

**Exchange university**

Arts et Métiers ParisTech

Degree programme

Mechanical Engineering

Exploration of Paris and France, with some studies on the side

Before departure

I have always loved travelling, and I think that is what motivated me to first apply for exchange studies. Being able to travel to another country while retaining the strong societal connection that a dedicated occupation entails seemed to me like an opportunity I could not pass up. I made no preparations whatsoever, left home quite spontaneously, and it has worked out astonishingly well.

Upon arrival

I have visited the city several times before, but arriving in Paris to live here was a whole different experience. When coming here I had decided to not go directly from my home, but rather to spend a few weeks travelling around Europe on the way. Like this, I ended up spending time in Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria before even arriving in France. Even though this certainly contributed me to being mentally better prepared for my arrival, I still could not help but feel overwhelmed by the sheer size and tempo of Paris.



Parc Montsouris, just next to my home in Paris.

Financials

On top of the regular student aid I was already receiving, I was able to receive another scholarship from Erasmus to cover extra living expenses and travels. Paris is in many senses more expensive than Stockholm. Rent is something that I paid much more for in Paris than back home. As the housing market here is much less structured, and competition for housing very high, landlords can generally take out high rents and still find tenants willing to pay. Food was another cost that increased. Mainly this is because of my changed habits in going out to restaurants or cafés much more regularly.

Accommodation

I was able to get a room in the Cité Universitaire, a beautiful campus within Paris hosting a great part of the city's students. Finding an apartment in Paris is on its own a feat, and I am very happy to have had the chance to stay in probably the best student area in all of Paris. The Cité is made up of many houses, each representing and sponsored by a nation, foundation or organisation, with plenty of parks and sports areas in between. I was able to find a room in the house of Arts et Métiers, exclusively available to students of my school. The apartment itself was very modern and clean, with its own bathroom, shower and even kitchen. The only drawback to the room was the imposed view of the 11-lane motorway which passes directly outside the window. In terms of facilities the Cité offers many clubs and sports groups to join. Unfortunately, I found rather fast that they are almost exclusively operating in French. If you are not fluent in French this makes for a fun linguistic challenge but is hardly an ideal environment for meeting new friends.



My house to the left, and to the right a normal day at the university working in CAD.

University and studies

Arts et Métiers is a Grand École, an engineering school, with several campuses all throughout France. The programme I chose was taught on the campus in the 14th arrondissement of Paris, a beautiful old building with two green courtyards and old artistically decorated hallways. My programme was taught entirely in English and consisted of 14 courses of one to four credits each, that were all starting and ending at different times throughout the semester.



The courtyard of my university.

Courses

The large amount of relatively small courses in my program allowed me to learn a little bit of everything. For example, I had courses in applied mathematics, statistics, fluid mechanics, career development, bibliography, French language and scientific writing. Though it was sometimes hectic to have this many courses at the same time, it also kept my studies constantly fresh and not unnecessarily detailed.

City and country

Paris is an interesting city in that it offers many things, and whatever you search for in coming here, chances are you will find it. For me, the grandeur and tempo of the Parisians' lives have been the biggest differences. The French really do care about culture, heritage and spending money on the small things, which is reflected in the many grand monuments, museums and other public displays, as well as the many restaurants and bakeries that are an integral part of many peoples' everyday lives. Life here is also fast but sometimes lacking in efficiency. For example, people are always in a hurry, but never in time for their meetings, traffic is always fast to the point of constant danger, but still the roads are left completely blocked by it most of the time.



The Seine in fall to the left and some metro art to the right.

I have personally enjoyed the large offer of museums and exhibitions as well as the rich night life. The thing I have lacked the most is the slice of peace and quiet to which I am accustomed. However, for those who are into hiking and nature, the vast rail network of the Paris region, which is all included in the metro ticket, is available to take you far out in the peaceful but noticeably artificial forests that surround the city.



Paris at night to the left, Normandie beach to the right.

Leisure and social activities

As my class was very small, I was lucky enough to be able to have a relatively close relation to my classmates. Particularly as most of us lived in the same neighboring buildings, we were able to throw spontaneous board game night or cook together frequently. My best friend during the exchange had a room with a view opposite of mine, which often led to us running into each other in the windows across from the street and breaking out in spontaneous dancing, something that will always be a dear memory.

Apart from this I played basketball and danced salsa as organised by the campus on which I lived. I also went on other events like dance parties, hikes and meetups through Erasmus. If you have the courage it takes to throw yourself into new social situations, Paris lacks nothing for you to find new friends as a student.



Two different countryside hikes. The first one just near Paris and the second a few hours north.

Sustainability

As the distance between Stockholm and Paris is relatively short, it was easy to go here and back by train or bus. This kind of trip requires a small bit of dedication, but knowing it makes a big difference compared to flying makes it easier. Paris on its own has many cars compared to other European cities, but recent politics has driven the change towards more bicycle-friendly city planning. Buying a bicycle was among the first things that I did on my exchange. But unfortunately, partly due to the intensity of the traffic, I never had the courage to use it for my regular commute.