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ORA Report 2005 – 2006, Université Jean Moulin-Lyon III

I spent a year studying Sciences Politiques at Jean Moulin-Lyon 3. The report is a little long, but hopefully you'll find the info useful.

Getting to Lyon

I booked my ticket in late July with Travelcuts. I looked around a bit with different travel agencies and websites, and Travelcuts had the best fare. I ended up paying \$1000 CDN, all taxes included, for a return ticket from Toronto to Lyon via Paris on Air France. The ticket was valid for one year from the day of departure, and I could change it at anytime for 25euros by calling Air France. It was really useful to have that choice as I did end up changing my return date to the beginning of May. The only problem was that because I booked a 'student' fare, it seems Air France places a limit on how many student fares they can have on each flight, so availability was **extremely** limited when I tried changing my return portion a month in advance.

Accommodation

I decided to go with a 'résidence universitaire' booked via the university's International Relations office. It was easy enough to fill in the form on the internet; they had a list of recommended residences with a little description and on the actual form I just listed my top 3 choices. A few weeks later Elise Blas at the international office at Lyon 3 emailed me to say that she had found a room at the Madison Park residence, which I hadn't listed among my choices. The location was a little far off, but I didn't really have the time / energy to go to Lyon early and apartment hunt for something better, so I just took it.

If you're going to Lyon, do lots of research on the residences in the city, **there are lots**. Another ORA student ended up finding a residence **right beside** Lyon 3's main campus (Manufacture des Tabacs by the Sans Soucis metro stop). She booked it directly with the residence as it wasn't listed by the university's International Office.

The room I ended up getting was a double room at le Madison Park in the 9th arrondissement of Lyon, a short walk from the Gare de Vaise metro stop (last one on the D line). It was a new building, so the condition of the building was really good. There was a small gym in the building and laundry facilities, though it was expensive to wash clothes, 3.20euros for a wash and I believe 2euros for each 30 minutes of dryer time. I went for the double room because it was much, much cheaper than the singles. For a single studio you get a small kitchenette, your own washroom and a small bedroom that has a bed, two desks and a closet, but at a price of about 490euros a month!

The double rooms also had their own kitchenette (i.e. two electric hot plates, a small fridge, sink and cupboards, same as in the single rooms), washroom, living room and bedroom. Two desks, so one per person, a coffee table and a futon that folds out to a double bed are in the living room. The odd thing about the design is that both beds are in the bedroom, so you sleep in the same room as your roommate even though there's enough room for two separate bedrooms! There was also a small balcony that was nice to sit out on in the sun while reading, or to dry laundry since the dryer was obscenely

expensive. The studio as a whole was comfortable, and at only 295euros a month per person, minus 75 euros a month in APL, I was only paying 220 euros a month for the studio.

The general set up of my studio (kitchenette, washroom) seems to be pretty standard among all the residences in Lyon. I had a friend in one of the nicer buildings in the Allix compound, and her room, as well as another friend's in the Residence Jayet, were practically identical.

The residence itself had lots of international students from Lyon 3, so there was a cool atmosphere, but the problem is that because it's run by a private company, they're under no obligation to house only students. There were quite a few older people who lived in the building, who often complained that the students weren't "studying" (International students? Studying?) which made for some tension between admin and the students. The neighbourhood was quiet, not particularly lively. There weren't lots of restaurants / clubs / bars around, so you had to take the metro everywhere. There were enough boulangeries (as there are everywhere in France!), and there was a Monoprix supermarket a 5 minute walk from the residence, by Valmy metro stop.

The people who ran the residence were, aside from one of the guys, polite, albeit slightly incompetent / bureaucratic. It takes several months for the caution to be refunded (which, at 590 euros, is not small), but if I had to choose again I would choose a more central residence. The metro in Lyon stops running just after midnight and doesn't start again until 5am, and unlike Toronto there aren't any night buses (at least not to my neighbourhood) so if you go clubbing and want to come back before 5, you need to taxi it, which can add up especially if you're by yourself and not splitting the cab fare. I walked from a club on the banks of the Saône, by Vieux Lyon, back to my residence and I think it took about an hour (although to be honest, I can't remember too well!)

Of Euros and Dollars

Depending on what kind of accommodations you set up before you leave, make sure to carry **lots** of money with you, or at least that you're able to access lots of money as soon as you get to France. You'll need to pay all sorts of fees, especially residence fees (deposit, first month's rent etc.) that can amount to over 1,000euros for your first day!

I'm really bad at controlling my spending, but basically the trip **is as expensive as you want it to be**. I treated myself to lots of pastries at the boulangerie, more expensive things at the supermarket and farmer's market like cheese, when I could have spent less and still had plenty to eat. I also travelled a lot around France and Europe.

Monthly Expenses

Rent: 295 euros

Phone: 15-20 euros

Utilities: 20 euros

Metropass: 30 euros

TOTAL: 365 euros, not including food
(minus 75 euros per month from CAF)

For food, I spent about 20-30euros per week at the grocery store, usually on stuff I would make myself (i.e. not lots of ready to eat / canned / bottled stuff). I got the feeling that I could have gotten by on less if I did more of my shopping at the farmer's markets (various days and locations around Lyon, check the city of Lyon's website for all locations and times at http://www.lyon.fr/vdl/sections/fr/economie/halles_marches_1/marches_alimentaires/)

Insurance

All of us were forced to buy *sécurité sociale* from the university for 196 euros, plus the residence forced us to get housing insurance (I forget how much, maybe 50euros?) that included *responsabilité civile*. In the end, once I got my visa from the French consulate, no one checked to see that I actually had *responsabilité civile* insurance. I checked in with OHIP to make sure that they wouldn't suspend my coverage while I was abroad, and they also cover expenses up to what they would pay in Ontario, PLUS my Queen's medical insurance plan. All in all I had 3 different medical insurance plans. And I never had to see a doctor in France!

