

Linn Jansson – KEDGE Business School, Bordeaux – Fall16

The international approach of the program, including an exchange semester abroad, was the major reason for me to start studying BAPS at Stockholm University. Since I already had adequate skills in French from high school and some travels, I had France in mind as exchange destination from the very beginning. Strategically, I had applied for studying the course French 1 at part-time in parallel with my BAPS courses the first year at SU, and felt very prepared and excited when I finally got notice of being accepted for my top-choice destination. This was my chance to finally get fluent in speech and to enjoy the rich social culture for one semester in the country of wine, electronic music, pretty pastries and 'demos' engagement in hot labor unions.

I preferred Bordeaux rather than the other electable cities Paris and Marseille because of its sympatric size and geographic situation, only 40 minutes by car from the Atlantic Sea. If I was to compare Bordeaux with any Swedish cities, I would probably say that it is a bit like Lund in the size of Gothenburg. The city center is very dense, with many small streets reserved for pedestrians and numerous bars, restaurants, and stores – both commercial and representing local brands. It is easy to get around with the cheap public transport system, which offers trams, buses, and very popular city bikes. Myself, I bought a single-speed upon arrival and enjoyed the freedom of being able to bike to university, home from late parties, and to nearby towns when I felt like being sporty in the weekends. It was not a problem to sell it when the semester was over.

I arrived in France without having anywhere to live, since I had not been successful in my research for a room to rent during the summer. Luckily, I had several weeks to find a place before the lectures started, and I must say that it was an advantage to know some French. As in Stockholm or in other Swedish student towns, it is indeed not easy to find an apartment in September. Of course, it is neither impossible, but my recommendation is to not delay one's efforts for finding a contract. The student organization Melting Potes helped some people with housing, but those were few, and their efforts are not to count on. Personally, I was a bit fussy and wanted to find something in the city center. Fortunately, I did, and it has been very nice to live so centrally as I now have done, especially since affordable downtown locations in my home are rare to find. However, it can also be stated that living in Talence, the suburban area where KEDGE is situated, not makes a social difference, since it does not take much time to go into the city center from there and since many other students also are situated in the area. Furthermore, I have missed having access to the green areas well-adapted for walking and running there, while living in the stone-white-grey urban center.

The population of Bordeaux is very outgoing. Many social events, cultural as well as related to sports, politics, and business, are arranged on weekly basis and there is always a food, wine, or music festival to attend for free somewhere. As many others, I and my friends often gathered by the river La Garonne in the summertime (well, summer lasted for long) and the atmosphere was always relaxed and easy-going. Sundays have implied going to the food and antiques markets at Chartrons or in Saint Michel, that always are crowded with French families and individuals doing food shopping from local farmers, mingling, and having seafood platters. During my exchange, I and my friends also went to the opera, we played sports on KEDGE's

rooftop, we visited local vineyards and made trips to beaches and the closely situated Pyrenees. I could write for long about everything I like about Bordeaux itself as a city, but to focus more on academic aspects, I will now end this chapter with saying that Bordeaux this year was selected as “the city to visit 2017” by The Lonely Planet (see the video on YouTube).

KEDGE is a grand-école that normally is highly ranked in international top lists of universities, wherefore I had high expectations on the tutoring. However, the level of difficulty of the studies really turned out to be disappointing. Almost no course literature was provided, and for the final tests all that we had to study on were the PowerPoint presentations that the teachers supplied us with. This was very bad through a learning perspective, since there was no room for critical discussions of the content, nor any opportunities given to read more about certainly interesting or complicated issues. Furthermore, the English skills of the teachers were doubtful and sometimes, they used ‘FrEnglish’ concepts instead of conventional topic-specific connotations. Now afterwards, I am a little bit afraid that it would be hard for me to attend the bachelors’ course in business administration back at SU. Another thing that we were not conscious about when we chose KEDGE is that it not is possible for BAPS students to study financial management there, since our first course covers all the content that the French students learn in the second year. In fact, no courses are electable. All of them belong to the mandatory course-package that constitutes the third semester of KEDGE’s bachelors’ program.

I had also much looked forward to having French classes, but after writing the placement test and being put into tuition groups based on language skills, it showed that the highest educational level was A2. I had studied at level B2 at Stockholm University and ameliorated my competences even more during the summer, why the mandatory three-hour-classes came to be very boring. As in the other subjects, the expectations on the students were very low. If I had known this earlier, I would have dared to study in French. For anyone interested, I would encourage to take that challenge, since the level of difficulty in French universities in general seems to be lower than in Sweden.

To conclude, I am not pleased with what I have learned, or more accurately not learned, this semester. Although, my social experiences have been fantastic. I made amazing friends, both French and with international backgrounds, and people were very open-minded and interested in exploring life and surroundings. The kind and helpful Melting Potes arranged a lot of activities the first month (among other things house parties nearly every night) and it was easy to get involved. Bordeaux is a beautiful city with many open, social spaces and there was always something to do. Of that reason, I am glad that I chose this destination. To add, it feels good that Bordeaux is centrally located in Europe and that I hence so easily can return to the city that I have established a personal link to in the future.