Exchange in Delft

Before departure

I really like to visit and live different countries, so doing exchange studies was the perfect opportunity to discover a new one. I chose TU Delft and the Netherlands because it is a prestigious university, especially in the case of Civil Engineering. What is more, a lot of the innovation in the field of transportation engineering comes from this country, and this was one of the few universities that had a broad range of courses in the transportation field to select from.

Upon arrival

I went on exchange for the fall semester and arrived to Delft 2 days before the official introduction programme started (18-09-2016), so I could settle and get used to the city.

Introduction course: During the summer period there is a 2-week introduction course in which you fully immerse in the dutch culture, meet lots of people and do plenty of activities. For example, there were visits to the botanic garden, science centre, sport activities such as rowing or dutch games, pub crawls, concerts, etc. The organization of this introduction week is excellent, and there are things to do at all times for all students, so it’s impossible to get bored. I would really recommend to attend this introduction programme.

Dispuut Verkeer: In the faculty of civil engineering there are many different associations, one for each speciality or track. As I am a transport and planning student, I became part of Dispuut Verkeer. They do several activities throughout the semester, such as lunch lectures, social meetings or study visits.

Financials

I received the Erasmus scholarship, which is 325 EUR/month. Netherlands is overall quite cheaper than Sweden.

The only thing I found more expensive is the rent, especially if you rent through the University (DUWO), as I will explain in the next section. Apart from that, the prices of supermarket are cheaper, I usually spent around 160 EUR/month. Where I found the biggest difference is in the leisure activities. Going out with some friends for a beer, playing pool or going to the cinema is not that expensive. My monthly expenses were around 1100 EUR, but I did a lot of activities throughout the semester, as well as a lot of travelling, so you can surely expend less than that.

Another important remark here is that you should buy a bike as soon as you arrive in Delft. It is quite difficult to find one in August as all the new students arrive at that time. A normal bike should cost around 60 – 110 EUR.

Accommodation

There are two possibilities to get an accommodation in Delft. The first one is to look for something on your own. This option is kind of difficult as Delft is a small city and full of students, so there is a shortage in accommodation as the course starts. Moreover, you will probably be asked to do a face to face interview before being selected, so you will need to go there in advance. As good points, you may have the chance to live with locals and immerse more in their culture, and it will be cheaper.
The second option is to get the accommodation through the university, which is the option I chose. For this, you will first have to pay a fee of around 230€ to enter the accommodation portal. Once you get access, you will be able to choose from a selection of available rooms. This option is easier but quite expensive.

The building I was living in is Marcushof (Roland Holstlaan 652), which unfortunately will not be available anymore. It was located in the southwest of Delft, in a residential area with a mall and full of services nearby. From there, you can go to the train station, city center and university in 5-10 minutes by bike, so it is in a good location. The room is quite big and includes a toilet (no shower) and a sink. The kitchen is shared among 24 people. It is the perfect place if you are sociable, as you will never be alone in here. All the students are international, and there are a lot of events throughout the year. The cost of this accommodation was 470€/month.

University and studies

The university is really big and has plenty of facilities. There are not many classes per week and self-work and group-work are much encouraged. On a normal day I would have either 2 to 4 hours of lectures, followed by some group meetings. After that, I would have some free time to go to the gym, do some activities or have a beer with my friends. The teaching language is English for all master programmes. There is a possibility to enroll in a Dutch course, although I did not do it.

One thing you have to bear in mind when applying to Delft is that this university is very demanding, more than KTH. I would say a 4-credit course there is the equivalent of a 7.5-credit course here, so be prepared to work a lot.

Courses

CIE4811 Planning and Operations of Public Transport Systems

Really interesting course on Public Transport. It gives an overall insight on transport planning, from strategical to tactical and operational planning. There is a total of 4 assignments (one every two weeks) which are done in pairs and an exam at the end of the period. Some of the topics that are covered in this course are: Network hierarchy and design methodology, network structure analysis, railway operations and public transport governance. I would really recommend to take this course.

CIE5811 Transport safety

This course covers the different tools that are used to do a safety analysis and control during the design and operation of different transport modes. There are two lecturers and each of them focus on one different aspect: a higher level concerning decision making and societal influence; and a lower level which covers the principles of safe design, human factors and risk analysis and management.

There is no final exam for this course (just a small test) and 4 different assignments. I would choose this course if you are really interested in Transport Safety, otherwise there are more interesting courses to choose from.

Planning and Design of Multimodal Infrastructures

This course is rather open and requires from great coordination with your teammates. There is no lectures and no exam, just a weekly meeting with the lecturer. The goal of the course is to deliver a report about the design of a multimodal infrastructure in the future for a certain region in the world. For example, we designed a multimodal infrastructure network for South-East Asia for 2050.
CIE5802-09 Advanced Transportation Modelling

This course is based in the previous course CIE4801 Transportation and Spatial Modelling, which is similar to the course “Urban Modelling and Decision Support” from KTH, but this one covers many more things. Although I didn’t take this course I would really recommend it as it gives a full overview of Transport modelling and you will use the modelling software “Omnitrans”.

About the course in Advanced Transportation Modelling, I would not recommend it unless you are very interested in transport modelling. It is very theoretical, they explain several ways in which a typical classical model would not fit the requirements and which models should be used instead, but there is no practical learning. The goal is to develop your own advanced transport model in groups.

CIE5803-09 Railway Traffic Management

Very interesting course that covers the area of Railway Planning and Railway Traffic Control. It is a very dense course with lots of contents, and there are a total of 3 different assignments in which you will use railway simulation software tools, such as OpenTrack. I found it very interesting as I was really interested in the railway field, and Netherlands is one of the best countries to study the development in this field. However, this course has many guest lectures where they explain cases and tools which are used in the Netherlands, so maybe it is not that useful if you intend to apply it in Sweden.

CIE5810 Traffic safety

Although the title might be confusing between this course and Transport safety, they don’t have much in common. The way in which this course is structured is to develop a research proposal in groups about any safety related topic. At the end of the course there is an oral exam that covers both the content of the lectures and your research proposal.

City and country

Delft is a small city of the Netherlands located in South-Holland, between the cities of Rotterdam and The Hague. It is mainly a student city, who account for ¼ of the population. You may think of Delft as the typical Dutch city, with lots of canals and boats, small brick houses and cobbled streets. The center of the city is the Market square, with the Nieuwe Kerk and the city hall. Here there are a lot of events happening during the summer.

Netherlands is a very dense country, which means that there are plenty of cities to visit within a couple of hours. The most visited city is Amsterdam, but other cities such as Rotterdam, The Hague, Leiden, Utrecht, Gouda or Groningen are worth a visit. As the country is rather small, you may also visit Belgium or Germany.

Leisure and social activities

There is a whole section of TU Delft dedicated to sports and culture. Here you can find any possible sport or activity that you may be interested in, and at a very reasonable price. For the sports center, you have to buy a membership for either a semester or the whole year, and you can join any sport. Access to the gym is available paying an extra fee.

During my free time I used to go to the gym and do many activities with my friends. One of my favourite things to do was to take my bike and go cycling around the villages in the area. During the summer, I used to go to the lake, do barbecues, etc.

Other recommendations and observations

I would really recommend you to take the chance of going abroad during your studies; it is really a life changing experience. Especially in Delft you will have the opportunity to be one of the most important
Engineering Universities worldwide. Only thing you need to bear in mind is that this is not an easy university and you will have to work hard to pass the courses, but if you organize yourself, you will have plenty of time everyday to do a lot of activities with your friends and enjoy your life in the Netherlands.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Eduardo Carbajo Fuertes

ecf@kth.se