

Frequently Asked Questions - EDUCO

Before your departure

What should I pack? What's the weather like?

Zach: The weather varies. In the start of the fall semester and the end of the spring semester, it gets very warm – it's often around 70 degrees Fahrenheit. It dropped to the 30s from mid-November through February. Pack as lightly as possible, but still make sure you will not be missing your clothes from back home. Make sure to leave enough room in your suitcase to bring home souvenirs.

Haley: You should pack at least 5 scarves with plans to buy a few more once you arrive. The weather in Paris is pretty mild, but it gets chilly quickly. For those coming in the Fall, I don't recommend heaps of shorts or dresses and skirts that can't be paired with tights. Jeans are, of course, a must. If you'd really like to blend in, go for simple styles in dark colors, but no one's going to stop you on the street if you're looking too "American". Springtime in Paris didn't start until the end of April this year.

Mallory: During the spring semester, the weather can vary, but it is generally cold and damp. Make sure to bring rain gear: boots, jacket, umbrellas. Warm socks and sweaters are important, too, as Parisian apartments can be quite chilly. Bring basics that can be worn in many different ways since you will have a limited wardrobe.

Sophie: There is no need to bring rain boots, but bring a rain jacket and umbrella. For Spring 2014, we experienced a mild winter, but usually it would continue to snow up until March or April, so a peacoat would be nice, if not even a thick winter jacket. Scarves are good to have for both men and women. Bring boots though, since some days are freezing.

At the time of writing, in early-mid May, it is raining very often, and it is not warm enough to be in full summer clothes. Light sweaters or cardigans are still getting their use.

Pack a router if you're going to be in the foyer, and especially if your computer does not have an Ethernet port.

Don't pack too many leisure books. There are so many used-book stores that have classics for 1 euro and current books for around 5 euros.

Amy : Pack lightly! I only wore a fraction of what I brought and even worse – I ended up running out of room for everything I bought while being here all semester.

Is there a group flight? Will someone meet me at the airport? How do I get to the hotel from the airport?

Zach: There is no group flight, but many EDUCO students end up on the same flights. The easiest (but most expensive) way to get from the airport to the hotel is a taxi, which costs about 70 euros from Charles de Gaulle airport. The train is much cheaper (around 10 euros) and is very fast, but it requires lugging your baggage

around. I would suggest trying to find other EDUCO students on your flight to split a taxi with to the hotel.

Haley: You'll book your flight on your own (or with friends also coming on the program if you don't want to fly alone). Once you arrive at CDG you have a few options: one, take a taxi (depending on the day of the week and time of day, this can be very expensive), two you can take the RER B to one of the metro stations in Paris and then switch to whatever lines take you to the hotel, three you can take the shuttle. There won't be anyone waiting for you at the airport, just follow the signs that say "Direction Paris" and you'll be fine.

Mallory: Chances are other EDUCO students will be on your flight. Nobody will come to the airport, but EDUCO will give you instructions on how to get to the hotel. You can take the RER train from the airport or get a taxi and give the driver the hotel address.

Sophie: You can personally arrange a group flight if you want, but getting from the airport to the city is pretty straightforward no matter which airport you're flying in from. From CDG, you'll take the RER B (~10€); from ORLY (~8€) and Beauvais (~15€), there are buses. From Beauvais, pre-order the bus into Paris to avoid the line. You will be able to find an actual person at a register to sell you the ticket, if you don't have an international credit card to buy from the machines. These machines are sometimes really finicky and will only take coins instead of bills. The hotel is very close to a metro station, so you can find your way there with any metro map that can be found in the stations and then the subway cars themselves. There is a RATP/SNCF interactive map application that you can download onto a smart phone that does not need internet.

Amy : I was not able to coordinate my flight with anyone else on the program, but I did reach out to the other students from my own university to meet at the airport. We arranged a private car with Paris Shuttle (parishuttle.com) for 60 euro and split it 3 ways (way, way cheaper than a taxi). I ended up using Paris Shuttle every single time I went to the airport all semester; they also have 20 euro price for an individual.

How expensive is Paris?

