



Tilburg University

Tilburg University is located in Tilburg, a small city in south part of The Netherlands, around 2 hours on train from Amsterdam. It's one of the most multi-national universities; you can easily find students from Asia (mostly Chinese) and all over Europe (from Finland, Italy till Russia and Turkey!) here. However, there weren't many students from Thammasat who has attended here recently, so I have to learn a lot by myself, which is a bit hard but it is also nice and fun 😊.

First week in UvT (Universiteit van Tilburg)

I took a train from Amsterdam Airport (aka Schiphol) in the night before the orientation starts and stayed a night at a hotel in City Centre. (Unfortunately the room provided by university-contract housing agency wasn't available before the arrival day 😊) However, the university had provided a very good orientation program for exchange students; to make that we were having a nice kick-start. There were some volunteer students waiting for us at the train station, they looked after me and my luggage, these people would be my 'mentor' for the whole semester.



Every exchange students are assigned into a 'mentor group' consists of 4 current students and 10-12 exchanges. TOP-week (Tilburg Orientation Program-week) provided us a lot of info, such as, opening Dutch bank account, buying bike (very essential for living in the Netherlands!), and exploring the city center, walking around the campus, getting free sim-card and also attending some parties!

Prepare for studying

Most of the courses information is available to reach at the same time we are making our minds for the choices of university to attend. You can find them on the university website. About 2 months before the semester starts the exchange-coordinator would contact students and asked us which courses we'd like to register. It's not 100% sure that the courses you pick will be available for you, since there's some different in prerequisite courses but you can changes these info later within 1 weeks after you arrive at UvT anyway.

Although Tilburg University is known for student-interactive studying method, I found that in some big classes like Strategic Management and Innovation Management which I had registered was not that interactively. Grading system is on scale of 0-10, 5-6 is a pass, and 10 is a forbidden score (they rarely give it to student, oop). So getting 7 will be a B for us, 8 is a B+ and 9 and above is an A?.. I guess.

Lifestyle

One interesting fact about Tilburg University is that it doesn't really have a 'fence'. They don't cover the campus within a wall, unlike most universities; it is like a town with some big building just pop up among the houses, what a cute. Most exchanges live in the student houses call 'Prof. Verb' which has 5 floors, ranging from 6 single rooms sharing 1 bathroom and a small kitchen to 18 single rooms with 3 bathrooms and a bigger kitchen. Also it has its own train platform (*Tilburg Universiteit Station*) which also links to national railway, it is very nice this way since you can walk for just 5-10 minutes and jump on a train.



As I mentioned earlier, owning a bike is important thing as the Netherlands has very best bicycle track all over its country allowing us to ride around the city without having to risk our live at all 😊

It is just 3 minutes on the bike to the nearest supermarket in the university, 8 minutes for a bigger community market where you can buy clothes, medicines, fresh product and 20 minutes to city center with so many places more, like Asian market, Movie Theatre, Town Library and McDonald's.

Now what made me choose the Netherlands? Because its people has the 3rd highest rating of English-speaker among the European. However, learning a basic Dutch in 'Dutch for Asian Student' made me better at understanding them. Surplus from freeing of language barrier, it also has very low crime rate!

Activities

The classes here has half class attendant requirement comparing to those we took in Thammasat, let's say we have to take 3 hours per classes per week in TU, but in UvT it only took me 1.5 hour! (And with 10 minutes break at 45min half- oh...) I had a lot of free time which I spent on many activities.

Cooking is a nice thing I tried, although the meat and rice are quite expensive there, still it is cheaper choice than eating out anyway. It's a nice way to make some friends. There were activities which held every Tuesday 'Mentor Dinner' by our mentor group. We were invited to a dinner with another mentor group and each exchanges had to take care of the food in turns so that everyone had a chance to try food from each countries. As far as I remember I tried Dutch, Hungarian, Italian, Turkish, Spanish, Irish, Japanese Food... and many more.



We also have a party of that same day at the student pub (yes, it's owned by I*ESN, a student club) with several themes such as 'Welcome to Holland', when everyone wears orange t-shirt and " but the most exciting one was 'SEXchange', you guess.

Travelling is another best idea to spend time. Why bother staying in your boring room when you are at the hub of Europe? Yes, I just claimed the Netherlands is the best place to start your trip in Europe. With its developed train which I found newest among every countries I ever been, you can travel fast and punctuate to many countries.



And since the Dutch is connected with Belgium and Germany, it lets you travel to Paris, Brussels or Antwerp within 3 hours by train. Also there are 2 small international airports near Tilburg, allowing to take low-cost airline to many countries around Europe – its cost was as cheap as flying from the Netherlands to Czech Republic cost me the same as flying from Bangkok to Chiangmai.

Ending

Being an exchange student at Tilburg University is one of the best moments of mine. I met a lot of new friends from many countries around the world and learned a lot from them. I saw lives in new perspective, understood more about society and cultural. I'll never regret my choice 😊

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