



Hello, my name is Ingeborg de Pater, and I'm third-year econometrics student (Dutch version). Last fall, I went on exchange to the City University of Hong Kong, from September to December. I had an amazing time, and certainly recommend Hong Kong as an exchange destination to all students who are still in doubt where to go!

Exchange Hong Kong 2016

Preparation

Before my exchange in Hong Kong started, there were quite a few things to prepare. However,

everything is extremely clear and well organized, so don't worry about it!

When you're nominated by our own university to go to Hong Kong, you will get an invitation to complete an online application from the City University around April. In this application, you fill in your personal information, an application scheme for the visa and you must pick your courses. It's possible to change those courses later, but that's a lot of work

and many courses are already filled up, so it's worth to spend some time on this. There's a lot of paperwork, but everything is well explained and clear. If you do have a question, you can just send an email to the contact person of City University and he or she will answer you in less than a day. For the English proof, it was enough to get an eight or higher in English VWO, to be proven with your original diploma and a self-made translation. This spared me an expensive and time-consuming official English test.

The City University will complete the visa application, you should just fill in the paperwork in the online application and sent it to them (don't forget, like I nearly did, that it takes a long time for post to arrive in Hong Kong). However, I met a few people who didn't get their student visa in time. If this happens to you, there's no reason to panic: you can just buy an on-arrival tourist visa when you arrive in Hong Kong, and if your student visa arrives you can go with the boat to Macau and back, which will take you only half a day.

The most important part of your preparation is finding a place to stay. The City University offers places in the student residence halls beside the campus. I advise you to apply for a place here; it's extremely cheap compared to the rooms outside the campus and conveniently located beside the university. Unfortunately, they don't have enough space for everyone, and I didn't get a room. Finding a not too expensive room in Hong Kong is hard, especially from another country. Most places ask absurd high rents. Therefore, I decided to participate in the peer support program of the university. With this program, you stay in a place called 'Campus Hong Kong', where you share a room with three other international students. If you participate in the peer support program, one of the students is a local student who shows you around in the beginning and helps you settling in Hong Kong. The rooms are modern, clean, and, most importantly, there are many other exchange students. This makes it easy to meet new people and make new friends, and hence most of my new friends stayed in the same building. The downside however, is both the distance from the university (I left an hour before class), and the high rent (around 650 euro a month, the amount you pay for a whole semester in the student residence). Finding something cheaper is hard though, especially if you want to stay with other exchange students in the same building.

Arrival

Before the start of the semester, the university organizes an introduction week for exchange students. During this week, you finish the last part of your paperwork, switch to other courses if you want to, and you can attend many information sessions from the university. But the most important part of this week is to get to know other exchange students. The exchange student organization organizes all sort of activities during the introduction week and the first few weekends: a trip to Ikea and the cheapest supermarket, a day trip to a touristic highlight of Hong Kong, a hike etcetera. And every evening there is a party in the party district of Hong Kong, organized especially for exchange students. Everything is communicated through facebook, so make sure to subscribe yourself to all the Facebook pages for international students.

To go from the airport to the place you stay, check out the busses from the airport at their website. The bus is the most convenient and cheapest way to go from the airport to nearly everywhere the city.

Courses

The City University offers a wide range of courses for exchange students to choose from, from both the College of Business as well as other departments. Furthermore, it is possible to

follow a course in Cantonese or Mandarin. The level of the courses is in general significant lower than at Erasmus University, and you will probably not have much difficulties to pass a course. However, the courses differ a lot in difficulty. In general, so-called GE-courses are most easy, and contain a lot of group work. For the other courses, you should look at the first number of the course code. 1 is the easiest, 4 is most difficult. However, I found even the courses starting with a 4 way easier than most of the courses of Erasmus University.

To get 24 ECTS, you should choose four courses. I picked five, just to be sure. Most courses consist of a mix of group work, mid-terms, and a final exam. Sometimes participation in the class counts as well in your final grade, but for nearly every course it's possible to miss a few classes so you can travel throughout the semester. The quality of the teachers is varying, but most teachers I had were quite good, and all of them spoke English very well.

Economic Strategy and Game Theory (EF4484)

The first part of this course gives a nice introduction in game theory. The teacher goes quite slow in this first part, especially since we already discussed part of the theory in micro-economics, making it sometimes a bit boring, but I found the new problems very interesting. For this part, you have an exam and a mid-term. In the second part, you look at case studies and try to use your theoretical knowledge in real cases. For this part, your grade consists of individual assignments about the cases and a participation grade. The course was quite interesting, especially the combination of theory with real-life cases, and not too hard.