Zach: Paris is incredibly expensive in some ways, and remarkably cheap in others. A restaurant will probably cost over 20 euros per person, but a whole baguette with some ham and cheese might be just as good for only 3 euros. Paris can be affordable if you commit to cooking for yourself and finding stores that offer great value. A pastry for breakfast will cost you less than a euro, and it will likely be among the best you ever eat. Also, it is useful to get a supermarket loyalty card. They are free and give you savings on each trip to buy food.

For clothes, wait until stores have sales. Paris has some very fashionable stores with astronomical prices. However, deals can be found with some research and some luck.

Sophie: If you do not travel too much, it's not difficult to live cheaply. If you do want to travel, it's best to plan things in advance to take advantage of cheaper bus/train/plane tickets. For example, a ticket for Morocco bought a month in advance can be as cheap as 30 euros, but it will get up to over 100 euros if you buy it close to the date you are leaving.

Especially in more residential and less touristy areas, there will always be sandwich and pastry shops where you can buy a decently sized meal (a crepe, baguette sandwich, or slice of quiche) for less than 5 euros total. However, this can still add up, so cooking for oneself is an important part of saving money.

Outside of food and travel, there are plenty of museums you can go to for free as a long-term student resident of the EU under 26 years of age. If they are not free, there is usually a nice discount.

Should I open a bank account? Can I write checks? Should I bring my credit cards? How much money should I bring? Where can I change money? Are there ATMs?

Zach: It is worthwhile to open a bank account if you are going for the full year. It takes about a month to set up, and many banks offer deals for students. You will get checks and an ATM card to make surcharge-free withdrawals.

You should definitely bring credit cards in order to get cash in Paris. A lot of places don't accept American cards, so access to cash is important. Talk to your bank before you leave to discuss your options. There are also places to exchange money, but you should only use them to convert large amounts of cash in order to avoid paying unnecessarily high charges.

The question of how much money to bring is really up to you. Create a budget for yourself, but always bring more than you think you will need. There are certain things (metro passes, library cards, etc.) that you may forget to factor into your budget. There is no definite answer for how much money to bring, but keep in mind that Paris is an expensive place to live.

Haley: Yes there are ATM's and there are money exchange stores on every other street, it seems. Bring between 100 and 200 euro on the plane with you, so you can solve any small issues/handle transportation when you arrive without stressing. I don't really recommend bringing a lot of credit or debit cards, because it's too easy to get things stolen on the metro or bus. American cards work at all ATM's, they just charge you a withdrawal fee (usually no more than \$5) for each time you take out money. There are a few banks that have partnerships, such as BNP Paribas and Bank of America. If you really want to make sure your card won't give you any problems, get one with a little microchip ("puce"), if you go to the bank and ask for a card that works in Europe, I think they'll know what you're talking about. Even though I've opened a French bank account, it isn't really necessary unless you're working, then you'll need one.

Mallory: You probably will not want to open a bank account in France since it is rather complicated and you will not really need one. Do bring your credit cards and look into options that minimize international charges and conversion fees.

It is a good idea to have both a credit card and a debit card. Check if your bank has any partners in Paris that will help you avoid ATM fees.

Sophie: It might be smart to open a bank account in the States that does not have any sort of exchange fees and uses a chip instead of the swipe. But otherwise, do bring your credit cards. You can order euros from your American bank at a better rate than if you were to exchange the money here. But even so, there are many places to change money, especially in the touristy areas. And yes, you can easily find ATMs at any street corner practically.

Should I bring my laptop? Can I find a converter in Paris?

Zach: Definitely bring a laptop. You should buy two or three converters in the United States before your departure – there are some cheap and reliable ones on Amazon.com.

Haley: If you use your laptop regularly at home, then you should certainly bring it with you. You can buy converters in Paris, they tend to be universal plugs for a lot of different countries, or you can buy some off Amazon. If you're really anxious, check with the maker of your computer; Apple sells a whole kit of adapters (although it's really not necessary to pay over \$80, I bought mine of Amazon and they work fine).

Mallory: Yes, the universities and EDUCO both have computer labs, but you will probably want to have your computer with you if you have one. However, you may not want to bring your laptop when traveling within Europe, as students have had laptops stolen.

Sophie: Yes, bring a laptop. There will be papers to research and write. I've not bought a converter myself in Paris, but I assume that you can easily find one. However, head converters in the US can be super cheap, so it's best to come prepared.

