

Report

ERASMUS SEMESTER AT THE TUT IN TAMPERE, FINLAND

Civil Engineering, August 2018 – December 2018

When I first got the idea to study abroad, I knew that I would want to go to a northern country. This is mainly due to the fact that I always liked the social system and organisation of our northern neighbours as well as their culture. Furthermore, I am not really fond of the warmth, so going to Spain or Italy was an instant No for me.

However, what first started as a whim, formed more and more into a real plan. I read a lot about studies abroad and got some information on the website of my home university. It was then, that I decided to go to Finland. At the moment, I knew very little about this country – despite the fact that I used to travel a lot to Norway, Sweden and Denmark as a kid. Learning more about Finland was, therefore, really interesting.

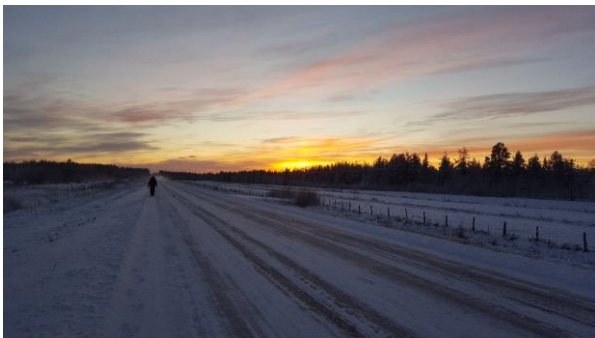
During my preparation, I went to information events organized by the IRO of the BTU and found the application process quite simple since it was organized really well. The application for the university in Tampere (TUT) was also no challenge at all. I received regularly E-mails from TUT about further steps and even got recommendations about student living. As soon as I received my confirmation of TUT, I was able to apply for student housing which was handled by the housing company TOAS. Apartments rented by TOAS are usually low in costs – especially in Finland, where everything seems more expensive at the first impression.

After arriving in Tampere, everything went according to plan. Getting the keys from TOAS presented no problem and the transportation in the third biggest city of Finland is well organized – mainly by bus, but there are building a tramway right now. I had to go to Hervanta, which is a city district of Tampere and where the TUT is located. My flat was just a few walking minutes away from the university and a shopping centre with three big grocery stores (Lidl, S-Market, K-Market). The apartment itself was clean and quite modern. The ground floor of each building is equipped with a Sauna, which you can book without additional cost. This impressed me, when I first heard of it – but after living in Finland for a while, I realised that it's not really uncommon. With 5.4 Mio inhabitants, Finland is home to 2.7 Mio Saunas. That inevitable means, that each Finnish household owns at least one Sauna. Finland is truly the Sauna country of the world. It is simply a part of the culture. Even I began to enjoy going to the Sauna regularly, something I would never had imagine in Germany. To be fair, the Finnish Sauna experience is quite different than in Germany.

The TUT, Tampere University of Technology, is only one of 3 universities in Tampere. There also is Tampere University for social studies and the University of Applied Science. However, as of the beginning of 2019 the 3 universities will merge into one. Finnish Universities are quite different from German ones. They focus mainly on the well-being of students and not only on creating a centre of knowledge. You can find armchairs, couches, computers, flat screen TV's and rentable study rooms at every corner. Additionally, there is a 3D-printer, laser-cutter and even a VR-room at TUT – and it's free of charge (!). Of course, you can also find a medical centre and countless cheap restaurants for students at the campus. Being a student in Finland has various other benefits as well. In restaurants, public

transport, bars etc. you get a discount – and believe me, you want the discount, especially when alcohol is involved. Like in every other northern country, alcohol is quite expensive.

The social life has a lot to offer. With your fellow ERASMUS students you can visit various parties at the city centre, going to pub crawls or join a guild/club at the campus. If you're a nature lover like me, then you will be in the right country. Finland is made of beautiful forests, lakes and even more forests. In fact, you won't find another European nation with more trees. I often walked around the Suolijärvi in Hervanta or along the shores of the two big lakes north of Tampere. Every time I went, it was breathtaking since the Finnish seasons are just wonderful – endless days in summer and endless nights in winter. Both are something that everyone should experience at least once in their life.



Trips to visit Lapland, Helsinki, Turku, Oulu or other places in Finland (or even Stockholm, Tallinn, Saint Petersburg etc.) can be booked with the student union ESN, but of course you can always rent a car and go by yourself with friends. I would even recommend latter since you can rent a cottage over the weekend in the middle of nowhere and enjoy lakeside sauna and the beautiful silence of the northern country. If you're lucky you can even witness northern lights. During my stay in Finland, I saw them three times.

The daily life in Finland doesn't differ much from Germany. You won't need to learn Finnish due to the fact that everyone, young or old, speaks English quite fluently. The only time, where you would need Finnish is the grocery store. Products and ingredients are often only listed in Finnish and Swedish. Swedish is the second official language of Finland, but no one except a minority in southern Finland actually speaks it. Reading English whilst shopping will, therefore, be quite rare. Because of that fact, google translator was my best friend during my first week. However, for Germans it won't be as big a problem as for other nationalities since Swedish is pretty close to German and can be understood pretty well even if Finnish seems like a lot of gibberish at the time. Be that as it may, I started to study Finnish just for fun and began to really love it. It is a lot different than German or other European languages, but for everyone who isn't intimidated by that, it will be a blast – especially because the language lessons are pretty enjoyable. Furthermore, I would recommend to find a Tandem partner to

learn Finnish since it is otherwise hard to get to know the silent Finns. If you are lucky and can count a Finn as a good friend, than you will truly get to know Finnish culture, which is just lovely.

So, if you're thinking about going to Finland, just do it! Don't be intimidated by everyone telling you it's too dark and too cold. I mean, of course it is dark in winter (and cold) but have you ever seen auroras whilst standing on a frozen lake holding your warm cup of glögi? Or having a campfire with friends at 11 p.m. watching the sundown in summer? No? Then go and enjoy the Finnish experience! You won't regret it.