

Finland, Kuopio

University of Eastern Finland

Environmental and Resource Management

5th semester

Report of my semester abroad in Kuopio, Finland:

Preparation

In my opinion, the preparation part was rather easy. The most difficult part was choosing where I wanted to go... After I made my decision, I applied to the University of Eastern Finland (UEF) and two universities in Sweden. There were several information meetings offered at the BTU, where all the necessary information was given on how/where/when to apply. Also the AAA was very helpful, answering all the questions I had.

After I sent my application, it took several weeks until I received an answer. With the confirmation letter from the UEF, I also got a welcome package with lots of information on what I could expect and how I had to proceed.

I also got a student tutor assigned, which helped me a lot! He soon contacted me and already told me much about Kuopio and the student life. He also picked me up at the train station when I arrived and brought me to my apartment, gave me a little tour on campus and always had an open ear when I had a question. He also turned out to be a good friend of mine of the course of the semester.

Accommodation

I applied for accommodation after I received my welcome package. The application was done online, at the local housing company. The process was easy, you could choose between different living areas within the city. I would highly recommend 'Neulamäki' (this is where I stayed), as most exchange students stayed here and it is very easy to meet new people and make friends.

The apartment itself was simple and not super modern, but sufficient. It was possible to borrow survival packages with plates, pots, pans, cutlery, bed sheets, etc... but this was not necessary for me at all. The previous owners of my apartment left everything behind, so my roommates and I didn't have to borrow or buy a single piece. This was not the case for every apartment, I guess I just got lucky.



There was also a bus station right outside, from where it took 10-15 minutes to the city center, and 5-8 minutes to university. Walking to university took approximately 20 minutes.

Studying at my host university

Studying at the UEF is something I experienced as something different than studying at the BTU. First difference: the UEF campus is beautifully located, right next to a lake. But also the courses I took were different. The other participants of my courses were mainly master degree students or other exchange students, unfortunately not many Finnish students. In one of my courses, we did a lab experiment, which took several weeks. Even though it was not my favorite topic, it was definitely nice to experience such an experiment, as I never had



something like that before.

In another course we first learned the basics of the ArcGIS software, and then applied our knowledge on a practical example, where we were supposed to find out the best living area in Kuopio. In my opinion this was very interesting, even though we had to spend a lot of time and effort for this course.

Everyday life and free time

Definitely the highlight of my exchange! I made tons of new friends, many for the rest of my life. I had absolutely fantastic roommates, which made my time in Finland even better. There was a lot to do all the time. The student association organized several trips where one could go to (St. Petersburg, Stockholm, and Lapland). Lapland was probably the nicest place I visited during my time in Finland. You can do and experience things there which you can't back here, like a husky tour and sleds.

But also Kuopio has some stuff to offer. One really nice place is the Kuopio tower, from where you overlook the whole region. This is very beautiful, especially when no clouds are around. Then it is possible to see big parts of the lake landscape which surrounds Kuopio. The lakes are also a nice place to spend time, especially while it is still warm and light outside during late summer and the beginning of fall. We did a kayaking tour to an island within one

of the lakes and slept on the beach, next to a bonfire. A very special experience!



Also walking around in the local forests was a nice experience, especially after we got some snow. The snowy landscape was very beautiful.

A very unfamiliar experience was the darkness. It started to get dark very early and light very late at some point. At some point we only had 4-5 hours of light a day! This was very strange in the beginning and can be challenging, but with the right people around, I got used to it and it wasn't too much of a problem. I am still glad I experienced this for a few weeks.

Another unbelievable spectacle I witnessed were the northern lights. They occurred several times, even in Kuopio. They are absolutely spectacular and something I will never forget.

Finishing off, I really enjoyed my time in Finland! I am very glad I went there, I made friends, I saw things I haven't before and had a great time! I can encourage everyone to go on a semester abroad, no matter what country!