Amy : Definitely, I wouldn't have been able to survive without it. Bring a converter – that's the last thing you want to worry about during your first couple of hectic days in Paris.

What should I do if I need a doctor?

EDUCO hands out 2 important documents at orientation, one is called « Important Reminders » and the other is a great little booklet « Info Utiles » ; both give you names and addresses of several MDs (some even speak English), hospitals and nurses. But first, talk to the EDUCO staff, they will advise you and refer you to the appropriate health care professional. Also talk to your host family; they can refer you to their family MD.

If you are on prescription drugs, make sure you have enough medication with you for a couple of months and bring your prescription with you. A local doctor can prescribe the equivalent medicine but may also ask you to run some tests. The French health care system is excellent, accessible to all but very different from our system. In case

you need to go to the hospital, the ER may seem like a scary experience (people from all walks of life...), but once you get past that, it's great.

« Pharmacies » (everywhere !!!) also have qualified health care professionals who can advise you.

Daily life

How can I meet French students?

Zach: The best way to meet French students is in class. Everyone whom I spoke to was more than willing to talk to me and even help when I felt lost during lectures. Many French students like making American friends. It also helps to take multiple classes in the same department, because then you will have different classes with the same group of students. In my experience, French students have been kind, helpful, and approachable.

Haley: Go up to students in your class and ask for notes, just like in the U.S. your class friends can become good friends. I met my best friend at a bar for a Couchsurfing night, events like that are usually good because they are full of French people who are looking to meet internationals. The campus (*fac*, short for university) also has student organizations, Paris 7 has sports teams, or you can sign up for things outside of the university system like dance or art classes to meet people. It takes work to really break down the language and culture barriers, but you'll be surprised at how many people you meet once you make just one French friend!

Mallory: It can be challenging to meet and befriend French students, but if you are persistent you might succeed! French students in your classes are happy to answer your questions and share their notes, but that does not mean you are friends. Make an effort to get to know them on a more personal level. See if you can hang out outside of class. That will show them you really do want to get to know them. If you live at Cité Universitaire, make friends with people in your building. You can also get involved in extracurricular activities to meet students with similar interests.

Sophie: There are offices at each university that organize student activities called "le Bureau des Etudiants". Although I personally did not try them, I believe that they are actually quite active. Otherwise, EDUCO has a couple of events per semester that allow for us exchange students to do activities with French students. Finding classes that require group projects could be a hit or miss, but they definitely increase the chances of interacting with students. French students will usually not approach you out of the blue. It is up to you to ask them for notes and initiate conversation.

Are there many Americans in Paris? Will I be speaking English all semester?

Zach: The amount of French you speak is up to you. There is no language police preventing you from speaking English or from making French friends. It is easy to fall into a trap of only hanging out with other Americans, but many French students are excited to make foreign friends. However, they may want to practice their English skills as much as you want to practice your French. The amount of French you speak will be a direct result of your commitment.

Haley: There are tons of Americans in Paris. Ex-pats, teachers, other students, tourists, etc. etc. There's a good chance you'll be speaking more English than French if you only spend time with other American students. To practice French it helps to make friends, live with a family, or speak up a lot in class...

Mallory: There are many Americans, but you will not be speaking English all the time because you will speak French at EDUCO, with your host family and in class. The more you try to integrate yourself with the French, the less English you will speak.

Sophie: If you want to speak English all semester, you can. If you want to speak French all semester, you can as well.

Is Paris safe?

Zach: As long as you are smart, Paris is a very safe city. There are a few neighborhoods that should be avoided late at night if you are alone, but overall the city is a safe place to live.

Haley: It's as safe as anywhere else. Don't be out late by yourself, and try to know where you're going before you leave. The first few times you get lost on the metro will teach you quick!

Mallory: Yes, Paris is fairly safe. Still, it is necessary to take certain precautions, just like in any other large city. Be aware of your purses, wallets, cell phones, and other belongings.

Sophie: Yes, Paris is relatively safe, but it also helps to always be aware of your surroundings.

Amy : Extremely. I never felt unsafe in Paris at all times of day/night.

How can I get around Paris?

Zach: Paris has an outstanding metro system. You will need to get a monthly pass (or yearly, if you are staying for the year) in order to save money. You will take it everywhere. It closes around 1 am (2 am on the weekends), but night buses run all night.

