

Universiteit van Amsterdam  
Netherlands  
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## Preparation for Exchange

The SFU Exchange Manual is definitely a great start in determining what your needs will be during the exchange. It is best to begin browsing through this list multiple months in advance of your exchange, and creating lists with associated timelines to ensure you stay on track and have everything you need before your travels. Speaking for myself, I had a few nerves and jitters regarding whether or not I would have everything in order and all I needed while I was in the Netherlands. Fortunately, my to do lists, on a free productivity application, "Trello", helped me stay on track and keep calm before my departure! Prior to determining the exact courses I intended to take, I first created a list of potential options and ensured I visited the Communications Advisors to see how they had been transferred in the past. Unfortunately, the courses that were offered during my exchange slot had not been in the list of past transferable courses, perhaps because they were new and unique offerings. (Thankful for the help from the advisors and the manual.)

although when I arrived I realized I still brought too much! It would be good to only bring your favorite clothes you feel most comfortable in, and maybe a few toiletries that you will need the first few days after your arrival. Also, the shopping for clothing is terrific in Europe, so you'll want to add some new garments to your collection, which you'll need room for in your suitcase!

I tried to book my flight to Amsterdam as soon as I was given the orientation dates, and available airport pick-up times that are offered by the University. It's always best to book well in advance, as you are likely to receive the best possible deal. I did also chat with some friends I met in Amsterdam from Vancouver, who mentioned a lot of new budget airlines that flew to London or other parts of Europe for a lot cheaper than what I paid. That could be a great way to save some money, and it is quite easy to find flights to Amsterdam from all around Europe for a steal, since the flights within Europe are very cheap when considering how much we pay for flights from and to Canadian destinations! In Amsterdam, not many places take credit card. Instead, most places take debit card and cash. When you arrive, you will have the opportunity to open an ING bank account which is definitely recommended. I took a large sum of Canadian money and transferred into Euros as I needed at a place called "Pott Change" which had the best rate in Amsterdam. If you notice that the Canadian dollar is beginning to drop relative to the Euro, try to transfer as much cash as you can to get the best rate possible! If you would also like a credit card that has

no foreign exchange fees (something most cards have, that is not often made clear), it would be a great idea to research some options, such as the free Amazon Canada Chase Visa. I used this in various other countries in Europe, and it provided me with a real-time rate offered by Visa.



lot to offer, and has very mild weather similar to Vancouver. It can be quite unpredictable since it will rain one day, but will be sunny the next. The culture is very relaxed, and centered around enjoying the canals, having a drink at the cafés, and spending as much time outdoors as possible. This can be out on the streets of the city, in a boat exploring the canals, or just at the park enjoying some food and drinks. The city has many tourist spots to enjoy including Dam Square, Leidsplein, Rembrandt Square, Vondelpark, and Museumplein. These various spots offer outings such as bars, shops, parks, and various museums that are within the heart of the city.

## Reflection After Exchange

My exchange taught me a lot not only about myself, but about the world and others in general. My intention prior to my exchange was to feel confident and strong in my ability to live alone and take care of myself. After arriving back home I feel a lot stronger and know that I am able to feel secure and lead a good life if I was ever to be alone. Some challenges I faced, largely centered around getting into good habits with my diet and learning how to manage my home and kitchen. It can also be challenging to maintain all of this, and stay motivated to spend time with others and complete school work. I feel that I did a good job juggling my home, school, and personal/social life, but it can definitely be an undertaking. My biggest tip to new students is to make as many friends and connections as you possibly can. These individuals will spend most of your time with you, and are huge supports if you ever feel down or homesick. It is extremely important to be social and join as many of the "International Student Network" events that are made available to all international students. It can surely be hard and sometimes a silly feeling to put yourself out there and make friends, but it is one of the most important aspects of the exchange and a part of the experience that made me learn more about myself and how I should navigate the world going forward!



