Erasmus Report HEC Paris 2018/2019 Fall

I have spent my exchange in Paris, France at HEC Paris during the 2018 Fall semester as a CEMS student. My major is Management and Leadership (vezszerv).

The school is located in the outskirt of Paris very close to Versailles. If you wish to live in the heart of the city of lights I have to disappoint you: the school is situated in a very small village called Jouy-en-Josas with no night life. The best thing it can provide is regular shuttle service (1.5 euro/journey) to Paris and to Massy (some dormitories are there and a RER train station to Paris).

Jouy-en-Josas has an RER line C station that can bring you to Versailles (10 minutes) and Paris (around 1-1.5 hours). In front of the school there is a huge Auchan and some small restaurants.

When I arrived foreign CEMS students were not eligible to live on campus. They started the semester in Vélizy and then moved to Massy. I lived in a private apartment in Longjumeau that is around 20 minutes by train from the school.

The school has its own doctor (situated on campus), restaurant, a very modern library, club and bar, sport facilities and a very active student life.

I, personally loved that the school was in a nice little forest in a calm environment. I felt like home. Naturally, once in a while we went to visit Paris during the weekends and as Paris and Massy have several international train stations we also visited neighbouring countries like the UK, Belgium and Germany.

Accommodation

If you wish to live on campus the price is around 700-800 euros per month. If you live off campus but in one of the student residences the price can be a little bit cheaper.

Private apartments outside Paris (I mean here a studio) cost 600-700 euros + utilities. Same apartments in Paris cost a 1000 euros + utilities.

Please be aware! If you wish to rent an apartment as a foreigner you usually have to pay the rent in advance for the whole stay! It can mean 6-7000 euros of expense! It is better to find a place dedicated to students or rent a place in co-location (together with other people).

Transportation

The monthly fee of Parisian unlimited public transport (called Navigo) costs around 75 euros for all zones. Jouy-en-Josas is situated in zone 4 so that you should buy all-zone ticket (1-5 zones ticket in other words).

You can also buy a weekly ticket (22 euros, called Navigo Semaine) or one-way tickets (depending on the distance around 2 euros).

If you are less than 25 you can apply for Navigo Imagine R card. You need a paper from your school that proves you are a student there in French and have to fill in a form online or on paper (paper forms are available in every RATP office).
You have two choices: you either pay for one year in advance (around 320 euros) or every month separately (around 38 euros) and when you leave the country you just cancel your subscription (of course you should do that when you are on exchange). In both cases you need a French bank account (HEC has a contract with BNP Paribas they open you one in the beginning of the semester). The card takes around 3 weeks to arrive so order it as soon as you can. With Imagine R you can travel without limits in all zones. You should be able to speak French or have a French student to help you with that (or contact me)!

Public transport in Paris is very developed but absolutely not reliable. Always arrive 10 minutes earlier than you wanted and if the app says you arrive at a given time somewhere add another 15 minutes just to be sure. Download the Via Navigo app and check the traffic info. At least once every week there is a problem with the RER or the busses and you end up being blocked somewhere. Replacement busses are very rare.

I have already mentioned that the school has shuttles to Paris and Massy. They come once every hour or even less frequently. You need to download the „Karos” app to use them (entirely in French) and have to reserve a seat and pay 1,5 euros in the app.

There are two busses per day for free though. The reception can give you information about that.

Eating

The school has a restaurant, around 6-10 euros per meal. The food is totally okay there is even a vegetarian option.

If you wish to cook it is also possible. A baguette costs around 1 euro in Auchan, 1 euro 20 in a bakery. Chicken for one person around 5 euros, one bottle of milk is around 1,5 euros. For breakfast you can buy croissant, pain au chocolat, whatever you like they are a bit less than 1 euro and in building T you can buy them together with a coffee or tea for around 1,5 euros.

McDonalds or KFC for one costs around 12 euros (there is no fast food restaurant nearby only in other cities). A real restaurant should cost you 15 euros + drinks, in menu around 20-22 euros + drinks minimum.

HEC life

After all these general statements I would like to talk about my exchange experience. For CEMS students the school provides separated classes. Only the French classes are shared with other majors or full-time not French students. They are obligatory by the way and very useful as they teach business French on higher levels.

The course catalogue is quite good. They put a lot of emphasis on luxury management which I have found extremely boring and useless but a lot of students enjoyed it. If you are interested in this topic I recommend to take them.

The other strong emphasis is sustainability. I have taken all the courses related to that so that I have heard some topics several times. Nevertheless I loved them.

Some courses are advertised as beginner or introductory courses to finance. Do not believe them! You will find yourself in a Finance Msc course where you spend most of your time
googling words. The target group of these courses are people with a Finance Bsc. In my group there were only non-finance students so that we struggled a lot.

The average workload is less than at Corvinus, on the other hand it is not equally distributed. During some weeks we had to spend all of our times in the library and during some other weeks what we had to do was close to zero.

The teachers are helpful they answer all the mails. I would recommend you to take the course „Oil and gas and power trends” and „Innovative business models for sustainability”. If you speak French „La géopolitique internationale” is a must.

Exams are quite easy but you need to prepare well. We had case study type, multiple choice, essay exams. You did not even have to arrive in time, that is quite strange. You always have 3-4 hours to complete even a 40 questions long multiple choice exam.

Exams only counts for around 40% of your grade. Most of it comes from a lot of presentations, group projects and consulting type projects.

Student life was quite exciting. The CEMS Club Paris was very active and the International Association of HEC as well. Every Thursday there is the PoW (party of the week) on campus and several other programs with companies, guest lecturers and frequent thematic career fairs.

Insurance

As an EU citizen you are obliged to buy a small insurance online for 15 euros. It will be communicated during the first week. Besides – if you wish – you can buy additional health insurance for around 200-500 euros/4 months.

Do not forget that having your blue EU Health Card is obligatory.

Mobile phone

France’s mobile service provider market is highly competitive so that prices are low. I managed to get a RED subscription for 5 euro per month with 20GB internet and unlimited free call and sms without engagement. Other cheap service providers: Bouygues, Free.

If you have any question or need help you can contact me: bettina.boncz@gmail.com.

Conclusion

I have had a very good time at HEC, enjoyed the campagne and had interesting lectures. I highly recommend to everybody to select HEC Paris when applying to CEMS.