Haley: Walk. Métro. Bus. Vélib. Walking is enjoyable and free, I suggest you do this whenever the weather is decent (you'll regret it if not). The metro is amazing and has 14 lines, plus 5 RER's, and then the trams if you're on the outskirts of Paris. Don't be overwhelmed by all the stops, after a few weeks you'll be a metro pro. It helps to understand that the direction is named after the last stop of the line (so if you want to take line 4 north, you pick the "Porte de Clignancourt" side). The trickiest part of the metro is orienting yourself once you get out of the station; try to use google maps if you're not good at navigating before you leave the house and pick out some landmarks you know you'll remember. There's a great app that works even without data (and it's free) put out by RATP called "Visit Paris by Metro". I highly suggest

downloading it before you leave; it tells you how to get from point A to point B and even estimates how long it will take.

Mallory: Walking is a great option – it’s free, good exercise, and the best way to see the city. Buses, metros, and RER trains are also convenient. You can buy a monthly or weekly pass Navigo that will give you unlimited access to these methods of transportation.

Sophie: The metro is great! Public transportation in general is great. Paris by foot is also not as bad as you might think either. There are also easy bike rentals (Vélib), especially if you have a chip credit card.

Amy : The metro is amazing! It’ll get you anywhere you need in Paris and monthly passes give you unlimited access with extended areas of accessibility during the weekends.

How independent will I be?

Zach: The EDUCO staff is there to help with everything, but you are going to be very independent most of the time. If you are struggling with a class, it is up to you to ask for help. EDUCO organizes a lot of great trips and social activities that you should take advantage of, but most of your social life will be up to you. You will truly be living independently in a huge city. EDUCO is there to help whenever you encounter a problem.

Haley: You’re as independent as you want to be, I guess. Fixing problems (money, visa, school, work, etc) falls entirely on your shoulders, it’s really hard for parents to hop on a plane and rush over to help us with whatever minor catastrophe happened this week. That being said, the EDUCO office is there as a resource. If you’re having problems with course work, go to the tutors or even ask your host family if they have suggestions. Going abroad is about learning to function on your own, and adapt to a new environment at the same time.

Mallory: You will be quite independent. If you live with a host family, they generally respect your independence, but you will also be required to eat with them three times a week. There is a lot of support at EDUCO, but it is entirely up to you to determine your schedule and your social life.

Sophie: As independent as you want. It’s definitely easier to make friends with people in the foyer than the students in your classes. And it’s even easier to stick with people in the program.

Amy : You will be extremely independent from the day you arrive so come with the mindset that it’s an adventure and all little mistakes should be learned and laughed off! You’ll become very comfortable with “alone time” by the end of the semester, which really is a good life lesson!

When do I find out about my housing assignment?

Zach: You find out when you get to Paris. Don't fret too much about it before you leave, it will all work out.

Haley: When you arrive! It's just another exciting component of an already amazing day. You get a great envelope full of information and the first sheet is the details of your housing. That was my favorite part of the first day...and I think it's better that way because it makes you more flexible and teaches you how to adapt.

Mallory: You will find out when you arrive in Paris. You will most likely stay in the hotel for one night and arrange for your arrival to your host family if you have been assigned one for the next day.

Sophie: During orientation. Don't worry.

Amy : You will stay in a hotel the first night, arranged by EDUCO, and will receive your host family's information that day.

Housing testimonials (or What is EDUCO housing like?)

Zach: Housing experiences vary, and each option has its pros and cons. I lived in the "foyer," or international dorm, and that worked out well for me. I had my own bedroom and bathroom, and shared a communal kitchen. I liked having the independence of living on my own while still being surrounded by francophone students. Housing is really an individual decision, and there is no way to predict exactly how it will work out. Educo does a great job of finding good places to live, so it's up to you whether to go for the independence of a foyer or the supportive atmosphere of a host family.