University Life

Much different than in Canada! The universities are less organized, definitely feel more haphazard, and less academically rigorous... people cheating on exams in front of proctors, plagiarism (at least 5 people in my Master's level class in France got caught for plagiarism!) etc.

I generally found that I worked hard, but definitely not as hard as I would have had I stayed in Canada. I was studying almost exclusively classes in *Sciences politiques*, and did 3 Master 1 level classes (somewhat equivalent to our 4th year) and the rest either 3rd year or 'SELF' program classes (more on that later). Generally all the profs and TAs I had were sympathetic that French wasn't my 1st language, and were a little easier on me. They still expected me to do quality work though, and I had no problem passing my classes with decent marks (i.e. not 10/20). The format was definitely sit in lecture for 3 hours, take notes (if even) then leave, and have an oral exam at the end of the term where the Prof grills you on whatever topic you pick / he/she so desires.

Lyon 3 has a program it calls 'SELF' that is geared towards Anglophone exchange students whose command of French isn't good enough to participate in the regular classes. They're taught exclusively in English, and admin is for the most part English speaking. Ironically, these classes were among the better organized at Lyon3, and included two politics classes I knew I would receive credit for back in Canada, so I held my nose and registered for it. I don't recommend taking SELF classes, if only because you don't meet anyone outside of the English / American / Canadian circle of students that are in the SELF classes.

In most of the classes, I met some really nice (French) students who were genuinely interested in me as a person, and one of them is even coming to Canada next year! It seems really intimidating at first because it's a different language, different educational approach but I guarantee that you'll find some super friendly people who will invite you out for a drink after class.

Daily Life

Too nice... super efficient public transportation network! Life is easy when you live on the subway line, and your university is a 20 minute ride on the same line. Getting around was easy, especially since I had a monthly metropass at the student rate of 30 euros a month. The food was too good (I miss eating an entire baguette and block of cheese for breakfast, but probably all the better for my arteries), bought some really nice clothes at bargain prices during the famous January sales, and had lots of movies (French, and English in original versions if you can't handle the dubbed versions...) around the city. Not to mention that if you want to go skiing, you can just take day trip to the Alps for a day of fabulous skiing... I'll never forget the vistas from the slopes at l'Alpe d'Huez.

Work

I worked my butt off all summer before going to France, but the exchange rate just wasn't very favourable. I was lucky in that my parents bailed me out when I had spent too much on trips / food / generally, and I considered working while in France but decided that it would have been a shame to forgo weekends travelling etc. to work. I ended up returning to Canada early (May 2nd, to be exact) broke, with \$2 CDN in my bank account here, not much more in my French bank account and no regrets... it was worth it. There's been more than enough time to work and make more money this summer after returning from France.

Memories... the Best and Worst

Best memory? Too tough to choose. Seriously

Worst? Two actually stick out. Definitely my first day in Lyon, lugging my suitcases around with my Canadian travel buddy, jet-lagged, no apartment, and trying to navigate the ridiculous bureaucracy of having to cash my 1000 euros in traveler's cheques just to be able to move into my studio.

And the second worst memory? Getting a 370 euros electricity bill. That's right, 370 euros for 2 months' electricity. Turns out EDF (Electricité de France) just estimates how much electricity you use. They don't *actually* come to read your meter or anything. After nearly emptying my bank account and booking a ticket straight back home, I took a look at our electricity meter, phoned EDF and voilà! Over 300 euros magically came off my electricity bill. I even brought the now-infamous bill back with me to Canada... it still makes me laugh.

Travel tips

Lots of exchange students travel around France and Europe, and Lyon is definitely well placed for travelling. A few tips:

- Get a Carte 12-25. it costs 50 euros, but it pays for itself in savings on train tickets, including TGV tickets
- If you want to go somewhere, go! One thing I learned is that everyone will be interested in going everywhere... but that when it comes time to book tickets and hostels, not so many people will step up to the plate. Just go and enjoy!
- Easyjet (www.easyjet.com) flies from Lyon to London, but if you take the train to Geneva easyjet flies all over Europe. I got really cheap flights to Amsterdam and

- Berlin from Geneva... my trip to Berlin (train to Geneva, flight Geneva-Berlin) return trip was less than \$100cdn.
- If you like skiing, or just want to try, there are lots of day trips from Lyon to the Alps. Try Skimania at www.skimania.fr, I went with them and it was well organized if you can get yourself out of bed at 5am for the bus. I've also been told Magic Evasion is good: www.magicevasion.com
 - The TGV goes straight from Lyon Part-Dieu to Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport's Terminal 2 (the train station is actually underneath the airport), so if you're looking for a flight, make sure to consider that. With the carte 12-25, it might not be as expensive as it first seems. (although the train to Geneva is definitely cheaper, at about 25 euros return trip from Lyon to Geneva airport)

Suggestions

Don't stress too much about stuff... get a croissant, take a walk along either of the rivers and relax. It'll all work out. Trust me.

Hope this helps! If you have any more questions, feel free to contact me at:
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Cheers,

Stephen