

Student's Feedback Trip to Provence

June 2008

Andreas Minne

Thank you for a wonderful trip. I will do the feedback day by day:

Sunday:

Early morning, not much to do about that. The guided tour was the best on the whole trip. Not because the guide itself was better than the other guides, but since we stayed there for 3 days, one had time to explore Aix en Provence with the glasses she provided (old town, "new" town, the fountains and so on) which gave a lot to the feeling.

Monday:

Interesting with the vitrification process and nice weather at Pont du Gard. It would have been nice if we could have been outside more at Visiatome.

Tuesday:

The bus tour was interesting since it's more dynamic than a static presentation. Looking forward to the massive ITER. Lourmarin and Lubéron were great. A pity we didn't have more time to spend there, like dinner for example.

Wednesday:

Eurocopter was really nice since we could go and watch the production. Just one thing missing: having a ride in one of the helicopters of course! The presentation at Sophia Antipolis was really disappointing. I had hoped to see more of the city, rather than just sitting there for 1-2 hours.

Thursday:

I was sick most of the day so I don't know if Grasse was good.

Friday:

The observatory was quite cool to see.

Other things:

- Much time of the trip were spent travelling by car. I don't know that can be decreased somehow, just an observation.
- Since we went a lot to nuclear facilities we got a good picture of the French way of getting power, but maybe it was a tad too much.
- I would have liked if there were some interactive parts in the program. Most things were passive like the tours and presentations.
- The food overall was delicious. Incredibly good!
- 14 people on this trip was a good number. You could have everyone in a group without getting anonymous, and it was still possible to have smaller groups doing things by themselves.
- I would have liked it if you spoke more French!

Best regards and thanks again for this lovely trip, Andreas

Ann-Marie Ejlertsson

I would really like to thank the French embassy and especially Emeric Mudry and Charles Caure for putting together and organizing and this trip.

Even if some of the sights were not really in my field it has been extremely interesting and inspiring to go. I was totally amazed that so many people would take of their time and show us around and take time to inform of what they are doing.

Going to Cadarache was for me the best of all the activities, I found it very interesting according to my education as well as private. I think that if I hade gone on a trip like this earlier I would even have had chosen a different field, I would have studied less construction and more physics. It was absolutely great to have been able to go there.

Also going to Eurocopter was fantastic, it is cool to actually se on the field how things are done and how much work there is behind, not only when designing but when constructing.

Mane was for me a surprise, I did not think there was such a big industry behind aromatic factories.

Unfortunately I didn't get so much out at Sophia Antipolis. I was very surprised that I have never heard of he place before, but I have fond out more about it since I came home cause even if I did not really get what was going on there while we where there it made me curious and I have spoken a lot to people about it since I came home, and apparently it is well known. Maybe not that well by people my age but when it comes to my parents generation everyone seems to know about it.

Seeing the observatory in Nice was cool.

Everything was well planned, it has been interesting meeting others from different universities and different educational backgrounds. The mixture of scientific sites and the more touristy bits made a great combination, not too laid back nor too heavy.

It is going to be cool to go back to school and tell everyone of this trip. I hope I can inspire some students a bit because this trip inspired me a lot. Trips like this is something that I wish more students would have the opportunity to do. I feel like I am going back to school more inspired and willing to work harder.

Once again, thanks for a great trip, fantastic experiences, good food and great company!

Ann-Marie Ejlertsson
Student at LTH

Carl Gillblad

Some time has now past since the trip ended and I am now ready to put feelings into words. It was five hectic days with many new events to interpret and think about. Many of us (the students) did not know what to expect in advance which made each study visit a little more exciting. From the beginning to the very end of the trip the atmosphere among the students and the two leaders was very relaxed and comfortable. I would like to thank our leaders Charles Caure and Emeric Mudry for welcoming to the trip in such nice manner. As for the study visits, they were very thought provoking and interesting. The visits to Marcoule and Cadarache were enlightening since I did not know that much about French and international advancements in fission and fusion. The visit to Eurocopter was also nice, it was "cool" to see the assembly line of the different choppers. The balance between cultural and scientific visits was good since the purpose of the trip was not merely to show one side of Provence. The visits to Pont du Gard and Fragonard in Grasse were good examples of this.