Haley: My housing experience was one of the best parts of being in Paris. I was lucky enough to be placed in the center of the city, which I enjoyed because it meant I was only half an hour away from everything. No matter what part of the city your apartment is in though, you'll find things to keep you busy. You'll fall in love with your neighborhood bakery or a specific café because in the months you live there, it really does become home. I loved living with a host family because they gave me a real opportunity to learn about the average Parisian's life. Student-life in France, just as in the U.S., is different from family-life, and I think if I hadn't lived with a family I would have never seen that. I had my own room, but always felt welcome to use the kitchen and also had access to their washer/dryer. If you like to make long-lasting connections then I think a host-family is a great way to do that; I've only been back in the States for a few days but have already exchanged emails with my host-mom.

Mallory: Host families vary from single older people to families with young children. Be honest about your interests and needs. Sometimes students living with host families with children can have more of a familial relationship compared to parents whose children no longer live with them. The latter might give you more privacy and independence. If you live with a host family, you frequently have access to cooking basics and kitchenware and laundry amenities. You may have an opportunity to travel with your host family, like go to their country house for a weekend. Many will include you in family events or will invite you to do cultural things around Paris with

them. A host family usually affords you the opportunity to interact with French people and understand how a French household runs, but does not always equate to a deep relationship. The Cité is more like an American college campus with dormitories, cafeterias, and student activities. You will not live with Americans, so you will get to speak French and meet students from all over the world.

Sophie:

Foyer:

Pros:

- Nice-sized single with bathroom.
- Access to Cité events throughout the semester, such as fitness classes or student-organized parties and outings (to museums, parks, and even Versailles/Disney).
- Library or study area open 24/7 (this might not seem like such a pro until you realize that libraries in Paris close mostly before 7pm).
- At an RER B stop, meaning easy transportation to both CDG and Orly.
- Next to Parc Montsouris, which is good for running or picnics.
- Easier to make francophone friends.
- Privacy—I was able to host numerous friends stopping by Paris without difficulty. There are beds for rent or you can borrow a mattress from someone within the building.
- 70 euro budget for towels and kitchen utensils. Sheets are provided by the dorm.
- Close to the Sorbonne (Paris 1 and 4 L3) and the campus at Tolbiac/Bibliothèque Mitterand (Paris 1 L1/2 and Paris 7 L1-3)
- You can make the decision to speak French or English. The students there are always willing to speak French with you.

Cons:

- Starting from scratch with food, if you want to cook for yourself.
- Kitchen and study lounge closes at 11pm.
- Lack of host family means that it's up to you to find the French gourmet food experience.
- The food at the cafeteria (for which EDUCO gives you 50 euros voucher a month to eat) is mediocre at best. But on the bright side, cooking for yourself is still adequately cheap and doable.
- It doesn't feel like you're living in the middle of Paris, since the neighborhood is quiet and there are few Parisian streets that intrude into the large student housing complex.

How's the food? Can vegetarians survive?

Zach: The food is amazing. Paris puts an emphasis on quality food that can be hard to find in the United States. However, it is incredibly easy to eat poorly in Paris while spending a lot of money. Avoid touristy places that offer dozens of “stereotypical” French dishes. If you are going to go out to eat, look for places with hand-written menus that change regularly. Even vegetarians will eat well in France.

Haley: I'm a pescatarian and I've survived quite well. If you don't like/are allergic to cheese, I think that will be more difficult for the French to understand. There are usually cheese baguettes and fish-options when you go out to eat. Paris also has a lot of ethnic food; you won't only be eating croque-monsieur, so you can find a lot of veg options that way. I love French food, and the way they eat. Don't be afraid, just embrace it. If you're really worried you'll miss something special then bring a little box along with you.

Mallory: French food is excellent! Host families generally provide great meals and the food at the university cafeterias is good and very inexpensive. Vegetarians can eat just as well, but will have to indicate food restrictions at planned events or if living with a host family.

Sophie: The food is great! I recommend finding restaurants through lafourchette.fr. You can also make reservations with discounts through that site. Vegetarians can pretty easily survive, but probably not vegans. Restaurants usually have at least one vegetarian dish, or you can always enquire into having the chef just preparing something out of the menu. But be forewarned that food preparation laws in France are not so strict as in the States. Not everything will be labeled

What about phones? Should I buy a cell phone? What should I do about calling the US?

