

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
Faculty of Engineering

Exchange Experiences 2005-2006



Université de Technologie de Compiègne
Compiègne, France

Prepared by:
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4A Chemical Engineering
February 19, 2008



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Prof. Roe
Faculty of Engineering Exchange Office
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario
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Dear Prof. Roe,

I had the opportunity to go on exchange to the Université de Technologie de Compiègne (UTC) in France. Following a spring 2B term at UW, this year-long exchange covered a study followed by a work term of approximately 5 months each. Thus the two terms took place during one study and two work terms at UW.

This report will supplement my work-term report (appended), which will contribute towards the GENE 303 credit. The purpose of this short report is to report non-technical experiences during my 3A exchange (2005-2006). I felt that since the Exchange Office already has a wealth of material on acclimatizing to the French culture and to UTC, it would benefit from a more personal, photographic account of the exchange.

I hope this report will encourage potential exchange students to embrace new possibilities in their academic lives and cultural frontiers.

Sincerely,

Richard Hui

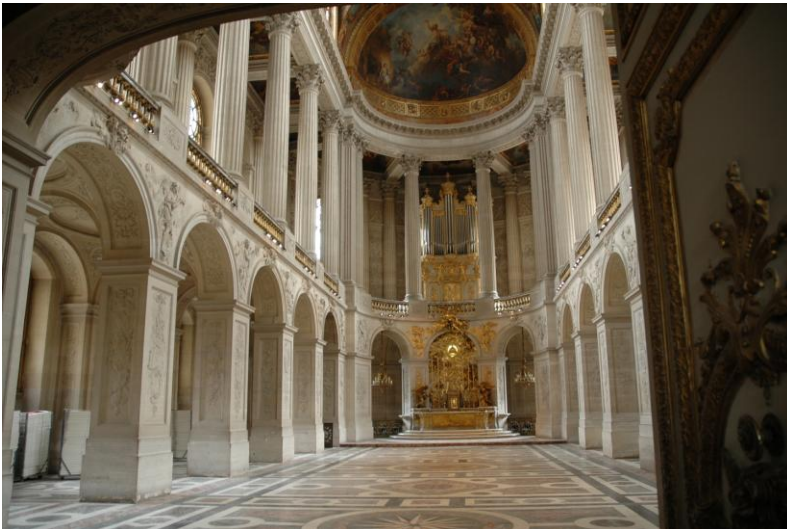
Arrival in France

All international students to UTC are required to undergo a month-long French language course in August prior to the fall term. Since my 2B final exams ended in mid-August, I was only able to attend for two weeks. My Grade 5-11 French skills were out-of-practice, but definitely proved to be sufficient for daily situations. As such, I would not place too much emphasis on the language course, especially if one has to rush from Waterloo following final exams.

The language courses are divided into 4 levels from Beginners to Advanced. One highlight was a wine-tasting class wherein the professor shed light on the many varieties of wines in France. (Access to alcohol is never a problem as it can be bought in supermarkets.)



The majority of the international students surprisingly did not come from other European countries, but from Brazil and China. Making friends with the international students, I found, was easier because of the shared coping experiences.



One student organization that all international students will become familiar with is Esperanto. Its mandate is to help students integrate. In August, they usually organize weekend trips to various sightseeing attractions. In two weeks, we visited Amiens, Touquet and the royal palace in Versailles.

Courses

After class enrolment in early September, classes begin a week later. There are no textbooks; most courses function with course notes, however. Normally, French students are advised to take 5-6 courses and international students to take 4-5 courses. However, with an obligatory language course plus Waterloo's workload, that may be hard to accommodate. The courses that I took were:

