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MBA

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Exchange Experience

Studying in Paris was an amazing experience. **The city** is one of the most beautiful and lively cities I have ever been in. There are tons of amazing restaurants and bars everywhere you go and the architecture is incredibly beautiful. The city is full of history and you can walk Paris' streets for months and constantly discover new things. There are lots of museums and national monuments to discover and tons of cultural events that take place throughout the city. Paris is truly a multicultural city; you can find a diverse set of people living there, including a vibrant Jewish community. This is great for students coming from Israel because it is fairly easy to find kosher restaurants, supermarkets, or community events. One of the best things about Paris is the city is centrally located, making it really easy to travel throughout France and also to other cities in Europe. I highly recommend traveling to other cities in France. There is so much to see and France is a pretty diverse country. The North and South have unique cultures and you should take the opportunity to discover them.

ESCP is located in the 11th arrondissement of Paris, making it centrally located and easy to access. There is a metro stop directly adjacent to the university so it can be easily accessed from any part of the city. The campus is very small, but located in a typical Parisian building with a lovely courtyard in the middle. If you are looking to eat lunch or drink coffee for cheap, there is a cafeteria at the university that has discounted prices for students. I was really impressed by ESCP's student union. They

are really well organized and constantly have events planned for ESCP students. There is also a bar on campus where students often meet after class to have a drink. Besides that, there is a gym on the campus and the possibility to take part in organized sport. Finding a gym in Paris can be pretty expensive, so this is a great deal for ESCP students. There is an online career center where students can look for jobs and internships, both in France and internationally. This could be a really useful resource for someone looking to stay in France.

Overall, I was not very impressed with the courses or professors at ESCP. I think that the courses and professors at Tel Aviv University are much better; TAU classes are more interactive, interesting, and educational. **ESCP courses** are based on the traditional French model of teaching which is very different from TAU. Lecturers often speak for the entire class (which could last up to three hours) without input or discussion from the class. Professor's presentations are very dry and not interactive. There was a mandatory seminar when I was at ESCP which was comprised of a full week of classes before the semester started and a class that took place once a week. This seminar was mandatory for all exchange students and touched on cultural topics about working with the French and the European Union. Most of the classes involve group work, which is nice because there is really a diverse group of people studying at the university. Therefore, you get to work with people from all over the globe and to learn a little about where they come from.

Finding **an apartment in Paris** is not very cheap or easy. I was lucky because I was able to find a place through a friend so I did not have to worry about dealing with a landlord or rental apartment. Rent is relatively expensive in Paris and you should keep that in mind before traveling there. The university does have some information about housing, but they will not send it to you until right before your departure so your best bet is to look for an apartment on your own, and to begin a few months before leaving Israel. There are some student housing opportunities in the city, but if you are on a budget then sharing a room in an apartment will most likely be cheaper. There are tons of places on Airbnb as well as other websites. I was lucky since I had a place to stay, but I understood from other students that this was one of the most difficult hurdles for them when settling in Paris. I recommend beginning the process

as soon as possible, and getting advice from someone who knows the city to help determine a good place to live.

If you plan to stay longer than three months, you will need a **student Visa**. Getting the visa is really easy and can be done with just one trip to the French consulate in Tel Aviv. That being said, you need to be sure your application is 100% complete before making an appointment and bring “backup” documents just in case they won’t accept anything you bring with you. You can find the visa requirements on the consulate website, but essentially you need the letter from ESCP proving your acceptance, proof of insurance, proof of your financial situation, and other identity documents. If your documents are in Hebrew, they will need to be translated into French or English by an approved translator. Once you receive the visa, you are considered a French resident and are allowed to reside and work (on a limited basis) for a year in France.