Zach: There are two options: get a cheap phone in Paris or unlock your American phone to work with a French SIM card. The easiest option would be to buy a phone in Paris (basic flip phones are remarkably cheap) and charge it with credit as you need it. If you want to have your American phone work with a French number, it just requires talking to your American phone company beforehand. For some carriers, it will not be possible. But for others, it is as easy as buying a French SIM card and putting it in your phone. You will then be able to load your phone with credit.

Haley: This answer depends on how often you'll be calling home, if you don't mind using Facetime or Skype instead of a phone, and how often you'll want to get in touch with foreigners. If you'd like to easily be able to text or call the U.S. I recommend either an international plan with your American carrier, or using calling cards. If you'd like to have a French number while abroad you can buy a phone that's very cheap and not high-tech, or you can bring your American phone and just buy a French SIM card to put in it. If you have an iPhone I think you'll need to "unlock it" before coming abroad (whatever that means). Check with your carrier.

Mallory: You can buy a cell phone and a SIM card once you get to Paris. There are many different options and you will learn more during your orientation. You can also get an international plan in the U.S.

Sophie: Check with your carrier if you can unlock your phone to be used abroad. There are super cheap (comparatively) uncontracted cell phone plans that include international calling and texting for as little as 20 euros a month. If not, you can find cheap phones here for around 20 euros, but they will not have keyboards for texting.

HOWEVER, you can call internationally for free via Wifi, if you download Talkatone onto your cellphone (MUST BE DONE IN THE US). Talkatone is an app that uses Google Voice to make your calls go through, so you must set up an account with Google and get a number through Google voice. You can use Google Voice directly from your computer too!

Amy: I brought my old iPhone that was out of contract and unlocked and bought a SIM card here. I got an SFR plan for 30 euro/ month (unlimited text and call in France with 2 gigs of data) and just used Whatsapp or FaceTime audio over data to call home, other than Skype on my computer. No need to buy an international plan!

Is Internet easily accessible? Where can I find it?

Zach: Wi-Fi is relatively easy to come by in Paris. If your home doesn't have wireless internet, you may need to go to a coffee shop.

Haley: Yes and no. If you live in a home-stay, internet is a mandatory part of their set-up. Outside of the home, the school libraries have the best Wi-Fi. Next are the public libraries (of which there are usually 2 or 3 in each arrondissement). Last are places like Starbucks. Don't expect the Wi-Fi to work (or even exist) every time you go into a café. Bringing work outside of the home isn't exactly done in Paris, unless you're an aspiring novelist or working on a Sudoku puzzle.

Mallory: You will have Wi-Fi access at the Cité Universitaire or at your host family. You can also use the computers at EDUCO and at various libraries.

Sophie: Unfortunately, internet is not easily accessible. There are some places for which the city of Paris provides free internet, but it does not cover the entire city by far. However, most restaurants will have Wi-Fi and will give you the password if you are a customer. The universities will also have Wi-Fi, so make sure to activate your account online beforehand.

Is it easy to workout in Paris?

Zach: Paris is a great city for working out. There are a lot of parks to run in, and biking around is a great way to see the city. There are also traditional gyms and pools available. You will need to use Google to find the best option for you.

Haley: I've been running twice since September, but I know other students who had an easier time with it. Paris is, like all urban cities, a little awkward to run in. The big parks are in the center or on the outskirts, and sometimes it's not feasible to take the metro thirty minutes there and then thirty minutes back. There are plenty of little gyms, but I'm not sure how expensive they are.

Mallory: Many people run by the Seine or in the gardens. There are also gyms and various fitness classes, but they can be expensive.

Sophie: People are always seen running in all the neighborhoods, and there are numerous pools and gyms throughout the city. At Cité Universitaire, there are fitness classes that are either free or require a nominal fee for each session.

Will there be time to travel? Should I buy a Eurail pass? Is it easy to travel around Europe?

Zach: Traveling around Europe is very easy. It is by no means cheap, but living in France is a great opportunity to see other places. I would not recommend buying a Eurail pass, because flying is just as cheap and it is much faster. Do, however, invest in a “Carte Jeune” from the SNCF if you are planning to take the train. It costs 50 euros and gives you huge savings on train travel. Weekends are a great time to travel, but I would not recommend doing more than one trip every three or four weeks. You may want to see everything Europe has to offer, but you may book a trip without realizing you have a major academic workload. Be smart about it, prioritize where you want to go, and book early to save money.

