

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**

Jonas Planck

Year and semester for exchange

Spring semester 2025

Exchange university

ISAE Supaero

Degree programme

Aerospace Engineering TAEEM

A semester in the Aerospace capital of Europe

Before departure

I had already been to France a lot of times and learned the language during both primary school and high school studies, so when it came to deciding on a potential country for exchange studies the choice was obvious. ISAE Supaero is also a prestigious university in the subject of Aerospace studies in Europe and Toulouse is kind of the aerospace capital of Europe with Airbus and several other aeronautical and space-engineering related institutions, so if I plan on working in the broader European aerospace context I felt like it could be good to have studied there. Before departure, the living situation was the most important thing to fix. ISAE has dorms on campus that one can apply for through Alteal, the student housing company there. The university send out relevant information in the beginning of December on how to apply for it and relevant requirements from the student. As France is within the EU, I did not have to apply for any kind of Visa or really any other national administrative stuff, but the housing company required a guarantor to apply for student housing. This was extremely confusing as I never had been required to have that in any capacity in Sweden before and some mishaps in the process made me wait a month after arrival to be granted student housing (the French are very adamant about their bureaucratic processes, more in the accommodation section).

Upon arrival

I arrived the day before the welcome ceremony due to the studies starting relatively soon after the Swedish examination period in early January, but many of the people I studied with arrived earlier and had time to explore the city a fair bit. As previously explained, the housing situation would not be sorted before the middle February and as it still was the middle of January I basically jumped a bit between hostels and airBnB's (good thing to have Erasmus cover the extra unforeseen costs). I heavily recommend sorting out dorm-room on campus early and not misinterpret Visale. There was a small welcome ceremony where we in the programme got to introduce ourselves to each other and sort out any question marks with the university staff and the first week was solely French classes all the way through with a focus on some cultural elements etc. to integrate us well.

Financials

France is generally a bit less expensive than Sweden. Food was less expensive (for the most part) while other living costs were about the same in price such as the dorm room being just a bit more expensive than a room in Kungshamra. Erasmus was a great extension of the financials and one of the reasons for doing an exchange within Europe, allowing for more interesting cultural activities outside of the studies and exploring the nearby area! Toulouse was accessible by train, so I do also hope to get the full trip payed for by the green scholarship by KTH. While I did not get use of them (I got a bit lost in the

processes) there are scholarships you're able to apply for for studies in France from the Swedish French institute I believe and in Toulouse you can apply for housing assistance from CROUS.

Accommodation

Applying for campus accommodation could be done in early December when the university sent out links to Alteal, the student housing institution. The rundown for this process is that you are required to have a guarantor who pays tax and lives in France in order to apply for housing and since this is very difficult to have as an international student there is this French service called Visale that can be used as guarantor in the application (the housing company will refuse to process your application without a guarantor). Applying for Visale is simple if you know what you're doing. I did not know what I was doing. Basically, the application happens on their website, and you must fill out that you have no income etc. and then they'll grant you guarantees for up to a certain monthly rent which covers the basic dorm rent on campus. This process is entirely in French and as I checked the option of study grants as income I fell into a month-long bureaucratic rabbit hole of being required to write emails in French, appending official bank details and grant agreements in French (not possible as a Swede btw) which delayed my housing application. I'm basically just writing this as a cautionary tale to future students to France as there was no available information from which I could take away that I should just check that I had no monthly income and to just not share that you have study grants/Erasmus grants. Just check no income and the process is done in under a day.

The dorms on campus are like SSSB student corridor rooms, but a bit smaller and instead of a kitchen for each corridor it's one kitchen for each building. You do have a fridge in each room and a microwave, so having a microwaveable dish ready in the fridge were good for evenings when the kitchens were full. It's very nice to live on campus and every international student lives there as well, so people I got to know through my courses lived next doors and it was easy to spontaneously come up with plans as you never had to think about the logistics of meeting up with each other. Campus is located outside of the city centre though and a 15min walk from the nearest metro station, so on week nights after long days of studying, it wasn't always that attractive to go through the effort of going into town to go to bars, restaurants or to just hang out.



