

Hi, dear S.H.Hoers!

I've just come back from the University College Utrecht (UCU), the Netherlands. It's my great pleasure to share my experience with you.

During my stay in the Netherlands, I've gained a lot not only in the academic aspect, but also for my self-development. After finishing my study in UCU, I must say that it is an unforgettable and important experience in my university life even in my life.

Life in UCU

In terms of the school life in UCU, I experienced a quite different one compared with that in Hong Kong. Different from Chinese University, University College has much fewer people and smaller class sizes. Normally, there are only about 20 students in one class, which provides us more opportunities to communicate with professors. Foreign students are always much more outgoing than Chinese students, which gives me a chance to be more confident to interact with my classmates in class. Teaching methods are also different in the Netherlands. Opinions and thoughts from the students are mostly encouraged by professors. Discussions and debates are held in each class. Courses in UCU mainly focus on liberal arts and sciences, which means that there are no business courses there. Business students should think carefully about that because you probably cannot transfer any credits back to Hong Kong. However, UCU is a good place for you to try different academic fields and find out other knowledge beyond your major. During my stay there, I spent a while to adapt to the new academic style and

make myself more participated in the class. This experience is a great opportunity for me to know more about the world and learn from the people from all around the world. In UCU, each student will be assigned to a tutor who will help you in your study and your life as well. At least 2 meetings will be held in one semester. It is a good way to help you adapt to the new environment quickly.

An introduction week is held before the semester officially starts. Exchange students and new full-time students are divided into several groups, through which you can make friends with students from different backgrounds. 8-10 students will form a group with 2-3 group mothers and fathers, which is quite similar to the O'Camp in CUHK. During the intro-week, you will take part in a lot of activities and have a city tour by bike. At night, there are always parties in the hostel and college bar. After the intro-week, you will know a lot of new friends and it will be a good start of your exchange life.



Together with my group mates



Campus of University College Utrecht

Travel around Europe

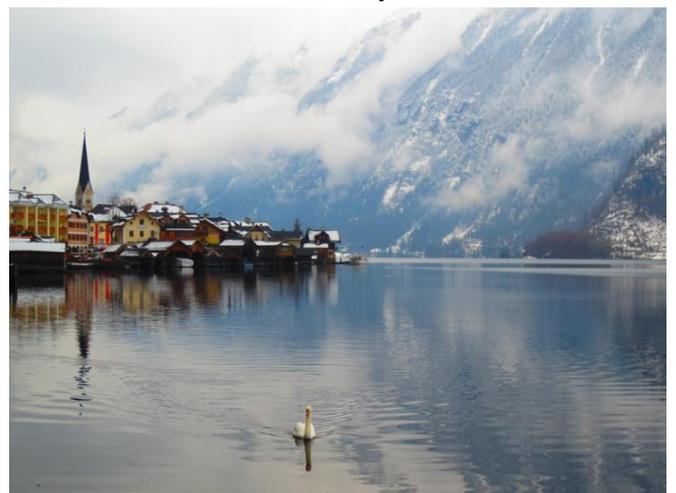
Utrecht is the fourth largest city in the Netherlands. With a central location, it is really convenient for you to go to other major cities by train. It takes only 30-40 minutes to Amsterdam and The Hague. During weekends, I went to most of the major cities and some small and pretty towns in the Netherlands. Sheep, cows and windmills are everywhere in Holland. You will feel the beauty of the nature there easily.

The location of the Netherlands in Europe also makes travel quite easy. With the visa of Holland, you can travel to most of the continental European countries. Weekends can be used to visit its neighboring countries, such as Germany, Luxemburg and Belgium. Each of them has their own characteristics and cultures and is really worth visiting. I've traveled to 9 countries in Europe besides the Netherlands during my time there, which include Germany, Luxemburg, Belgium, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Demark, Italy and France. Europe is a continent with a long history and a bunch of cultural relics. At the same

time, its beautiful natural landscapes are amazing as well. I was shocked not only by the fantastic masterpieces by many famous artists but also the unbelievable scenery in many European countries. The advantages of exchange in the first semester were that I could celebrate the Christmas with the local people in a traditional European way and saw the beautiful snow in the Alps. The most impressive experience for me was my trip to Hallstatt, which is a world heritage village in Austria. I'd never imagined that I could go there by myself and see the most amazing and awesome scenery in the world!



Christmas market in Germany



Amazing view of Hallstatt, Austria

Some Tips

1. Nearly all of the Dutch speak fluent English, so there is no need to worry about the language problem in the Netherlands.
2. A bike is necessary if you want to travel in the city more easily. You can buy a second-hand bike in the bike shop for about 60-80 Euros and sell it before your departure. Remember to keep the receipt if you want to sell it back to the shop!
3. You can open a local bank account in the ING bank, which makes your life there more convenient. Don't forget to cancel it before you leave.
4. If you want to travel around, Eurail Pass and budget airlines are really helpful. Easyjet and Ryanair are famous budget airlines in Europe. You can get really cheap tickets if you book early enough.
5. Lots of Youth Hostels are available in Europe. It costs about 20-30 Euros per person for one night. If you will travel with your friends, booking a hotel might be cheaper for each of you.

Generally speaking, this exchange experience is quite meaningful and helpful in my life, which provides me more courage to face problems in daily life and know how to get on well with people from different cultural backgrounds. There are a lot of stories I can share with you. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about exchange in the Netherlands. Don't miss the opportunities and have a memorable university life!

Yours,
YUAN Wenying



Dom Tower in Utrecht