

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**

Punnawat Siripatthiti

**Year and term for exchange**

2022, first cycle

**Exchange university**

École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)

**Degree programme**

Transport and Geoinformation technology

## A terrific journal in Lausanne

### Before departure

Even though I am an international student here at KTH already. But I feel like going on exchange study is a great opportunity to discover another university and another country. I chose EPFL because it is a very prestige university like KTH. They offered courses and laboratories that might be beneficial for my thesis.

The university is located in a French-speaking part of Switzerland, which means that some interesting courses are taught in French as well and I might have lesser courses to choose from. French people are proud of their language, so I tried to prepare my French from the beginning in hope that I can blend into their culture.

Apart from the language, I needed to prepare a visa application as well since I am a non-EU citizen. I recalled that I got the acceptance letter quite late, and I had to apply for the visiting visa almost later than the three-month-prior-entering period (The visa process generally takes up to three months to finish, so it is wise to apply three months before entering the country). Good thing that the Swiss embassy is just across the street from KTH.

### Upon arrival

I arrived around two weeks before the start of the semester. There were introduction days for exchange students in which professors explained about courses and rooms for study. Moreover, the EPFL student organization offers activity packages which cost >100 CHF per package, or you can pay per only activity (ranging from 15 to 25 CHF per activity) if you want to participate, and some activities are free.

EPFL has its own student organization like THS which is called AGEPoly, and an organization similar to chapter student unions. EPFL also has many varieties of clubs for students to choose from. However, unlike KTH, EPFL doesn't have a Union Day (the day that KTH introduces all clubs available), so I don't know how many clubs in total but during the semester they will send you emails about their activity. Most unions and clubs apparently require French to participate.

Unfortunately, I had a problem with my accommodation during the first month upon arrival, so I had to live 1.5 hours away from the campus which made me miss out on every student activity.

### Financials

I received a grant from ERASMUS. Which was helping me a little bit. In general, Switzerland is a little bit more expensive than KTH. But the accommodation cost is twice as high as SSSB and requires a 1- or 2-month deposit. Also, the tax system is very confusing here. Be expected to pay somewhere around 35 CHF per month to commune.

Try to secure an accommodation place with a student accommodation agency like FMEL. They will help you a lot with all the documents and taxation since they are very familiar with ERASMUS students. Cooking every could marginally save you money, Aligro and ALDI are the cheapest supermarkets. Planning to travel ahead of time with a super saver ticket will help you reduce traveling costs a lot.

### **Accommodation**

I got my accommodation via [www.unil-epfl-logement.ch](http://www.unil-epfl-logement.ch) but you need to have an EPFL account first. I tried queuing in FMEL since May but still didn't receive any offer (but some of my friends got one). If you still couldn't find any accommodation and ask for the university's help, they will refer you to the previous website link.

I got an accommodation which took 45 minutes to travel. It cost me around 700 CHF per month with only one month's deposit. The accommodation was a sublet room from an apartment unit. So, I had to live with an old lady. The condition was perfect, but I needed to respect the lady who concerns about noise, light, cleanness, electricity consumption, studying hours etc.

The reason why I was in this situation was that I couldn't pay the rent of more than 800 CHF per month. Note that the higher the rent, the higher the deposit as well. For student accommodation agencies, you can expect the deposit to be two months in advance. If you can pay a large sum of money for the deposit, good accommodation near the campus will be possible.

### **University and studies**

The university is quite big and each building is close to each other but has fewer parks and common space than KTH. The program that I am studying at KTH is Transport and Geoinformation Technology. At EPFL, transportation is part of the Civil Engineering program and Geoinformation is part of Environmental Engineering. The course system at EPFL is different from KTH. On average, a course will have 4 ECTS which means you have to study 5 to 10 courses per semester. Because the credit is very small, so the teaching period is very short per week. Fortunately, those courses are a combination of project-based and oral exams. So, the total number of final exams is not that much.

I participate in language courses for the summer break, during the semester and during the winter break.

### **Courses**

I already knew before applying to the ERASMUS that courses in transportation are taught in the French language. But there were Geoinformation courses in the first semester at the time. But when I arrived, all of them were moved to the second semester.

Fortunately, there are still some courses that I am interested are taught in English. I want to do a thesis about crack detection which will relate to data science and machine learning. The courses that satisfied me were CS-401 and CS-423 relating to data science and data mining. The most interesting course for me is CIVIL-426. The course was taught this year for the first time and was about predictive maintenance. I even got my thesis at EPFL because of this course.

My thesis is related to computer science, so I need to do a course about photogrammetry, i.e., CIVIL-510. I also wanted to extend my knowledge of Geoinformation, so I took ENV-444. Finally, CIVIL-424 is a free elective.

### **City and country**

Prior to the exchange, I know that the French people are proud of their language, and it could be troublesome. So, I took language courses provided by EPFL. During my stay, I felt like I couldn't make

friends with local people. Not only because of the language problem but I felt that Swiss people are quite preserving themselves from foreigners.

The city of Lausanne is quite small compared to Stockholm (obviously). Finding a variety of foods there was quite difficult, but a variety of alcohols, cheese, and chocolate were the subsidies.

### **Leisure and social activities**

Most leisure activities in Swiss are not free even the ones provided by the student union. The only free thing is walking thus I hiked a lot. Because the unfortunate things regarding my accommodation made me miss out on every early student activity held by AGEPoly and ESN. Fortunately, Swedish exchange students are kind enough to let me hang out with them. So, I know more Swedish students than Swiss students from the exchange.

### **Sustainability**

On the way back I chose to travel by train, which was surprisingly easy than I thought. The university encouraged sustainability not to the same extent as KTH.

### **Other recommendations and observations**

The mean of communication between exchange students should be Whatsapp group (or other similar apps). I found that Canvas is too slow and not effective.