Information Management for Financial Services (IS4835)

This course contains of two parts: in the first part of the lecture, the teacher tells you about the computer systems supporting the exchange market, especially the one in Hong Kong. It was interesting to get some insights in how exchange markets work, and no previous computer knowledge was required. However, learning for the final exam wasn't hard, but extremely time-consuming, since you had to learn a lot of facts by heart. The second part of the lecture was about coding in Excel VBA. In the lectures, you just had to copy and paste the code from the word file into Excel, so you didn't learn much. But in the group project part of the group had to write an own code in Excel. I really liked this part, since I really like coding. However, if I didn't have any experience in other programming languages from econometrics, I think the coding in the group project would have been very hard, since you didn't learn much in the lectures.

Solving Business Problems with Spreadsheet Modelling (CB2011)

In this course, you learned how to formulate optimization problems and solve them in Excel. Nearly the whole theoretical part of the course was already covered in my econometric bachelor, so this course was very boring for me. Only the practical part in Excel was new for me. The course might be more interesting for economic students, but I think the lectures will be very slow and boring and the course very easy for them as well.

Mathematical Finance (MA4529)

This course was about the mathematical approach of option pricing. You learned different models of option pricing and their mathematical derivation. Though the subject is extremely interesting if you want to major in finance and/or are interested in the math behind the stock markets, I was not a big fan of the course: the teacher was quite chaotic and left many things unexplained. The mathematics were doable, but I'm not sure whether all the necessary mathematical techniques are covered in the economy bachelor as well. If you just want to

know more about option pricing and aren't interested in the mathematical details behind it, the course below is a better option.

Principles of Option Pricing(EF4520)

This course is, just like the course above, about option pricing, but then from the economic instead of a mathematical point of view. You learned three different basic techniques of option pricing. I really enjoyed this course: the teacher was good and I gained some useful basic knowledge about the (mathematical) models behind the stock markets used by traders. The techniques of option pricing were based on mathematics, so there was some math involved, but not too much and the teacher explained all the mathematics very well.

Finances

Asia is known as a cheap destination, but unfortunately Hong Kong is an exception. Life in Hong Kong is quite expensive, though it also depends a lot on your lifestyle. Travelling to other countries is, of course, expensive, even with the relatively cheap plane tickets. Since I didn't live in the student residence, my rent was extremely high as well. The upside was the well-equipped kitchen in my room, so I didn't have to eat in the university canteens every day, which saved me a lot of money. I didn't cook much at home compared to The Netherlands though, since eating in a local restaurant is cheap (around 5 euros for a meal), and the food is delicious. Try to buy your food and vegetables in the local markets, this will save you a lot of money and it is nice to experience the local Hong Kong life in the markets.

What	Euros
Rent	2580
Flight ticket (to Hong Kong and back)	620
Trips (Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Shenzhen)	1200
Public traffic	140
Food, social activities and daily life	1600
Total	6140

Daily life

Hong Kong is an amazing city and a great place to live. It will probably take you the full four months to discover the city. Beside the famous touristic highlights you have to see, there are many less known but equally beautiful temples, parks and markets to visit and trails to hike. What I liked about Hong Kong was the mix of the Asiatic and Western culture. On one hand, you had the more Asiatic part of the city, with the local markets, the small restaurants with delicious food, temples, small shops, parks and the extremely busy areas with people and neon lights everywhere. On the other hand, when you crossed the water to the Western business district on Central, you have modern skyscrapers, Western restaurants and all the clubs to go out. English is the official second language in Hong Kong, so all the signs are in both Cantonese and English. Together with the excellent public transport, this made it very convenient and easy to travel around Hong Kong.

If you want to go out, you usually go to LKF, a small area (compared with the number of people living in Hong Kong) full with clubs and bars. Drinks inside the clubs are expensive,

so most of the times you drink in front of the seven-eleven, go to a club and back to the seven-eleven again whenever you want a drink. For girls, the entry of the clubs is usually free, and on Wednesdays you have the lady's night with free drinks. Very unfair for the boys, who often pay around 15 euros to enter a club. But the international exchange club organizes a lot of parties where you can buy your ticket beforehand and don't have to worry about the entry-price.

What I really liked about Hong Kong was all the beautiful nature around the city. Hong Kong is surrounded by mountains and seas, and I often went on a hike for a whole day, climbing a mountain for a beautiful view of the city or the sea. This was the perfect way to escape the often crowded and noisy city.

At last, Hong Kong is a perfect starting point to travel around Asia. I went to Tokyo, Taiwan and the Philippines, but there are also many other countries to go to, like Vietnam, Indonesia, Mainland China, Cambodia etcetera. A round-trip ticket usually costs around 100 euros, but this of course depends on the place and the time. It was my first time in Asia, and travelling around to see his amazing continent was truly fantastic.

If you have any questions regarding an exchange in Hong Kong, feel free to send me a mail at ingeborgdepater@gmail.com