

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**Zidong Zhou**Year and semester for exchange**Year 2, Semester 1**Exchange university**TU Delft**Degree programme**Sustainable Urban Planning and Design

Embracing Urbanism and Dutch Culture in Delft

Before departure

I was drawn to the academic atmosphere at TUD and the Netherlands' advanced water management system. My expectation was to immerse myself in different cultures and city life. Preparations were a breeze, thanks to the inner-EU mobility offered by the Netherlands, which spared non-EU students like me from the hassle of reapplying for a visa. It was a smooth sail from there on!

Upon arrival

I arrived in Delft 5 days before the start of my studies to acclimate myself to the new environment and handle any administrative tasks. This early arrival gave me ample time to settle in, explore the city, and familiarize myself with the campus before the academic workload began. Upon arrival, the university organized a comprehensive orientation program for international students. These sessions were incredibly helpful in understanding the local culture, navigating the campus, and meeting fellow students from around the world.

Financials

During my exchange period, I was fortunate to receive funds from the KTH Erasmus program. This financial support was crucial in helping me manage the costs associated with studying abroad. In general, the cost is almost the same as in KTH. The cost of living in the Netherlands was higher compared to Sweden. Everyday expenses such as groceries, transportation, and dining out are more expensive. However, the cost of housing is lower, which helped balance out some of the higher living costs.

Accommodation

I found my accommodation through DUWO, an organization that collaborates with TUD. I lived in a studio apartment, which was very convenient. The studio was located about a 10-minute bike ride from campus, and there was a supermarket right downstairs, making daily life very convenient. The rent was relatively affordable as well.

University and studies

The architecture school at TUD is larger than KTH's, with a strong emphasis on engineering and practical application. Overall, the university placed a greater focus on hands-on projects and real-world experience. I found the study intensity to be higher compared to KTH, with a more demanding workload. We studied in English, although some materials were in Dutch but totally fine. A typical day consisted of lectures, studio work, and group projects. Despite the challenging curriculum, the

experience was enriching and provided a deep understanding of urbanism practices.



Courses

I enrolled in two design studios and two theoretical courses. It's the urbanism course package, a standard choice for urbanism students. The studios focused on creative design while the theoretical courses covered urban planning history, principles, and technical practices. The courses combined lectures, workshops, and projects, providing a robust blend of theoretical knowledge and practical skills crucial for urban design.

City and country

Delft is a tranquil town, half of which seems to be comprised of the university. I quickly embraced the cycling culture here. The Netherlands' flat terrain makes cycling incredibly popular, though initially, I was cautious about the speedy cyclists who adhere to their unique traffic rules. However, I soon adapted and enjoyed the efficient mode of transportation.

Leisure and social activities

During leisure time, I often ventured to Rotterdam or The Hague for shopping or dining outings with friends. The city offered a rich array of sports and cultural activities, and the university frequently organized engaging events. These activities not only enriched my social life but also broadened my cultural horizons through interactions with students from diverse backgrounds.

Sustainability

Delft embodies a strong commitment to sustainability, with bicycles outnumbering cars. The prevalence of charming second-hand shops also contributed to the eco-friendly lifestyle. I found delightful tableware and decorations while supporting sustainable practices.

Other recommendations and observations

1. Embrace the cycling culture wholeheartedly. It's not just a mode of transport but a way of life in the Netherlands. Rent or buy a bike early on and discover the convenience and freedom it offers.

2. Take advantage of the Netherlands' excellent train and tram network to explore other cities like Amsterdam, Utrecht, and Leiden, etc. Each city offers its own unique charm and attractions.

