

Environmental and Resource Management – BSc: Lunds University

The preparation for the study abroad in Lund was, at least in theory, relatively simple. The website of Lunds Universitet was structured well enough to find courses of interest, and the information was mostly also available in English. In general, the preparation did not largely differ from any other, with the unique exception in my case, where there was a delay with the partnership contract between the two universities. Consequently, the status of my application was in limbo until very late in the semester, leaving me in somewhat of a state of uncertainty. As a result my application was put forth after the official application deadline, leaving me with limited options regarding the courses I could join; I settled with two 15 credit courses, an introductory course on physical geography and a master course in ecotoxicology, and a 7.5 credit Swedish language course.

The afore mentioned late application made my first months quite a struggle, I was not assigned to a mentor group, which is quite essential to integrating yourself into such a large university (so in case you are not assigned to a group, just join any group), and I was too late to apply for student accommodation, leaving me with the only option of searching for a place to stay on my own accord, browsing through Facebook groups and countless Swedish housing websites.

Upon arrival day I had to accept the fact that I was not yet registered at the university, and after being sent around to different people, I ended up with my coordinator, who could not help me either. So all I was left to do was wait it out. The reason this is a problem is that without official registration you don't have a personal number. And in Lund, this number is your life. You need it to apply for university accommodation, you need it to be able to use the library and access buildings and rooms, and you need it to join a student nation. In Lund, student nations are responsible for almost everything outside of your studies, since most of the cafeterias, pubs, clubs, and further activities are organized by these nations. And this was a problem, particularly in the first weeks of university.

Despite these set-backs, the orientation weeks were overall very helpful; you got information about the different student nations, institutions and organizations around Lund, including sports and music etc. My personal favorite was ESN, the Erasmus Student Network. For a small membership fee of 50 kr you could take part in many events organized by ESN, mostly consisting of trips to different places such as Göteborg, Stockholm, and Swedish Lapland; an ideal opportunity for seeing the country for those too lazy (or time-constrained) to organize own trips.

The university is known to be the best in Sweden. While this brings along many benefits, such as high standard of education, it also implies a high workload: A full-time course really means full time work, thus the usual day work day is 8 hours long. Although most of the course segments are not mandatory, the courses are quite intensively packed with information: Missing one day would therefore mean a great amount of catching up. This therefore usually only leaves the weekends to see Sweden, making ESN trips all the more useful! I was lucky with my first course (Physical Geography); since we did a great deal of excursions, including a one week field trip, looking at rocks, coasts, landforms and different water bodies around Scania (the southern district of Sweden), I managed to see great part of south Sweden that would otherwise have been hidden from me. The second course (Ecotoxicology) included many experiments in the lab. This shows quite well that the swedes manage to keep their education interesting, and overall it is a very relaxed atmosphere; the relationship with the professors is usually more similar to a colleague to colleague than a student-teacher relationship, and during the exams you are given more time than you actually need to finish them.

Due to its international status, most of the courses are taught in English, although that depends on the course you are taking. Overall, English literacy in Sweden is one of the highest worldwide, making it very simple to navigate through town without any knowledge in Swedish; even the shows on TV and cinema films are in English. However, the Swedes are a very proud folk and love their language, so they are often very happy when you talk to them in Swedish.

The city itself is very beautiful, and it has many comfy cafes and restaurants. It is a great place for those interested in sports, with a large number of gyms and sport clubs ranging from volleyball, soccer, to tennis and basketball. The nightlife is largely organized by nations, which control most of the pubs and clubs in the city, but there are also a great deal of parties in dorm corridors. Also, Malmö (as one of Sweden's biggest cities) is very close by in case you want a little more non-university night life, better shopping possibilities, or want to go to events such as concerts or soccer and ice hockey games.

In general Sweden is quite an expensive country, the cost for food and groceries is slightly higher than it is in Germany, and alcoholic beverages are massively more expensive (usually there will be groups going on "boarder-shopping" trips to Germany). Accommodation prices in Lund are quite comparable to those in German university towns, with prices ranging from 2500 to 4500 kr. The only thing in Sweden that can be considered relatively cheap is the long-distance travel using trains or buses, with prices ranging from 150-180 kr to Stockholm or Oslo. Overall I was told that 5000€ for the whole semester should be enough, so roughly 800-900€ per month, and it turned out to be a good estimate. However, if you are very keen on travelling around Sweden or Scandinavia, or wish to return to Germany every once in a while, you may need slightly more than that.

All in all, Sweden is great, the people are friendly, the city is beautiful and Lunds Universitet is a great university, especially if you are serious about your studies, since it has a high budget but is also highly intensive. If you want to spend your time mostly traveling, I suggest taking SAS courses (Special Area Studies –deals with Swedish culture and society), going to another university altogether, or doing so before or after your studies.