**Student Exchange Program to Grenoble, France**  
**Institut National Polytechnique de Grenoble**

I would like to begin this introduction to Grenoble, INPG by saying that this will not be as detailed as the rest of the contributions by other students. I tried not to be too detailed so that the value of discovering and learning things on your own may still be there. I will provide a good introduction to Grenoble and what to expect, if you need more details, you may email me at leslieyeo@nus.edu.sg

Hope this will be useful to you!

**Why Grenoble?**

Probably the 5th or 6th biggest city of France, it is located South-East of France, where the famous and magnificent French Alps are located. It is smaller than Singapore though, about half the size of Singapore. It is 3 hours by train (TGV) from Paris, Gare de Lyon. The city is cosy and easy to get around, people are friendly and warm, much better than Parisians. It is a modern, clean and safe city. More important to note, Grenoble is considered pretty much as a university town. Expect to meet students from all over the world. Asians are abundant over there, you will meet many from Korea, Japan and China. Most go to Grenoble to attend the popular language courses. Hence, go to Grenoble and enjoy a mélange of culture and languages!

More information on Grenoble as a city can be found at:  

**Why INPG?**

INPG is a group of 6 engineering schools. These schools are highly specialized and prestigious in France. They are known as Grandes Ecoles, “grand schools”. The difference between Grandes Ecoles and the Universities is the entry requirements. There is a tough entry exam for the French to enter the Grandes Ecoles and it takes 2 years to prepare for this exam. Therefore, expect top notch knowledge gained at INPG!

Also, if you’re a Chemical engineering student, INPG is perhaps the best choice in terms of module mapping!

More information on INPG can be found at:  
Before deciding on INPG

1. Language Considerations

Almost all courses in INPG are conducted in French. The lecturers can speak English but not fantastic. Tutorials questions and exams are in French too. You can approach the Professors for English version of notes but do not take that for granted, it really depends on individual Professors. I took 6 modules when I was there, and only one professor was kind enough to provide English notes.

Therefore, ensure that your French is of a certain standard before deciding on INPG. You should have at least successfully completed French 3 at NUS. There are free French lessons in INPG though, but you may not have the time and interest to attend these lessons. I would advise that there is no need to attend these classes as long as you have attained at least a French level 3 at NUS. Free up the time for more travelling perhaps?

2. Financial Considerations

Standard of living in Grenoble is not very high. But of course, it’s expensive if you want to compare to Singapore. Compared to Paris and other parts of Europe, I would say Grenoble is not too bad.

Estimated Monthly Basic Expenditure (Assuming conversion of 1 euro : 2 SGD):

- Accommodation: $450 – $700
- Food: $100 - $200
- Transport: $50

Total: $700-$1050

3. Climate Considerations

Because Grenoble is surrounded by mountains, it is basically like a valley. I was there from summer to winter, so I experienced both the extremes. In summer, temperatures can go up to about 30 degrees. Going out in shorts and teeshirts is not problem. In winter, temperature can go down to minus 10 degrees on an average. It snows quite abit in Grenoble.

4. Study Considerations

First of all, prepare for a culture shock when you get to France or any part of Europe. In terms of workload, it will be a breeze over there for us NUS students. The French
do not focus so much on grades. Therefore, it will be a good break from the kind of education system we get in Singapore.

In the 6 modules I did over at INPG, I had no such things as homework or assignments. Not to mention projects! You will just be graded by one final examination, which in my opinion, is simple compared to NUS standards. Always have the mentality that you are on SEP for an experience you cannot get in Singapore.

5. VISA preparations

We will require a 6 months visa and this can be easily obtained at the French Embassy. It will cost about $200 to make the visa. Visa documents need to be prepared before you can apply for accommodation, so it is important to get it done first. It takes about 5 working days to obtain the visa if you are a Singaporean. For other citizens, please check on this so as to get your visa on time.

