

## Experience Report Lyon, Exchange 2016

My name is Valentin Sigrist and I spent my Master's exchange at EMLyon, Lyon, France. My degree program is the MSc Behavioral Economics at Erasmus School of Economics (ESE), Rotterdam, Netherlands.

### Host University

EMLyon Business School is located in Ecully, a quiet suburb of Lyon. From basically any point in Lyon, it takes roughly 40 minutes to an hour to get there by public transport. About 3300 students are enrolled at EMLyon Business school, which is a French "Grand Ecole", one of the prestigious graduate schools in France.

The school took basic care of the exchange students by introducing them to "BDI" a student-led community who organizes social events.

We also had a contact person, Mrs. Rona Zhangrong, who was available for technical questions around courses and enrollment. The Ecully Campus has a very modern library, which was still in reconstruction, but already a good place to have group meetings or self-study.

The course registration at EMLyon was complicated. There were only a few hours for the bidding, in which the server broke down immediately. A lot of courses were full very quickly, so we had to contact Mrs. Zhangrong several times to get the enrollment right. Although many courses seemed to be full right from the beginning, I could take every course that I wanted to, after consulting with the exchange office of ESE.

### Academics

I took the courses "Crossing Cultural Borders" (CCB), "Deciding", "Developing Business abroad" (DBA) and "Sustainability Reporting". This resulted in a total of 17,5 ECTS out of 16 required by ESE. Initially, I tried to take the course "Geopolitics", taught in French which I cancelled soon because of my insufficient French skills, given the frontal way courses are taught in France. All other courses were in English.

All courses were ok, after all. "Developing Business abroad" is pretty much a crash course in intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Law which to some may not be the most exciting subject. Yet, the topic is quite interesting once you understand the big picture. "Crossing Cultural Borders" (CCB) and "Deciding" are introductions to Cultural Intelligence and Behavioral Economics, respectively. Both are interesting and require very little study load. "Sustainability Reporting" is a two-day course in December which is interesting and very practical. It requires two full days of team work, which is pretty much the same as for the other two courses each. Please note, that "Sustainability Reporting" gives 2,5 ECTS while the other courses give 5 ECTS each.

### Housing

I lived in a shared apartment with a French guy, Guillaume, who worked and rented a room in his quite modern flat in the 8<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement. I found my apartment online. Finding an acceptable apartment in September in Lyon proved to be very challenging, which led to me living at friends' places the entire month. Only in October I was lucky to find the room at Guillaume's. I paid 450 €/ month, which is normal for the location. In the city center, rents may reach 550€/ month. Unfortunately, a student's dream of a bohemian old building flat in the Old City is either very difficult to find or very expensive. Landlords generally avoid people renting for less than an entire year. Then, all sorts of guarantees and bureaucracy are required until one can finally move into the flat.

### Money

My monthly budget was around 400€ after rent and insurance, but as going out in Lyon is expensive (Coffee 3€, beer 6,5€, dinner min. 25€), this budget was a little short.

French supermarkets like Carrefour are about the same prices as "Albert Heijn" in the Netherlands but much lower quality. The cafeteria at the university is priced ok, but rock-bottom quality and only open for lunch. This essentially

makes working late at university impossible due to a lack of food.

I opened a bank account in France in order to apply for the housing support CAF. Both is a bureaucratic nightmare. By the time this report is written, which is three weeks after return, none of these processes are completed.

### **Host country**

About 500.000 people live in Lyon. It is the third largest city in France after Paris and Marseille. There are two rivers, Saone and Rhône, flowing together in Lyon. During summer, you can enjoy evenings at the riverbanks or in one of the many boats that are transformed to bars and restaurants.

Lyon has also a very nice old city, which is UNESCO world cultural heritage with a lot of good restaurants, nice bars and pubs. Personally I would rank Lyon as a smaller, slightly calmer and cleaner version of Paris. The second arrondissement, the area between Saone and Rhône, is good for shopping.

There are other nice places not far from Lyon worth a visit, like Paris, Carcassonne, Annecy, Toulouse or Marseille.

It is important to mention that most French people don't speak any other language than French. Even if you ask in English, they will respond in French. Everyday life will thus be easier with some French skills. The university does not provide language courses, so it totally depends on you to learn some French in advance or visit a language course in the city.

Lyon is the culinary capital of France; its culture is stamped by legends like Paul Bocuse or other chefs. Therefore food, and especially the 'cuisine Lyonnaise' plays a crucial role in the life of Lyon citizens. To experience this, I would recommend to visit one of the typical restaurants, called the 'bouchons', which are located mostly in the old town. I would recommend 'le Pailleron', a good restaurant in 'Croix-Rousse', which serves delicious traditional food in large quantities.

In the beginning of December there is 'Fête de lumière', a festival that focuses on light engineering and takes place in the whole city. It is a highlight and worth a visit (for example from friends and family).

An interesting aspect of living in France is that everything seems to be very complicated. Even buying a ticket for the public transport can be challenging, as it is not possible to buy it online. In front of the few stores are always long waiting lines.

In supermarkets, always plan ample time as cashiers work at their own ease and speed. Generally, you can expect opening hours to be more restricted compared to what you may be used to in neighboring countries. Digitally, Lyon is not a front runner. Do not expect Wi-Fi, cellphone networks, electronic payment or mobile Apps to work properly or at all. Online transactions of any kind are not customary to many French companies, universities and public services.

Personally, I benefitted from the exchange, practiced the French language and got to know the French culture in general and the Lyon culture specifically. Academically, I experienced a moderate knowledge progress, partly because EMLyon is just a business school. In my personal experience, the academic and organizational standard at EMLyon did not fully reach the standard of Dutch universities such as Maastricht, my bachelor university, or ESE in Rotterdam. However, this perception may be influenced by my status as exchange student and the related course load. I intentionally did not take too difficult courses because I wrote my master thesis parallelly.