The **public transportation** system in Paris, and France in general, is really impressive. Within Paris, the RATP runs an extensive network of Metro lines and buses. If you plan to use the metro and buses a lot, you can get a monthly pass called a Navigo pass. It costs 73 euros and allows for unlimited travel for the month in the 5 zones surrounding Paris (from the 1st of the month until the last day of the month). The Navigo pass is convenient as well because it includes rides on the RER and Transilien networks which allow you to travel to both airports (CDG and Orly) and suburbs surrounding Paris in the Ile de France for free. If you are looking to take day trips from Paris this is great because there is so much to see in Ile de France including chateaus, parks, small villages, and even Disneyland. If you want to travel outside of Paris, the SNCF runs trains throughout the country. The train network is simple to use, efficient, and can take you to almost any city in France. There are TGV trains that travel at high speed and arrive at far destinations in just a few hours. One piece of advice: if you are planning to travel, buy your train tickets in advance. If you do so, they are reasonably priced but if you have to buy train tickets at the last minute they may become very expensive. If so, there are also buses that run throughout France and tickets are fairly cheap.

If you are staying in France more than 90 days and if you are less than 28 years old, you are obligated to purchase **French national insurance** (Sécurité sociale) for a year through the university. The cost is around 215 euros and covers basic costs such as visits to the doctor. The university has lots of experience signing up foreign students for Sécurité sociale so they will provide you with detailed information about how to register and pay. The only problem is that even if you are registered, it may take months for you to receive your Sécurité sociale number or card. If you are only staying for three months, you may never receive your permanent number. Therefore, if you need to go to the doctor, you have to pay out of pocket and then request that your insurance provider reimburse you. It is inconvenient, but at least you know you are covered and can use the French medical services.

The food in Paris is incredible. There are tons of local markets that have fresh products including fruits, vegetables, cheeses, meats, wines, sea food, etc. Overall, the quality of food is really impressive and the cost is about the same as in Israel. If you prefer to shop at a supermarket instead of local market, there are chains throughout the city that have equally high quality products. France is known for its wine and cheese, and for good reason. There are so many different kinds and variations to choose from, I recommend tasting as much as possible. Also, each region in France has its own local products, take the time to try them and discover the local culture! As I said before, you can find kosher food in Paris, especially in Le Marais and around the 9th arrondissement. The night life in Paris is equally impressive. There are lots of places to sit and have a glass of wine with friends, many of which are combined restaurants and bars. This is a really fun atmosphere because you can sit, eat, drink, and talk with friends without being pressured to leave. Restaurants and bars can be expensive, but you can find places in Paris that have reasonably priced meals and drinks.

My number one tip for people **traveling to Paris** is to learn some French. Parisiens are infamous for being cold and not so welcoming to foreigners. If you make an effort to speak French (even if it is only a few words or greetings) the French will truly appreciate it and they will open up to you. There are lots of French language schools in Paris (I studied at a place called L'atelier 9) and ESCP also runs language

programs for students. At ESCP you can take a free French course once a week and pay for a peer-to-peer class run by French students. Also, ESCP runs a “lectorat” where you can have free, one-on-one, 30-minute sessions with a qualified French, English, or Spanish teacher once a week. This is a great resource that not many students know about. Once you get to know them, the people in France are very warm and love to share their experiences, worldviews, and opinions. Take the time to speak to the locals because they can often times show you things you would never discover on your own. Similarly, I recommend getting out of Paris and seeing as much of the countryside and other cities as possible. There is a lot to see in France besides Paris, especially small villages and towns that you have probably never heard of.

Overall, I had a wonderful experience in Paris. I learned so much about French culture and language that now I have a much better understanding of the French mindset. For me, the true value of my exchange was discovering Paris and France on my own, not necessarily the classes at ESCP. That being said, ESCP is a great place to meet other exchange students and to make friends. The staff at ESCP are really helpful and will do everything in their power to make your stay in Paris as comfortable and problem-free as possible. Lastly, if you are planning to travel to France you should be aware of the financial commitment. Housing, restaurants, travel and entertainment can be very expensive in France and you should plan accordingly before you leave for Paris. I definitely recommend traveling to Paris to study at ESCP and believe that it is an invaluable experience that will contribute to your studies at TAU.



