

MY ERASMUS SEMESTER IN SWEDEN

*Beautiful Sweden*

The preparations for my semester in Sweden started long before I could finally start my journey. In January, I had to hand in my application together with a letter of motivation, CV and Learning Agreement. Sweden was my first choice for my studies abroad, mainly because I can only speak English (not French, Italian or Spanish) and I preferred a country of which I knew that the level of English was rather high. Furthermore, I heard that the education is supposed to be very good in Sweden and for my profession (urban planning), there is a lot to see and experience in the country.

After I finally got the acceptance and necessary material from the university, I started looking for accommodation. That's where I first found out that living in a country that has its own currency and a strong economy would not be cheap. The main website used for student accommodation is Karlskronahem.se. They offer a lot of different and rather cheap rooms for students. The main student areas are Kungsmarken, Pantarholmen and Galgmarken. The rooms are available from around 300 € per month. Unfortunately, their assignment procedure is really disappointing and I got very frustrated after some time. First, I had to sign up on their website (which was not easy to get through back then – I think they changed a few things by now) and then choose where and when I wanted to rent a room. First of all, there were not many offers and they often came in with short notice (a week or so before the move-in-date) and if I liked one, I had to immediately sign myself in for that. With a lot of luck, I would become one of the 5 chosen ones to get to the next stage. It happened to me once (out of at least 7 rooms I signed up for) and I had to send them an email within 24 hours in which I accept the offer. After that it was time to wait again and hope that the 3 or 4 persons before me didn't manage or didn't

*Karlskrona City Centre**Dinner Party at the Jail*

want to answer to that email and I would get the room. Unfortunately I was unlucky (I later found out that other students used programs or websites to automatically sign up for the rooms immediately – unfair 😊). Since I only had a few days left until my departure to Karlskrona, I got under pressure and chose to live in "The Jail". The Jail is a former prison which is now reused for student housing / as a hostel. The

rooms are really (!!!) small and I had to pay over 400 € for only 8 m². The big advantage and main reason I stayed there was the social life. At least 15 other Erasmus students lived there, and I have never been alone if I didn't want to. Every week there were pre-parties or parties at the jail and at the same time I had the chance to stay in my room to study or simply be by myself.

So, after arriving and getting my room, the introduction week started, and I got to know all the other Erasmus students. We did introduction games, kajaking, a cinema night, karaoke and lots of other fun things. It's been a great way to get to know the people I was going to spend the next half year with and already after the first few days I felt really comfortable with everyone.

After the introduction week, our studies started. As an Urban Planner we had (different to the other fields) each course for only one month. I chose three courses; one in September (7,5 ECTS), one in October (7,5 ECTS) and one from September to January (but it only started in November – 15 ECTS). Since there was very few time to fulfil the schedule, the first two months were rather busy. At the same time, we had the chance to explore Sweden a bit, because our professors organised trips to Malmö, Copenhagen, Växjö and an architectural exhibition in Linköping. That way, I could see a lot of Sweden due to the university and my studies. Apart from that, the last two months were a bit more relaxing and I had a lot of time for the last project.

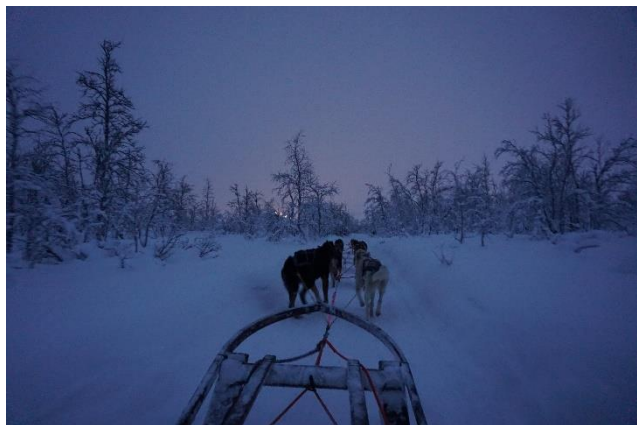
Thanks to our professors, we were also able to attend all the activities organised by ESN BTH (ESN = Erasmus Student Network). Our big trips have been to Poland (cheap alcohol!!), Estonia and Lapland. Apart from that, we had some smaller trips and activities and the ESN organiser have always been the people we could ask for information or help.

The trips were amazing! To Poland and Estonia we've been on a ferry, where there was a buffet and a party later.

Especially the one to Estonia was great because it was organised by ESN Sweden and nearly all the Erasmus students from all over Sweden got on one boat to party together.

In December, we have also been to Lapland by bus. The 24h bus ride was hard, but the experience was unique. For 5 days, we travelled around and did a lot of activities which would usually be way more expensive. Dog sledding, snowmobile, ice bathing and seeing the aurora borealis were only some of the great things we experienced there. I would recommend to everyone to spend some time in Lapland someday.

After all, I had an amazing time in Sweden, mostly thanks to all the friends I made and people I met. I am glad I took the chance to go to Sweden for half a year, although the cost of living is high. You'll get used to it or simply be happy with less.



Dog Sledding in Kiruna, Lapland

ENJOY YOUR ERASMUS