



ERASMUS TRIP REPORT

Partner University: EHESS
Semester: Summer 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

Congratulations, if you're reading this, you've already made up your mind and think of an Erasmus exchange semester, and I can only encourage you to follow through, because it will bring you memories you won't forget. When planning an exchange semester, choosing the right destination is essential. The AWI maintains partnerships with many top economics departments, and one of them is the EHESS in Paris, which stands out for its excellence in the social sciences. For me personally, there were several reasons for choosing the EHESS. First, you gain access to one of the most prestigious universities for social sciences in France, which you'll feel immediately on the new Campus Condorcet in the north of Paris. Second, you're enrolled in the Master Sciences économiques et sociales, a joint programme run by the EHESS, Université Paris Dauphine, and PSL, which lets you take up to three courses per semester at the Paris School of Economics (PSE) as well. This gives you access to some of the most renowned economics institutions in France and Europe at a high level of quality (courses are open only to master students, and many seminars are effectively taught at PhD level). If you're taking the Development Track in Heidelberg, there are plenty of courses in economic history and economic development, and a strong offering of Public Choice courses too at the PSE and EHESS. And then there's the cultural side: Paris is a vibrant city that I think everyone should experience at least once, and if you want to improve your French, it's definitely the right choice. I was there during my 4th semester, so in the summer term of 2026 (January-May).

2. PREPARATION AND TRAVEL

Preparing for this exchange is a bit more involved than for other universities, at least compared with my previous exchange at the University of Bergen. First, once you're accepted, the EHESS will send you a pre-registration link, where you again have to fill out a form with your personal details and more importantly provide evidence, via your school transcript or a language certificate, that your French is at the required level. The administrative and language is primarily French, and only individual lectures are taught in English. As part of the application, you also propose a research project, which forms the basis of your admission to the EHESS. Ideally, this project matches the topic of your master's thesis, since you'll be assigned a professor as an advisor closely aligned with your research. **It's worth noting that the research project matters most for the EHESS's own master's students, whose programmes are always structured around it, for exchange students it carries less weight, but you should still have a clear idea of what you're interested in and write it in the form.** The admission process itself is lengthy. The EHESS summer term officially runs from February to June, but that says nothing about when your actual courses start. Especially if, like me, you also want to take courses at the PSE. The PSE's courses start in mid-January, about a month earlier, and courses offered by other PSL institutions can start earlier or run later than June. So it's important to plan for this and choose your courses in advance, so you know when you need to arrive in Paris (most courses have a mandatory attendance, with an attendance sheet to sign each session). For the summer term, the admission letter typically arrives around the first week of December. Once you have it and have been given access to your EHESS email account, I recommend contacting the professors whose courses you want to take (for instance at the PSE) directly. They have full discretion here and can accept or decline you. Once they accept you, you'll need to register yourself at the second institution, whether that's the PSE or PSL. After all this administration, you're ready to travel: if you live in Heidelberg, I'd recommend taking the TGV/ICE to Paris via Karlsruhe or Mannheim, booked early, it costs around €40. In my case, I started in January with courses at the PSE, which is on Campus Jourdan in the south of Paris. When planning your

courses, keep in mind that the PSE and the EHESS are about 45 minutes apart via metro line 4. The professors at the PSE were very helpful and supported me in registering there. If you'll be at the PSE often, I'd recommend getting a library card for Campus Jourdan (around €40, valid for one year): it gives you access to the library and two others in the PSL network, and it also works as a badge for entering the Campus Jourdan building. Without one, you either have to wait for a student or professor to let you in, or ring the bell, show ID to security, and fill out a guest form.