When it came to food , the meals were terrific. We had delicious dinners with good wine every evening which gave us all a power boost for our minds.

Overall I had a great time and I am glad that I went on this trip. I highly recommend it.
Best Regards.

Carl Gillblad
Third year engineering student at KTH, Stockholm

Cécilia Norgren

You wanted some feedback, and here it comes (better late than never I hope).

The visits I enjoyed the most was Cadarache and Eurocopter. Cadarache because we got to see and hear a little bit about the Tore Supra (fusion is such an interesting field) and Eurocopter because it was such a complete visit! Those are places I'd really like to come back and work at. Maybe I would've liked to see something other than the spent fuel storage facility at Cadarache. It was almost the same as at Marocule, but not as cool.

Marocule was also interesting, and educational. First to hear about the waste storage and then to see how it was done.

It would've been nice if we had gotten to see something more of Sophia, maybe visit a company, because it seems like an interesting. As it was now it was only a lot of numbers and praise to the founder.

The Mann perfume factory was nice stop. I like tours of any kind, and we got to see so many parts of the process. I think its good to keep a visit of this kind even though it wasnt my field of study, and it wasnt purely tourism either.

The astronomy visit the last day was also a good one although a little stressed for obvious reasons.

As for the visits to Lourmarin, Fragonard, tour of Aix-en-Provence etc., they gave the days a good mix, with more hard core visits in the morning and cultural in the afternoon. That was a really good set up!

Then I would like to say that the good reception everywhere and nice meals with good company (I loved the food) lent the trip a golden edge!

All in all it left me even more eager to go to France next year!

Best regards,

Cecilia

Elias Odelstad

In June this year I had the privilege of participating in a trip to the Provence Region in France organized by the French Embassy in Sweden and the Swedish-French Association for Research (AFSR). The trip took place June 8-13 and included visits to scientific facilities and high-tech industries as well as some historical sites. After the trip we were asked to give some feedback about the trip, so here it is.

We arrived at the airport in Nice around 10:30 in the morning on Sunday the 8th of June. After a quick lunch we took the bus to Aix en Provence, where we stayed for three nights. The hotel was really good; the rooms were nice and we got a decent breakfast each morning. The afternoon of our arrival we were taken on a guided tour of the town, which was both interesting and practical since it in addition to an appreciation of the history of Aix en Provence it also helped us to find our way around the town, at least in the vicinity of the hotel where we were staying.

The following days we visited first Marcoule (Monday) and then Cadarache (Tuesday). At these sites we were shown how the nuclear waste was handled. This was really interesting, especially since we in Sweden have chosen another solution and we now got the chance to compare the two methods. We even got to enter the rooms under which the waste was stored, which I thought was quite exciting. At Cadarache we also got to visit an experimental fusion reactor and that was really fascinating.

Somehow, we also found the time to visit some historical sites on these days. The first one was an old roman aqueduct named "Pont du gard" and the second one was a castle from the 15th century. These visits were quite interesting as well, but I would have liked a guide to show us the aqueduct and maybe tell us a bit of how it was built. We were a group of engineering students after all.

On Wednesday morning we visited Eurocopter. I thought it was really fun to see the assembly lines where the helicopters were put together. I think we all felt like real V.I.P:s when we walked around on the factory floor in our jackets and suits.

In the afternoon we transferred to Nice, but on the way we stopped to visit Sophia Antipolis, a big science park located on the outskirts of Nice. The visit was rather short and we spent the entire time sitting in a conference room listening to a presentation of the park and its history. I must admit that I would have preferred a tour of the area and maybe a visit to some of the companies located there.