- PS15 (Thermodynamique physique) for ChE33 (Thermodynamics): a very good match with Waterloo's course. The course notes were well-organized.
- BL10 (Structure et physico-chimie des molécules biologiques) for Chem38 (Introductory Organic Chemistry : Reactions) : BL10 was a basic biochemistry course, and so it was not appropriate as a organic chemistry course substitute. BL10 would more suitably substitute ChE32. The laboratory component included a HPLC lab, electrophoresis, spectrophotometry and other labs.
- BL16 (Génie métabolique, cultures cellulaires et bioréacteurs) for ChE32 (Introductory Biotechnology) : BL16 dealt much with enzyme kinetics and cell growth. The laboratory component included one 2-day lab of growing/characterizing yeast cells.
- TF11 (Introduction aux phénomènes de transfert) for ChE30 (Heat transfer) : I found this course to be easy for third-year. It was reminiscent of ChE100/101. Most of the maths was at the first-year level, and so, this course was not a good substitute. Probably TH02 or TF14 would be better.
- FQ01 (Économie globale et maîtrise de la qualité) for GENE22D (Topics for List D Complementary Studies Courses taken on exchange) : What Larry Smith and economics was to ECON102 at UW, is what Jean-Marc Picard and quality assurance to FQ01. His Saturday class was so well-attended that it had to be offered at the other (Royallieu) UTC campus, which is about 2km away from the main campus, Benjamin-Franklin.
- LA93 and LA94 (Français langue étrangère niveau 3 & 4) : All international students must take one French course. In addition, there is a weekly radio-listening recitation, and a course fulfillment to complete 10 hours in the Language Lab where one watches videos or listens to cassettes.

More course information can be found at <http://www.wetu.utc.fr/rentree/catuv/>.

Accommodations

The two main residences are Roberval and Clos de Rose. More information can be found at <http://www.crous-amiens.fr/logement/compiègne.html>.



Although a disproportionate number of international students live at Roberval, the residence is dormitory-style with shared kitchen and washroom facilities. All rooms are single with a sink. And the showers are adjoined with the adjacent room. It takes 5 minutes to walk to the main campus, and more importantly, the walk from the train station is doable (for the late night adventures in Paris). Otherwise, the buses in Compiègne are reliable and free!

[Top]: Kitchen at Roberval. [Middle]: Christmas in the hallway. [Left]: Inner courtyard

Finding a Job

Similar to Jobmine, UTC's Demeter is a way to obtain contact information for employers seeking UTC students. However the system does not allow one to search for jobs. Instead, I believe the jobs that are posted on Demeter are already filtered according to one's academic discipline, perhaps even filtered for international students. As such, there were not as many jobs available (compared to Waterloo). In the end, despite all the misgivings of the coop system, only one international student did not find coop.

In October every year, there is a job fair called Comutec. The fair is well-attended by both students and employers, so don't forget to pack interview clothes!

Jobs in France are not known to be well-paying. For example, one can expect to be paid 700-800 Euros gross per month. That amount roughly equals \$8 CAD/hr. For more information on my coop, please see my attached work report entitled, "Capabilité de Cisailage".

Fun Stuff: SkiUTC

After final exams in January, the student organization SkiUTC organizes a week-long ski trip. The location changes every year. In my year, the ski resort was Valmeinier-Valloire. Prices are around 350 – 400 Euros for a package that includes rentals, accommodation and even food.



Events Organized by Esperanto



For the fall term, Esperanto organized two weekend excursions: Mont St-Michel, pictured above, (in October) and Strasbourg (in December).



Every country (or group of countries) has the opportunity to select a music playlist and provide snacks in hosting a themed party night at the Piccolo, the student bar. From left to right, the above pictures are the soirées from Spain, Germany and Brazil.



In the spring term, Esperanto organized another two weekend excursions: Castles of the Loire (Chateaux de la Loire), a region in France and another trip to Mont St-Michel. The castles rank among France's top tourist destinations. Each castle has its own particularities in terms of history and design. I was pleasantly surprised to find the resting place of Leonardo Da Vinci at the castle in Amboise. Pictured above is the largest castle in France, Château de Chambord.



