I am in Paris getting a tour of the world’s largest startup campus. Station F is home to 1,000 startups along with corporations, investors and organizations. The space spans more than 360,000 square feet.

While the building itself measures 190 ft by 1,017 ft. That makes Station F nearly as long as the Eiffel Tower. A desk here costs $235 on average per month, a figure about half as much as other coworking spaces in Paris. But don’t just call it co-working. Station F hopes to be considered a sort of startup university. And to work here, you have to apply through one of the incubator or startup programs

hosted by various organizations and companies. You see a lot of the biggest tech company names like Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon. But it’s not just tech companies, either. You’ll also find retail, luxury and other types of industries.

This is Homeric. He returned to France in 2015, after living in China as an expat. He’s now working for an augmented reality company called Bear and it’s based in Station F.

France is a small market, we’re only 68 million, but if you find this market you can develop a good SME and have recurrent revenues which will help you finance growth in the U.S. or somewhere else. The goal here isn’t only to create the largest startup campus in the world under one roof, but also, to put France at the forefront of the international startup map. The vision of Station F was backed by Telecom billionaire Xavier Niel, who’s poured $285 million into the project. The space is a former train depot that’s now been designed into three separate sections. The Share space is where events take place, along with private offices and on-site services. It’s hosted the likes of Facebook’s Sheryl Sandburg and French President Emanual Macron. A little bit underground, you have these lockers where people can store their stuff overnight, and they’re along the same lines as where the train tracks used to be.

The middle section is called, Create, where it’s exclusively for startups to work out of, but in true entrepreneur style, that could also mean taking a break sometimes, too. Finally, the Chill zone is home to this Italian restaurant, called La Felicità, it’s considered to be the largest restaurant in Europe.

It’s open to the public, yet its proximity is a perk for with those actually working in Station F. When we ask our startups why they come to Station F, it’s not for being in a beautiful building, it’s not for paying inexpensive prices. It’s actually to be surrounded by 1,000 entrepreneurs. Roxanne is the program director for Station F and helped launch the concept in 2017. Everybody here is selected so we have a certain, kind of, level of entrepreneur that we have on campus. And they love being able to talk to people that have encountered the same difficulties, that have resources, that have contacts, they’re really sharing with each other and I think that’s the main resource that you find here. Station F was born around the same time the French President took office and he emphasized wanted to turn France into a quote, Startup Nation. France now has a lot of the elements necessary to actually create new companies. You have access to a lot of early-stage capital, you have a lot of talent, you have a lot of government support. That’s Ben. He’s a venture capitalist for the firm, SOSV. It’s both a really good networking place, a place where business is done and also a very good symbol of France’s efforts towards startups. But, while the initiative is highly symbolic of the intent for France to take off, whether it proves to be successful or not isn’t necessarily guaranteed. What’s still missing in the ecosystem are things around skills for growth, maybe marketing skills as well, knowledge of international markets. And the last thing that’s also missing I think in the environment is habits and knowledge around exit. A lot of startups are being created, but really the proof comes when you have an exit and most of those exits tend to be M’As, rather than IPOs generally. But Ben says French companies and founders are less familiar with acquisitions. And that m’s Uptin.

Thanks for watching. Do you think Station F can help put France on the international startup map?

Let us know in the comments below and also check out more videos here and here. And we’ll see you next time!