On Thursday we went to Grasse to see both a modern and an old perfume factory. At the modern factory we had a fairly ambitious guide who showed us what seemed like the entire factory and the process of making perfume, from the orgy of smells in the workshop to the air-conditioned offices and laboratories of the R&D department. I felt that it was a little too much information for me to take in, being that my interest in perfumes is restricted to the ones who wear them. However, some of my travel mates seemed very appreciative of this visit and I must say that the smells of the workshop was an interesting experience. The visit of the old factory was similar, except that the smells were not as overwhelming and our new guide didn't sweat quite as profusely as the previous one had done. It was interesting to be able to compare the production techniques of the past and the present in this way.

The last day, the day of our departure, we visited a set of observatories on a hill above Nice. Since I am very interested in astronomy I really liked this visit. I only regret that we didn't go there at night so we could look through the telescopes. That would have been really cool.

In general, I thought the trip was very rewarding and I don't regret for a minute that I participated. To be able to visit these sites as we did is really an opportunity of a lifetime. At several sites, particularly Marcoule and Cadarache, the responsible people actually joined us for lunch. This way

we got a further possibility to discuss what they had shown us and get to know the people who worked at the various sites. I also feel compelled to mention the outstanding quality of the food we were served at most places. As it turned out, not only did we get to learn a lot about the technological research of the region, but we also got to know the cuisine of Provence. This is mostly thanks to our excellent hosts from the French Embassy, Charles Caure and Emeric Mudry. Not only were they our gastronomical guides, but their relentless commitment to make sure that we all had a good time was a key ingredient to the so successful outcome of this trip. I sincerely hope that future trips of this nature will be fortunate enough to have such competent management.

Finally, I just want to add that this trip also gave us the chance to get to know students of the same subjects from other Swedish universities. The group that I traveled with was a great mix of people from all over Sweden and we had so much fun together. I hope this sort of trips will go on so that others might have the same opportunity in the future.

Erika Lätt Nyboe

First I would like to say that it was a very well organized trip with very pleasant participants. The first day at Cadarache was interesting, but it would be fun to speak to an engineer that works there. The second day at Cadarache was also interesting, I would want some more information about the highest technology. The diner at the castle was very pleasant with tasty food! The both hotels were very nice with good service and good breakfast in a central location. The visit at the factory Eurocopter was the best meeting of them all. It was very interesting to look at the factory but once again it would be fun to see what kind of work the engineers did.

The visit at the small town with the “unforgettable” name, that I’ve forgot, was very boring and I never understood the great thing about this little “technology city”. The man that held the presentation never told us what the different companies did there and what kind of research they studied. As a swedish student I’m interested to learn more about the different kinds of job and the newest technology and progresses. The visit at Grasse was also very fun though it smell terribly at the perfume factory. I liked a lot that we were able to watch the whole procedure from the flower to the Chanel-bottle. The two restaurants in Nice that served “typical french food” was really nice and it was very interesting to taste many various plates. The last visit at the observatory was interesting in an historical view but the technology itself wasn’t that thrilling, however the view of the city was beautiful!

I like the small trips we did to different small cities, it’s always nice to know the surroundings and its culture. The drivers were very kind and fun to talk with. I think it would also be fun to see what kind of job the engineers in France do. All the participants at the trip were positive and easy to spend time with. I think the organizers did a perfect job, there were no trouble at all during the whole stay and everyone enjoyed it a lot!!

Fredrik Runeus

My name is Fredrik Runeus and I am studying Engineering Physics at Lund Univeristy. I had the pleasure to be one of the lucky participants of the trip to Provence organized by the French Embassy. During the trip we had the opportunity visit sites of French high-tech industry. The trip was organized in a nice setting with great food and interesting cultural events. The experiences I gained during this week will stay with me for the rest of my life.