Discovering Paris

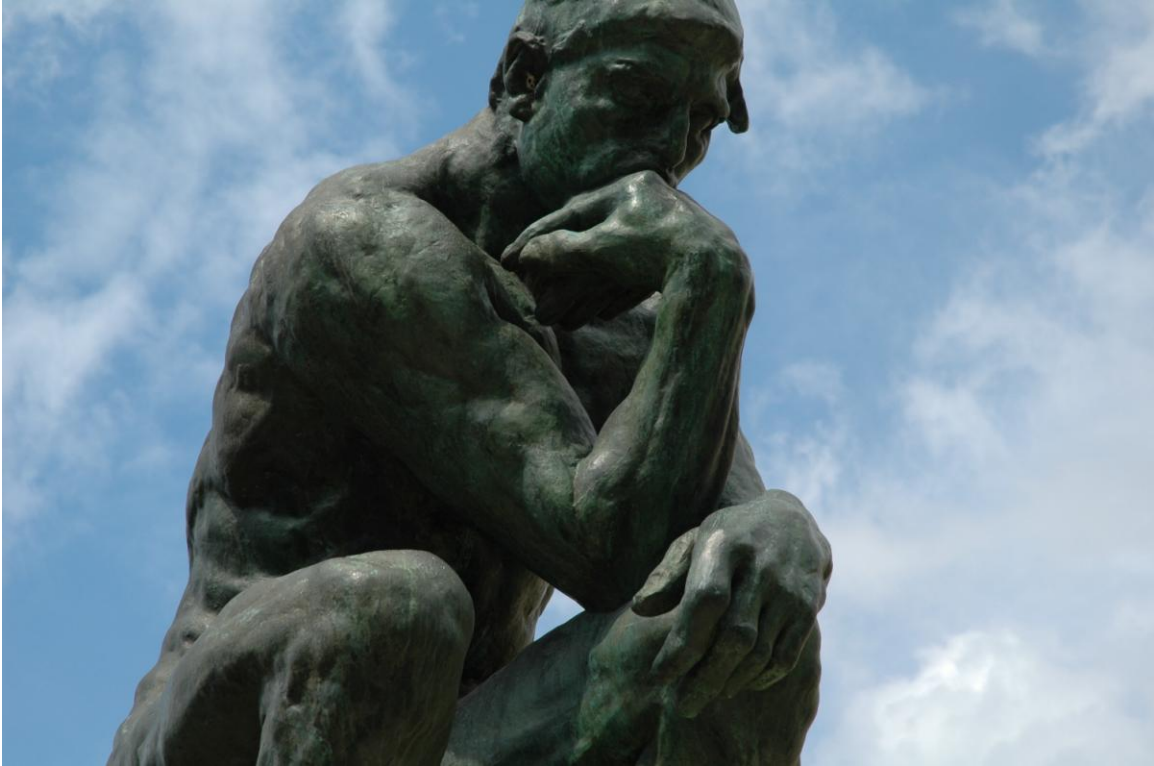
The Compiègne-Paris roundtrip cost (with the Carte 12-25, discount rail card for 50 Euros) is about the same as Waterloo-Toronto roundtrip cost on Fed Bus. As such, with free buses in Compiègne and an exceptional Parisian transit system, discovering Paris on the weekend ought to be very easy. Moreover, two key events help exhibit the city: Nuit Blanche (in October) and Bastille Day (in July). Nuit Blanche, like it's Toronto offshoot, is a night when the city becomes a open air museum of contemporary art. Pictured directly below is an interactive game at the Hôtel de Ville.



Bastille Day is France's national holiday. There are many events during the day, cumulating with the fireworks display at the Eiffel Tower. Pictured below include the military procession and a free concert of ballet and contemporary dance at the Opera Bastille.



Enfin...



« Le seul véritable voyage, le seul bain de Jouvence, ce ne serait pas d'aller vers de nouveaux paysages, mais d'avoir d'autres yeux, de voir l'univers avec les yeux d'un autre, de cent autres, de voir les cent univers que chacun d'eux voit, que chacun d'eux est. »

- Marcel Proust