More information on what documents to bring when applying visa can be found at: http://www.ambafrance-sg.org/article.php3?id_article=953

6. Lodging Considerations

There is this organization known as CROUS which helps to find hostels and residences for foreign students. It is pretty effective in allocating hostels to foreign students. As I mentioned, Grenoble, being university town, there are many types of rooms available for students. There are also private apartments that you can rent. I do not have much information on private apartments since I lived in a school residence.

The link for CROUS is http://www.crous-grenoble.fr/

I strongly recommend the residence where I lived in for the 6 months. It is called Residence Houille Blance d’INPG. C’est tres tres bien!

Here is the link: http://www.rhbgrenoble.com/

RHB is a popular residence because it is new, comfortable and affordable. So do make sure to make your reservations in advance. It is high in demand! There are good facilities there, swimming pool, gym, pool table, reading room, games room etc. It is near campus also, about 10 minutes by bus.

I lived in a petite studio, with another person. There is toilet and kitchen in the room. Each of us paid about $480 a month.
**In Grenoble Itself**

1. **Setting up a French bank account**

Commonly asked question- a huge concern of many. It is extremely useful if you have an account there because many transactions can be made through this account. If you use a Singapore account, you will incur many unnecessary transaction fees. I made payments for my rents, phonebills, travel tickets etc through my French account.

How to go about doing it? There are a few methods but I think the easiest and cheapest way is to get a bank demand draft here in Singapore before you leave, go over there to any French bank (Societe Generale is good), and open the account by depositing the amount into it.

It takes about 1-2 weeks to get the account running, so do bring along enough cash to last you till the account is ready. A safe amount would be 2000 euros.

2. **Getting a French telephone number**

A necessity since you will be calling one another and your new friends there pretty often. There are pre paid cards that are easily available at any TABAC stores in France. There is also this plan known as Forfait Bloque where you choose a talk plan and pay monthly, just like how you would do so in Singapore. I paid about $28 per month for about a talk time of 50 minutes. The plan comes along with a phone. I bought my phone for just 1 euro! You can get such plans at any phone company over there, like SFR, Orange or The PhoneHouse.

3. **Getting around in Grenoble**

The two main public transports there are tram and buses. Tram operates till about 1am while buses operate only till about 9pm, except Thursday, Fridays and Saturdays, they operate till late. They serve pretty much the entire city, quite convenient.

Get their ‘EZ-link’ monthly for about $50, and enjoy unlimited rides on their trams and buses. You can get this at TAG outlets, on campus too.

More information on the public transport system can be found at: [http://www.semitag.com/](http://www.semitag.com/)

4. **INPG matters**

The people that take care of foreign students are the International Relations Office and Bureau Internationale, which is a student body which organizes orientations and activities for the foreign students.

5. **Entertainment in Grenoble**

There will be many parties known as ‘soirees’ organized by the bureau internationale for students. These are essentially drinking parties and little dancing. The French don’t drink much hard liquor, just beer and wine. Do not expect big clubs like Zouk over in Grenoble, there is nothing close to that. Parties will probably at school halls or some people’s house.

There are many small pubs and bars for youngsters in the city centre. Shopping and movies are common around there as well.

Just like other parts of Europe, the nightlife may be quite quiet and for us Singaporeans, this is something we must get used to. Enjoy the tranquility and peace there while you can!

6. **Travelling out of Grenoble to other parts of Europe.**

The TGV brings you out of Grenoble conveniently. Train a Grand Vitesse, the national train system of France, high speed and comfortable. Remember to purchase a carte 12-25 at 49 euros, this is a discount card that helps you save money for future rides! TGV can bring to travel around France. Also, it can bring you to places out of France like Milan, Brussels, Switzerland, Spain, etc…

Of course the journey would be long, so sometimes taking flights will be more practical.

Tickets for TGV can be easily purchased online at: [http://www.voyages-sncf.com/](http://www.voyages-sncf.com/)

There is no airport in Grenoble, the best way is to fly out of Lyon St Exupery Airport which is 1 hour by bus from the train station at Grenoble. From there, you can catch budget airlines such as Ryanair, Easyjet to other parts of Europe. For more flight options, you can also take TGV to Paris, and then use Charles de Gaulle airport.