For me as a physician the visits at the nuclear sites Marcoule and Cadarache were the absolute most interesting. Since my specialization will be in the field of nuclear physics it was really impressive to see how much effort the French government puts into nuclear science. Moreover it was really interesting to hear about the innovative French solutions for managing nuclear waste, a topic much discussed in Sweden. After talking to some Swedish researchers at Cadarache I truly got the impression that if one would like work within fission energy France is the place to be.

The other great impression from the journey was the commitment of Charles and Emerique. They really made the trip something extra and in every situation tried to make every minute perfect. They were really convincing in conveying a picture of Provence as a wonderful place to live with great food and culture, proximity to both the sea and mountains and a lot of nice people.

To summarize the trip it was a perfect mix of business and pleasure where I learned to know many new people and interesting things about French science. I would like to thank all the sponsors who made this possible.

Best regards

Fredrik Runeus

Jonas Östlund

Dear friends at the French embassy,

I would like to thank the French embassy in Sweden, Charles Caure and Emeric Mudry, for organising the trip to Provence June 8th to June 13th summer 2008. I am very happy I got the opportunity to participate in this trip and I believe the trip was a success from all aspects. You, Charles and Emeric, have done a superb job planning this trip and you can be proud of what you have achieved.

The visits of French nuclear sites have made me understand how important nuclear energy is to France although there are still some doubts about the environmental impact, and I believe more in the nuclear source of energy than I did before. I was really impressed by the nuclear fuel reprocessing at Marcoule and the efficiency and elegant features of it, such as transmutation and vitrification. The visit at Cadarache was also very interesting and I understand that France have great ambitions concerning nuclear fusion energy. Hopefully I will be alive when a fusion reactor produces more energy than it consumes. The visit of Eurocopter was also interesting. Nice to see the production line. To sum up, all visits were very interesting and relevant and it was a privilege to see things that no ordinary tourists are allowed to see.

The living conditions during the trip were excellent. The meals were impeccable and it was interesting to taste genuine french food and wine. The hotels and mini-bus transports were also good.

Concerning the social aspects, the composition and size of the group of students was good. It was neither too small nor too big. I hope that I will keep up the contact with some of the participants. I would also like to thank you for your enthusiasm during the trip, on the excursions, at the dinners and on the dance floor. We all had a really good time together on this trip. Thank you for teaching me the allumette trick and the game where you push your opponent with two hands.

Since I have never been to the Côte d'Azur before, it was interesting to see the nature here, to see the mountains in the area, to swim in the Mediteranean and to climb a datier palm tree :). I really appreciate the French culture, industry and nature and believe it has many unique features that cannot be found anywhere else.

Hopefully I will have the opportunity to live (in the top of a palm tree?) and work in France in the future, perhaps in Sophia-Antipolis with computer vision. Have a really good summer and thank you for our time together on this trip!

Best regards,
Jonas Östlund

Viola Thomasson

Hi!

My name is Viola Thomasson and I am one of the twelve students from Sweden who got the opportunity to see Provence with the French embassy, June 2008. It really was one of the most amazing trip of my life.

I study Applied physics and electro technology, so I really loved the visits of CEA in Marcoule and Cadarache, especially the fusion reactor in Cadarache was really interesting and fascinating. I like the science behind nuclear technology and might be interested to continue working in that field after I graduate. Also the helicopter factory, Eurocopter was fun to see, all the unfinished helicopters and the techniques of making them. I have never before been especially interested in helicopters, but after this visit, I started to become much more interested in the industry. The Perfume factory was also fascinating to see and so was the visit to the old observatory in Nice. Aside from the outstanding technical and industrial content of the trip, the tour leaders made sure that we had ample opportunities for taking part of French culture, not least the excellent food. Shortly put, it was a really great trip, impeccably organised by Charles Caure and Emeric Mudry. I learnt a lot of things I would never have learnt without this opportunity.

Many thanks to everyone who made the trip possible.

Yours sincerely

Viola Thomasson