Haley: There’s plenty of time to travel, imagine all the time you spend watching Netflix and taking BuzzFeed quizzes. On weekends you can stay or go, it’s up to you and your budget. I didn’t travel much because of my budget, but my recommendation is to solidify travel plans as soon as possible, that way you have a choice between bus, train, or plane. Eurail passes are only good (in my opinion) if you plan on going to a lot of countries in a short amount of time. They provide you with a certain number of travel days, and you book your trains according to what stations they allow you to stop at.

Is it possible to work in France? Have former students had internships?

Zach: It is possible to work in France as long as you have the student visa. Internships are by no means common, but they are possible. EDUCO will help you arrange one if you want to work.

Haley: I have an internship and babysit. It helps to start asking around early; mention it to the EDUCO office or your host family if you need ideas.

Mallory: Yes, students can work or intern while in France.

Sophie: Yes, it is possible. There are babysitting jobs, language jobs, and even internships, such as with UNESCO.

Academic Life

What are the differences between the fall and spring semester options?

Zach: Each semester, there is a huge number of classes offered in a wide array of subjects. They vary from semester to semester, but you will be able to find plenty of options.

Haley: There's no difference, they both have in common the fact that you should do a year instead.

No, but the fall semester seemed much longer than the spring, even though the opposite is true.

Mallory: The course offerings change from semester to semester. The distribution of students from the American universities usually varies, as well. Some students find it easier to make friends with French students in the fall since everybody is new. In the spring, many French students have already found friends in their courses and might not be as open to befriending foreign students.

Sophie: There are courses that come in series, so the fall semester might have courses that are easier or have more background information than the spring.

Why can't I register for classes in advance?

Zach: The French academic system is very different than the American system. French students do not enroll ahead of time using the Internet like we do. You will find out the available courses during orientation. There are hundreds to pick from in dozens of subjects, so you will find a schedule that works for you. Figuring out classes to take is one of the most daunting parts of the beginning of the semester, but don't be discouraged by its frustrating complexity. It will all work out!

Haley: The French University system is very different from the U.S. system (i.e., not everything is done online months in advance). You'll be attending a public university (unless you go to Sciences-Po, which is a "Grande École"). The registration process as a foreign student on an exchange program is also different from that of a French student/foreigner enrolled directly at the school. The French students have very specific courses they are required to take, whereas we are free to choose whatever we like. Because of this, we don't have the option to register in advance or online for courses. Don't worry though; EDUCO has partnerships with each of these institutions, which makes it a little simpler on us. Only students at Sciences-Po will register before arriving in Paris. Everyone else has to do it in person/by hand with the Department secretaries and the EDUCO office.

Mallory: The course offerings change from semester to semester and sometimes the class times and locations change at the last minute. Therefore, you wait until you arrive to register to make sure that you have the most updated information.

Sophie: Registering for classes does not happen until you are in Paris. There are class lists in the EDUCO office for you to get an idea of the courses offered, but

nothing final will be done until 3 weeks into the courses on site. Don't worry about the course list you have to turn in before leaving. Everything will be clarified when you actually start taking classes. We exchange students are given 3 weeks to shop for classes to make sure that we can understand the professor and that the material is interesting.

How do I register for classes once I get to Paris?

Zach: Once you have picked your classes, which involves going to the department offices of the courses that you are interested in, EDUCO will help with the actual registration. It is your responsibility to talk to your professors in the early weeks to identify yourself as a foreign student.

Haley: Upon your arrival in Paris you'll be given access to the EDUCO course book, which lists almost all the available classes at each of the three universities. It's up to you to go to the campus and find the Secretary's office to verify class hours and professor names (sometimes these are listed in the course catalog, other times they are not available till a week before class starts). Once you've decided on your classes you'll turn your definitive list into the EDUCO office which will then go on to register you officially with the university. It's also very important to introduce yourself to your professor during the first or second week of classes; this way everyone knows you're an American student. Professors also tend to be more helpful if you tell them from the beginning instead of waiting till the last week of class to mention you're having problems because you're not a native French student.

Mallory: You will look in the catalog that EDUCO puts together, as well as university websites and the listings at each university, to come up with a list of classes that interest you. The French do not have an Add/Drop period, but EDUCO allows you a few weeks to test out different courses and choose the ones that suit you. At the end of this period, you will give the course information to the EDUCO staff, who will take care of the official registration.