3. ACCOMMODATION

If you're taking many courses at the PSE, I'd definitely recommend applying to the Cité Internationale, a student housing campus in the south of Paris, right by Campus Jourdan. The requirements to get in are fairly strict: you'll need recommendation letters from professors, a motivation letter, a CV, and your project proposal, but if you're accepted, you'll have a nice place for only €300–500 a month. Neither the EHESS nor the PSE provide student housing themselves, and neither partners with CROUS, the official student housing provider in France, so finding affordable housing can be difficult. I ended up going with Paris Attitude, a private company that makes it relatively easy to rent an apartment for a longer stay, but it's correspondingly expensive. At least that was my experience, since I only received my EHESS admission letter in December and had to move in already by mid-January. If you look early and are confident about your admission, you should be able to find something on the private market for less than the €960 I paid. Being open to commuting can also cut your housing costs considerably. You should be aware of scams especially when looking on Facebook. In the picture you will also find some other websites listed that are more trustworthy (provided information by Campus France).



4. UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

I took most of my courses at the PSE, where I followed two seminars 1. "Economic History in Pre- and Post-Colonial Eras" and 2. "Monetary and Financial History", plus the lecture "Ageing and Public Choice." At the EHESS, I took the seminar "Histoire du travail." Seminars are generally small, with 10–25 people, and the classroom layout at the PSE can feel a bit like being back in school. In many seminars you're expected to submit a weekly summary or set of critical points on the upcoming session's topic or readings, which you then discuss in class, professors actively encourage this, and it often counts toward a participation grade. Overall, I found the level of teaching very high, and in some respects better than in Heidelberg. The professors seemed genuinely engaged and invested in their students, which created a positive learning environment, and you meet many French as well as Italian and Spanish students who are open, helpful, and reliable partners for group projects. Assessment varied by course: for "Economic History in Pre- and Post-Colonial Eras," I had to submit two one-

page reviews of academic papers, covering only the key points, plus a two-page research proposal. For “Monetary and Financial History” and “Histoire du travail,” I had to submit a proposal or seminar paper (up to 15 pages), with only a limited, preliminary version of the analysis section. For “Ageing and Public Choice,” the assessment was a one-hour exam (make sure you check the exam date early, so it doesn’t clash with other EHESS exams or the start of the summer break). The PSE lists its courses as worth only 3 or 4 ECTS on its own website, but once they’re recorded at the EHESS you receive 6 ECTS for each, and Heidelberg transfers them on the same basis.

5. DAILY LIFE AND SOCIALIZING

What does a typical day look like? Courses usually run in 90-minute blocks, often more than once a day, so the timetable can feel quite full even though you’re only taking three or four courses. For me, living in Montmartre, a typical Tuesday looked like this: 7:00 — wake up, have breakfast, get ready. 8:00 — leave the house and take metro line 4 to Porte d’Orléans, then walk about 8 minutes to Campus Jourdan, arriving around 8:45. Some time in the student common room, chatting with friends and classmates. 9:15 until 10:45 — first seminar, Monetary and Financial History, discussing that week’s reading and questions from the previous week. 11:00 until 12:30 — Ageing and Public Choice, then lunch with friends, either right at Campus Jourdan or at the CROUS cafeteria at the Cité. 14:00 until 15:30 — second Monetary and Financial History session. 15:30 until 17:00 — some study time in the library (you are allowed to take your normal bag with you ;) , sth. we will hopefully learn in Heidelberg someday) before heading home. On nice days, I’d often get off the metro two stops early and walk home through Montmartre, stopping at my favourite bakery to pick up “une tradi” (short for “une baguette tradition”). All in all, I’d say the thing that mattered most to the people around me was the long lunch break, it’s practically sacred for many Parisians, a moment to meet up at a local café, sit outside no matter the weather, and just talk, whether about the seminar you just had or life in general, or play cards together while the city carries on around you.

6. LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Paris is overwhelming at first (if you’ve never been before), it’s a city full of things to see. Among the museums I visited were the Louvre, the Musée de l’Orangerie, the Montmartre Museum, and the Musée d’Orsay along with sights like the Seine, Notre-Dame, Sainte-Chapelle, the Grand Palais, the Petit Palais, the parks, and Sacré-Cœur, to name just a few. I’d recommend visiting while you’re still under 25, since museums and many other cultural sites are free to enter at that age. But if Paris alone isn’t enough, the rest of France is right there waiting. Some highlights for me were Rennes, Mont-Saint-Michel, and the Château de Fontainebleau (closer to Paris than Versailles, and much less crowded) as well as Reims, only an hour away by train, and a trip to the Auvergne region and Clermont-Ferrand. All of these made for slower, quieter getaways, which I found to be a nice contrast to the pace of the city. It’s also worth remembering that Paris isn’t France: especially around Easter, tourist crowds flood the city, and Parisians themselves are quite different from French people living in smaller towns or villages. If you want to experience the “real” France, I’d definitely recommend seeing more of the country beyond Paris, and the good news is you’ll have the chance to. Both the EHESS and the PSE have a break during the semester, which is a perfect opportunity to plan a trip with friends or family.

7. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Looking back, most of the real challenges of this exchange were logistical rather than academic. The admission process itself was demanding: alongside the standard paperwork, you need to prove your French is at the required level and submit a research project proposal, all within a fairly lengthy procedure. My advice is to start gathering your transcript and language certificate early, and to have a clear sense of your research interests well before you’re asked to align them with a thesis topic.

A second challenge was the mismatch between the different institutions’ calendars. The EHESS’s summer term officially runs from February to June, but that has little to do with when your actual courses start, the PSE begins in mid-January, and other PSL institutions can start earlier or run later still. If you don’t check each institution’s specific start dates before booking your travel and finalising your course selection, you risk arriving too late or leaving too early. The solution is simply to confirm course dates directly with each institution as early as possible. The biggest challenge for me personally was housing. Because my EHESS admission letter only arrived in early December and I needed to move to Paris by mid-January, I had far too little time to apply to subsidised student housing like the Cité Internationale, whose application (recommendation letters, motivation letter, CV, project proposal) needs to be started well in advance and neither the EHESS nor the PSE offer direct student housing or

a CROUS partnership. I ended up renting through a private agency, Paris Attitude, at a higher cost than I would have liked (€960 a month). If you can, start your housing search the moment you feel reasonably confident about your admission, rather than waiting for the official letter, and stay open to commuting a bit further, since that alone can bring the cost down substantially.

Finally, a smaller but recurring nuisance was getting into the Campus Jourdan building without a badge, without one, you have to wait for someone to let you in or ring for security and fill out a guest form each time. Getting a PSL library card early on solves this, since it doubles as your building access badge.

8. REFLECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this exchange was one of the best decisions I made during my studies, and I'd encourage anyone considering it to go for it. Academically, the level of teaching at both the EHESS and the PSE was excellent and, in respects, higher than what I was used to in Heidelberg: seminars are small, discussion-based, and led by professors who are genuinely engaged with their students. You'll also build a strong international network, beyond French classmates, I met many Italian and Spanish students who became reliable partners for group work and good friends.

If I were to give advice to a future exchange student, it would be this: apply for housing (whether the Cité Internationale or the private market) as early as you possibly can, and don't wait for your official admission letter to start looking; double- and triple-check the start and exam dates for every institution you're enrolled with, since the EHESS, PSE, and other PSL schools don't run on the same calendar; get a PSL library card early if you'll be spending time at Campus Jourdan; and if you're travelling from Heidelberg, book your TGV or ICE tickets via Karlsruhe or Mannheim well ahead of time to get the roughly €40 fare.

Beyond the academics, take the cultural side seriously. Paris will keep you busy on its own but don't let the city become the whole of your experience. Use the break, and any long weekends, to see more of France: quieter, slower destinations like the Auvergne, Mont-Saint-Michel, or Fontainebleau are a great contrast to Parisian life and give you a fuller picture of the country. And don't underestimate the small things, the long lunch breaks, the café culture, the ordinary rhythm of daily life, because those are often what you'll remember most fondly once the semester is over.

Wichtige Apps für deinen Aufenthalt in Frankreich

 BlaBlaCar

 Lydia



MisterGoodBeer

