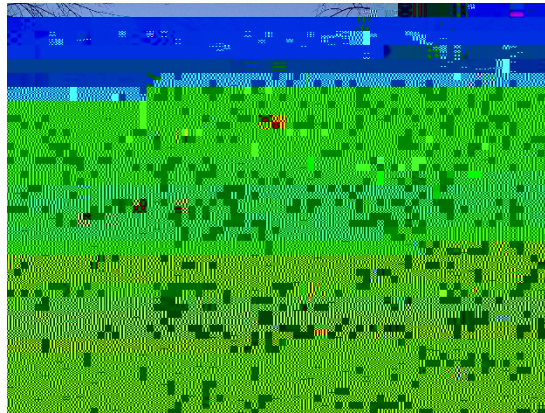


On January 27, 2015 I left Vancouver to study in The Hague, Netherlands at the Hague University. At Simon Fraser University I am an economics major. While I was in The Hague however, I studied courses under the Department of European Studies. I stayed for 6 months, returning to Vancouver on the 31st of July, 2015.

My preparation for exchange was, admittedly, super last minute. I had packed the majority of my personal belongings the day before I left, perhaps not the smartest decision as I had forgot to pack my favourite belt. I had packed for, more or less, a week's worth of clothes since I had decided to buy what I needed. In addition, I brought my laptop, a laptop bag and my backpack, all of which would prove to be extremely useful. The composition of my clothing was a majority of warm, winter clothing because I had read the The Hague had similar temperatures to Vancouver. In reality, the temperature was very similar, but the wind chill was unlike anything I had experienced before. The wind literally could cut through lesser jackets and the Canadian Goose jackets were common among residents for this reason. On the other hand, some decided to pack heavy and send back what was not needed later on, amounting from anywhere between 30 and 100 euros. In the end, I wouldn't change my light packing because it was a solid decision as I did not need to carry around a lot of luggage. This helped the transition of departing Vancouver and on my exploration the first day in The Hague. I was not hindered by multiple pieces of luggage like other exchange students I had met.

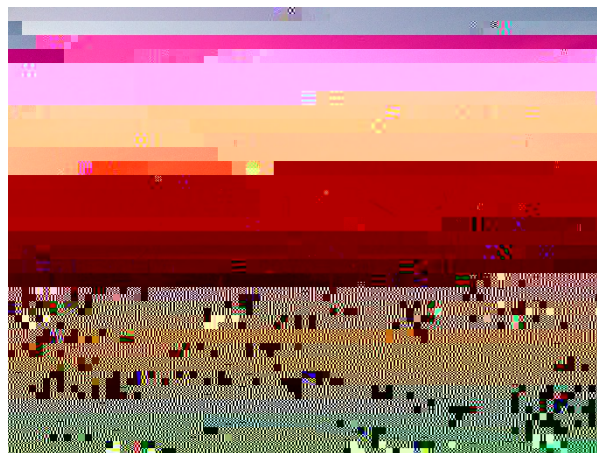
The transportation in The Hague was mostly by tram and had a price of around 2 euros each way which equates to approximately 3 CAD. If you plan on travelling a lot by tram, picking an OV chipcard is essential because it reduces the paper usage fee imposed that is inherent when you regularly buy tickets. The savings can definitely add up over an exchange period. Personally I think biking was the best form of transportation, unless you wanted to travel to Amsterdam, Rotterdam or another similarly distanced city. Biking not only is super fun but it allows you to really familiarize the new environment and explore the city. The bike paths are phenomenal and the infrastructure is suitable since the land is particularly flat. Don't worry if you have had a tough biking experience in Vancouver, it is completely different from the debacle that is Vancouver bike lanes. I high recommend buying a bike from one of the many Facebook groups or something of the like. Retail bike stores have costs upward of 100-200 euros

mine in February 2015 was around 40-100 euros, depending on the condition. Additionally, bike thefts were quite common and it was nigh impossible to recover your stolen bike unless you saw it on the street.



I think it's important to bring Euros because I had heard of some businesses not accepting certain credit cards leading to insufficient funds for the unfortunate. The best option, in my opinion, would be to get a debit card from ING since that's what I did. It's important that you apply as early as possible, all I needed to show was my passport. Once you apply, it'll take a few weeks to receive your debit card and then you are set. The debit card allows you to use ATM machines and regular POS machines virtually all across the EU.

The Hague itself had windy and rainy weather for the majority of the time. I think there was a total of maybe 5 days of my entire 6 month exchange where the weather permitted beach activities. Definitely don't count on being able to wear shorts or summer clothing until at least June. The wind was the biggest problem for me personally, it cut through all non-windproof jackets and felt like ice daggers.



There are local bars and clubs that host events available almost every night, albeit the highest quality nights are Tuesdays and Thursdays. Facebook is the best medium to discover the nightly promotions. I encourage everyone to go out and experience the local night life and then venture out to Amsterdam at the very least. I recommend the City Center or Grote Markt, especially, during the afternoon or evening since that is where the majority of the clubs and bars are.

This photo shows the view from my room in Waldorpstraat 47, overlooking Den Haag HS and the other Waldo building. To the immediate right is the Megastores mall where virtually all food shopping is done. There are two main stores, Jumbo and Aldi, among a McDonalds, Subway, a few