Sophie: You will shop around for classes for around 3 weeks, depending on the university, and hand in a final list to EDUCO, which will make sure that you enter the university system. There is no electronic way of doing it. EDUCO will provide a comprehensive list of courses from which you will pick and choose ones to try out. There is enough time to try out multiple courses, especially if you are prepared to look at courses starting the first day. You should hit the ground running that Monday after the first week of orientation.

Amy : I was shocked when I realized I had to physically go to the office of each department and check times and dates of classes. It's a pain and definitely not the most efficient process, but *c'est la vie*. Be prepared to do a lot of things the old school way on paper!

Will all my courses in Paris be accepted by my home institution?

Zach: You need to be in contact with your home university in order to see which classes will be accepted. Some universities offer pre-approved classes, but others do not. The most important thing is to stay in contact with your home institution and to keep all documents from each class.

Haley: Again, this depends on your school. If you're unsure the best solution is to talk to other students who have gone on the same program and find out how their credit transfer worked. If you need a certain class to graduate, and just *have* to take it the semester you're abroad, then you need to get a very clear description from your home institution so you can find something that matches. This works best when the department at the American university is flexible; after all, you don't go abroad to take the same classes you could take back at home (some departments just don't realize this). The difficult part is that you don't know what classes you can take until you get to Paris, because the French system is so different.

Sophie: Do check with your school if you really do need the credits for your major.

Is the course load similar to that in the US?

Zach: The French course load is very different than in the US. There tend to be fewer weekly readings, and instead you are expected to work independently without a lot of guidance. It is important to stay on top of your work, because some classes will have final papers or exams that count for your entire grade. The best thing you can do is to find some French students in your classes to help you through the daunting process.

Haley: I'd say the course load is less, in terms of work you're expected to turn in, but I think the French professors have higher standards/expectations of students. If your professor gives you a certain formula or plan to follow on your essay, do it. If you're unsure, ask the professor or a classmate. Most classes I've taken have had two assignments during the semester and one exam at the end. Sometimes those assignments are written-in class exams, sometimes papers, sometimes oral presentations.

Oh, and say good-bye to multiple choice tests. I haven't encountered a single one except in my EDUCO grammar class.

Mallory: The course load is not as intense as that at many American universities, but the French system takes time some getting used to. Assignments and expectations differ slightly. EDUCO can help you get acquainted by providing tutors and help sessions.

What are the classes like compared to the US?

Zach: The classes are mostly lecture based, and many of them are 3 hours long. Some do not put any emphasis on student participation or attendance, but it is still incredibly important to stay on top of your work. Essays in France follow a very

specific format that you need to follow. Once again, befriending other French students makes these differences more manageable.

Haley: The classes are a lot more lecture-professor based than those in the US. Three hours of note-taking with a fifteen minute pause in the middle. The French also like to make it seem as if they just want you to regurgitate information, this is not the case, they also really appreciate analysis. And the French kid you are sitting next to will probably take five times as many notes as you do; it's okay, they copy down every single word the professor says.

Mallory: The classes are usually lecture-based and can be as long as 3 or 4 hours. Not all professors use PowerPoints or slides. There are usually fewer assignments and exams, so your grade will come from only two or three assignments.

Sophie: Be prepared to sit through three-hour blocks of classes. All classes are about 3 hours a week, and may only meet once a week, which makes it difficult to get to know your classmates. The professors usually lecture straight from their notes without PowerPoint presentations, so getting used to the format takes a bit of time.

How long will it take my grades to transfer?

Haley: This is a process of several steps: first you take the class, then you take your exams, then your professors take ages to grade the exams, then the grades are given to EDUCO, then EDUCO sends them to your home school's study abroad office, then the office reports them, then when you return you sometimes have to do follow-up paperwork to finalize the transfer/credit approval (this really depends on which school you come from). My first semester grades were received by EDUCO by the end of January, but it took Tulane several weeks (months?) to put them into the system.

L'équipe d'EDUCO remercie les étudiants qui ont élaboré ces FAQ.

Zach Siegel

Haley Norris

Mallory Stellato

Sophie Mou

Amy Yeh