University and studies

ISAE Supaero is a leading aerospace university in the European aerospace capital of Toulouse which means a large span of connections to industry and other aerospace institutions. The partnership programme with KTH is one of a specific spring semester in aerospace engineering and as such it's not possible to choose your own courses except the possibility to exchange one of the courses in the programme to partake in a research project. This research programme could be worth 6 or 12 ECTS I think depending on if you're willing to extend the semester by a month. While the university is both dedicated to aeronautical studies and space engineering, this spring semester is heavily favoured towards the aeronautical part with only an elective project in one of the courses touching on more space-oriented courses. All classes had mandatory attendance on all scheduled occasions, so if you felt

ill or something it had to be reported to the organizer of the spring semester which felt very out of tune with how it works on KTH. As the semester is only oriented towards exchange students, I guess they made it so due to a lot of exchange students in the past skipping classes to go traveling or other abroad experiences. As a lot of the lectures weren't that good (good researchers and academics aren't necessarily good teachers), it did put a strain on the weekdays as I had to pretty much teach myself the concepts discussed in class during weeknights as the lectures didn't work for me. This coupled with a lot of homework expected to be presented to others in class created a lot of stressful evenings and weekends, but it also gave us students a lot of time to bond with each other (common enemy in the course load and all).

Courses

Since I only went by studying the given courses and not partaking in a research project, my specific courses went as follows: Structures, Aerodynamics, French language and discovery, Control systems and a course named Preliminary aircraft design. French language and discovery were by far the most fun course with mostly a focus on the language part. You don't have to have studied French before going as the class was divided into two parts, one for those with previous language experience which was a bit more advanced and one for those without. They really take pride in their language and culture in France, so this course was the only one which could not be switched out for a research project and attendance was especially mandatory for this one. Control systems were like an extension of the basic control systems at KTH which I took as part of the vehicle engineering programme. A lot of the content was similar like state feedback, PID etc, though explored in a new way and with a heavier emphasis on implementation in MATLAB as well as usage of SIMULINK which was completely new to me.

City and country

Toulouse is one of the largest cities in France and the capital of the region Occitanie with a lot of its own culture and traditions which was very interesting to explore! For example, the language Occitan is preserved as a language in the city and so in the centre of town metro stations are called out both in French and Occitan through the speakers and while the French flag is all over the place the same could be said about the Occitan flag which felt even more prevalent on some occasions. Toulouse is called "Ville rose", or the pink city due to the specific clay used in the bricks of the town buildings and is nice to just walk around in with many bars, coffee shops etc. to explore. Toulouse is one of the main university cities in France also, so you can expect a rather lively, young and international atmosphere. It's also a town with a special rivalry to the rest of France, being in the south etc. so expect a lot of Paris-bashing when talking with locals.

France of course is very French. Good food, good wine and a certain pride of the culture instilled in every person is to be expected, though the country is extremely diverse. In general, though, the formality and strictness in behaviour that French classes usually tell you is required is unnecessary, at least in a young city like Toulouse. Most people you meet get surprised when you use "Vous" instead of "Tu" for example and you stand out if you utilize "S'il vous plait" whenever you ask for something, but of course it's always nice to have good manners!

Leisure and social activities

The student union of ISAE Supaero has one section for various interests-clubs and one section for sport-clubs that you're able to join! Sadly, the clubs have their recruiting period right before the studies starts, so me and my friends couldn't join the specific clubs we had hoped for, but some clubs such as the football club etc. you can pretty much just join during practices if you'd like. Hopefully this changes to future years because it made it difficult to meet and get to know the French students who we never got to meet through classes. Otherwise, as the Spring Semester is its own full-blown programme for exchange students you really get to spend time and bond with other students interested in doing leisure activities and travel, so not being able to fully join the campus activities aren't to much of a problem. We were only two people from Europe during my semester, so everyone

was always up to explore cultural activities in town or travel during weekends to other parts of France and Europe. Daytrips to nearby towns are a must whenever you get some time off studying.

Sustainability

There are good opportunities to get to Toulouse by train and avoid flying. I took the night train to Hamburg, had to do some shuffling of two trains to get from Hamburg to Paris and then from Paris there's a night train to Toulouse, so while it takes a fair bit longer than flying it's manageable to train under 2 days. There is also the possibility of taking a bit longer by either staying the night in Paris to take the day train to Toulouse or possibly night train Stockholm-Berlin, night train Berlin-Paris and then night train Paris-Toulouse, but that exceeds the travel time requirement required to get the trips covered by the KTH-scholarship for green travel. I highly recommend buying the carte avantage Jeune-carte to be able to take the trains for reduced prices while in France to be able to explore the country with less of a carbon footprint. Toulouse is a walkable city with relatively good biking infrastructure, so while Campus is a bit off it's easy to get around sustainably. "Bio" products usually have their own more secluded sections in stores and such with a bit heftier of a price tag than the standard products, so while it's possible to think more sustainably by choosing "green" products it's required as an active choice.

Other recommendations and observations

Spend time with the others in the programme! They also came to France to explore it, so it's easy to get together to plan for trips in and around Toulouse. Since everyone lives on campus, it's also easy to get together during weeknights to cook and explore the French cuisine with good company. Highly recommend going abroad!