

Study Abroad Experience Report

INSEEC Grande École – Paris, France- 2025-2026

1. University and Study Program

I studied two semesters at INSEEC Grande École in Paris, France as a visiting bachelor's student: the winter semester 2025/26 from September to December and the summer semester 2026 from January to April. The year abroad was a mandatory component of the International Business degree programme and was funded through Erasmus. INSEEC is a private business school where many students study either in a dual system known as "alternance" or on a full-time basis.

In the first semester I chose the Luxury Brand Management track and in the second semester Geopolitics. The time abroad complemented my main studies with a total of 60 ECTS credits; no degree was obtained at INSEEC.

2. Courses Taken and Recommendations

At INSEEC, students choose a specialisation at the beginning of each semester. In the first semester the options were Finance, Luxury Brand Management and Digital Media Design; in the second semester Marketing, Geopolitics and Finance were available. Each semester consists of around 12 courses. In the first semester I took courses such as Luxury Brand History and Sustainable Management, and in the second semester, with a different major, Geopolitical Changes and Corporate Finance. All courses are taught in English.

Since the courses do not take place on a fixed weekly schedule, the workload feels manageable at first. Towards the end of the semester, however, the timetable becomes very demanding, with almost daily long teaching days sometimes running from 8:30 in the morning until 7:30 in the evening. The schedule changes weekly and is often communicated at short notice, sometimes even including an entirely free week in between. The academic level varies considerably from course to course. Many subjects cover topics rather superficially yet still require numerous group assignments, presentations and exams.

3. Preparation and Application

The first step was the nomination by Trier University of Applied Sciences, after which students apply directly to INSEEC. The required documents were a CV in English, current transcripts and proof of English language proficiency. One important piece of advice: patience is essential throughout the entire process. The administration at INSEEC can be chaotic at times, and the best approach is to take it in a relaxed, French way and simply enjoy Paris in the meantime.

4. Accommodation and Housing Search

I lived privately with a local family. In general, there are several options to consider. University student residences such as the Cité Internationale Universitaire are affordable and highly recommended, though the application process is competitive. Private student residences are slightly more expensive but tend to offer good value for money, often including study spaces and gym facilities. Shared apartments are always an option. Intercultural housing arrangements are particularly worthwhile, both as a way to save money

and because they offer social connections outside of university, often with local families who have a spare room. Finding a private flat to live in alone can be very difficult, and hidden utility costs frequently arise on top of the rent. For a shorter stay of around four months, an Airbnb can also be a practical solution worth considering.

5. Costs

Through the Erasmus programme, no tuition fees apply. The biggest expense is accommodation, which ranges from around 500 to 1,000 euros per month or more depending on the type of housing. Groceries amount to roughly 400 to 500 euros per month, and the annual Navigo card for public transport costs just under 400 euros. For meals out, good lunch deals can often be found for 10 to 15 euros, while evenings and bars tend to be more expensive. An affordable alternative is the Crous canteen network, which operates across the city and is open to students. INSEEC itself does not have a canteen, only a small cafeteria with irregular opening hours, though there are several restaurants and supermarkets nearby.

Paris is expensive and affordable at the same time. Numerous museums, events and concerts are free or very inexpensive, and discount supermarkets are available throughout the city. Overall it is important to plan with a realistic budget, especially since there is so much to experience.

6. Daily Student Life and Leisure Activities

Student life at INSEEC is very irregular. Intensive weeks alternate with free days or even entire free weeks, and group work, presentations and exams pile up particularly towards the end of the semester. In the first semester the cohort consisted almost entirely of Erasmus students with very few French students among them. In the second semester a small number of students from the alternance system joined the courses, though they were only present at the university for about one week per month.

In my free time I joined a sports club, which turned out to be a wonderful way to meet people outside of university, including some particularly welcoming French locals. Erasmus organises many events and activities, but Paris itself offers countless possibilities beyond that. What made the experience truly special was exploring the city together with friends from university, fellow Erasmus students and people met along the way.

7. Positive Experiences

The year abroad contributed enormously to personal growth and intercultural competence. Paris as a city offers unparalleled cultural richness and seemingly endless possibilities, and the international friendships and networks formed along the way are of lasting value. Even at university there were things to gain: despite its shortcomings, INSEEC introduced a different academic system, and the frequent presentations in particular were a valuable opportunity to develop confidence and communication skills.

8. Negative Experiences

INSEEC offers very little in terms of student community or networking opportunities, which means that a typical university experience is largely absent. Meeting French students is difficult, especially at the beginning, as courses consist almost exclusively of Erasmus

students. Beyond that, finding a sense of belonging in a large city can be challenging in general. The inconsistent academic level, the organisationally chaotic administration and the last-minute timetable changes all make planning ahead considerably harder.

9. Recommendations

Anyone planning a semester in Paris should come prepared with patience, both for the bureaucracy and for the housing search, which should be started as early as possible. Joining a sports club or society is one of the best ways to meet new people and connect with locals. It is worth making use of Erasmus events while also exploring the city independently. A realistic budget is essential, especially for rent and public transport, and it pays off to actively research and book affordable leisure activities such as museum visits and events in advance.

Studying abroad in Paris was an extraordinarily valuable experience that I would recommend to anyone. What stays with you beyond the academic lessons is something harder to put into words: Paris has a way of teaching you to genuinely embrace life and enjoy every moment to the fullest, and that is a lesson that lasts long after the semester ends.