

# **Report – ERASMUS, Winter Semester 2015/16**

## **Exchange Semester at the Halmstad University in Halmstad (Sweden), Environmental and Resource Management, 7. Semester**

The semester abroad was a mandatory part of my study course and I decided to apply for Halmstad University, because I always wanted to live in Scandinavia (even if it is just for a short time). Additionally, I had friends who studied in Halmstad before and highly recommended going there, which I can fully agree with now.

### Preparation)

The preparation and planning for the semester abroad was organised quite well, due to the fact that it was a mandatory component of my study course at my home university and thus everybody was very experienced with the procedures and could help us when we had any questions. We had a few organizational lectures and apart from that we could get all the necessary information from university websites and from material that was handed out to us. The application at Halmstad University was simple and consisted only of an online application.

I applied for several universities (most of them in Scandinavia) but Halmstad University was my first choice of all universities, due to the fact that it is rather small and I thus hoped it would be easier to find cheap accommodation and get in contact with professors if necessary. Additionally I very much liked the courses that they offered.

Making all necessary preparations for my departure was also done fairly quickly. It was very cheap to get to Sweden by train, even though I bought the train tickets just about 3-4 weeks before my departure (approximately 70€). It took about 11 hours to get there and I had to travel through Denmark. The easiest way to get to Halmstad would probably be to fly to Copenhagen and then take the train, but with all the luggage that I had I decided that taking the train would most likely be cheaper.

### Accommodation)

It is usually quite difficult to find accommodation in many parts of Sweden. Halmstad is a rather small city and Halmstad University a small university with not too many students but despite that, I heard that finding accommodation in the student residences is still hard to get and it is necessary to apply for it as soon as possible. However, a friend of mine already studied in Halmstad before and recommended a hostel facility called Strandparken, which was a little bit further away from the university (about 15-20 minutes of walking / 10 minutes of cycling) and less crowded than the student residences. The application was very uncomplicated. I had to send a request via email and received the contract, which I only had to fill out and send back. There were a lot of empty rooms, so I even had the option to choose and eventually took the cheapest one. The room was small but definitely good enough for the duration of my stay and I only had to pay 2500 Swedish kronor (roughly 265€), which is very cheap for Sweden.

Strandparken is a lovely place and only a few minutes of walking away from the beach. My own room was nothing special but we lived in a big fully furnished cabin, which itself was very comfortable. We had a very big kitchen and a common room and could thus invite people over very easily. In the beginning, not many students lived in Strandparken but that changed after only a few weeks. After a while many students from many nationalities, including Germany, France, Belgium, Brazil, Spain, India and China lived there. It was a very interesting and great experience living with

people from all over the world and experiencing many different cultures. For example we sometimes organised dinners with food from other countries. Additionally, our house provided enough space for 7-9 people but we were only 5 students, which means that we had a lot of space for ourselves.



Östra Stranden in winter – Just a few minutes away from our accommodation

Studies)

Before our studies began, we had some kind of “freshers week” (called Nollning), which actually lasted for more than a week and consisted of a very organised program, including games as well as introductory information. Sweden is famous for its freshers week and they put incredibly much effort into it, which made the first time in Sweden an unforgettable experience and also made it easy to get to know new people.

The actual studying in Sweden was also an interesting experience, even though I was in the end not completely satisfied with the courses I chose. The course system is completely different from the German system. Instead of choosing approximately 5 modules which last the whole semester and give about 30 credits, I only had to take 3 modules in Sweden, of which 2 modules gave 7.5 credits respectively and took place during the first half of the semester and the other one gave 15 credits and took place during the second half of the semester. We did not have many classes but we were encouraged to study at home as much as possible and often had to read articles or books in order to be prepared for our classes.

The quality of the lectures was very high and the professors mostly made it very interesting. Additionally, the professors often included excursions in their courses. We, for example, visited several completely different national parks over the course of 2 days.

I took a Swedish language course because I felt like I should learn some Swedish when I am already living there. It was very interesting to be more and more able to read all the signs and sometimes even talk to people in basic Swedish. However, nearly every person, from our professors to the cashiers in the local supermarket could speak English very well, which made living and also studying much easier.

Everyday life and free time)

The nature in Sweden is fascinating and definitely one of the main reasons for why I wanted to go to Sweden. Sweden has many beautiful national parks, of which I could unfortunately only visit a few, but the best thing is, that it only takes a short car or bike trip outside of the city to really feel like being in the nature. Most Swedes are very friendly and helpful people, but it was sometimes difficult to get in touch with them, due to the fact that most of my classes were only attended by other Erasmus students.

Like mentioned before I lived very close to the beach, which was perfect for jogging, walking or just having a barbecue with some friends. Additionally, Halmstad city is quite beautiful, even though it only took me a short time to discover most of the important places.

I was lucky enough to have a few friends who own a car, which is not necessarily essential, but made travelling a lot easier and allowed us to explore many parts of south Sweden. Unfortunately I did not manage yet to get to the northern part of Sweden, but I definitely want to do that another time. Among other things we visited Öland, which is a large island in the eastern part of Sweden, and could experience their local annual harvest festival.



Moose in a moose-park close to Halmstad

All in all it was a great experience and I never regretted going to Sweden for my semester abroad. I have made many new friends, got to live in a different country for the first time and learned many interesting things.