

Sweden, a country that contains true beauty in everything!



My name is Natasja Sluijk and I went to Örebro University from August 2015 till December 2015. It was my best semester. Örebro is a small town in Sweden, but it ranks sixth on the list of largest cities in Sweden (Statistics Sweden, 2010). It has about 100,000 inhabitants which is a lot less than Rotterdam. The city is quite spread out and it has beautiful surroundings.

Preparation

In the autumn of 2014 I visited the “Information market for Exchange” at the Erasmus School of Economics and I figured out that I could choose from over 70 universities since my grades were sufficient to go outside of Europe as well. From those 70 universities, I had to choose only three, which was a hard decision to make. At the end, I decided to go for Scandinavia. Scandinavia attracts me because of the nature, the culture and its reputation. I have a desire to work abroad after studying and I was considering of doing this in Scandinavia. I saw this exchange as a great opportunity to explore this area. However, before going there, several things had to be arranged. From the moment I knew I would go on exchange, I started saving for it and applying for funds. I would really advice you, if you need funds, to start applying from them already in January. Each fund requires a lot of documents and those documents are not the same for every fund. Hence, it requires some time.

After getting the confirmation of the host university, it was time to figure out some more stuff about Sweden. Quite soon, I found out that it was not possible to get a Swedish personal number. This implied that I could not get a banking account and some other memberships, since they require a personal Swedish number. Given the fact that I would have to use my Dutch bank account, I decided to request a credit card from my bank since I did not have one yet. A few weeks after I got the confirmation from my home university, I received an e-mail that one course got cancelled and they asked me what other course I want to choose instead. This procedure went really smooth.

Another thing that you should not forget if you are a Dutch student is to change your settings with DUO. Until my exchange period, I lived with my parents and therefore I had to change my “home settings” to “living away from home”. Besides that, I stopped my OV-discount card and demanded OV-reimbursement. It was then finally time to really plan my ticket. I booked my plane, but couldn’t decide on how I would travel further from Arlanda Airport. If your arrival with plane is close to a

departure of Swebus, I would advice you to travel with Swebus since it will get you directly to Örebro without any transfers. Otherwise, you can also take the train. I do not have any experience with any of those two options though, because I was lucky and able to join other students that were going by car from the airport. In the month June, I also had to pay my rent in advance. You have to pay the lowest rent then, and in case your room is more expensive, you have to pay the additional amount before October. I had to pay 16055 SEK which was about €1700. At the end, I had to pay 425 SEK extra.

Arrival

I arrived on one of the organized arrival days at the university. After getting my key, they brought me to my room with a van, which was great given my huge suitcase. My room was different from what I expected. I thought that I had to share my kitchen, but due to the fact that there is a pub on my floor I have my own kitchen. This also implied that I had to buy all the kitchen stuff, which I had not expected. I didn't have much time to get settled in my room, since the orientation program already started that evening with a dinner at MAX. It is like Mc Donalds but with better burgers.

During my arrival, I also received a bag with some information and a sim card. This was really great, because once you activated your card, you could use data without paying the higher prices from the Netherlands. Speaking of internet, you really have a lot of places in Sweden where you can use Eduroam, you will be surprised about that. It was also quite easy to get a public transport card. In Sweden, when you want to take the bus, you have to go to a machine in the bus (usually in the entrance) where you indicate your age and then hold your card in front of the machine. From the moment you checked in, you can travel 3 hours long, before you have to check in again. Hence, you can make as many transfers as you want, or even go up and down the city.

The main basic furniture that was in the room: a bed with a matrass, two cupboards, two tables and two chairs. Luckily, I brought my sleeping bag, since there were no pillows or blankets in the room. I had applied for the introduction program and already two days after my arrival we went to the IKEA where I could buy all the stuff that I was missing.

I would highly recommend you to participate in the orientation program. The program is great and gives you lot of opportunities to meet new people. It costs 900 SEK (less than €100) , which is not much in comparison with all the activities included. Some of the main activities were the different theme parties, trip to the Ikea, trip to Ånnaboda (beautiful area in Sweden), pubcrawl, and the welcome dinner. Hence, it includes both daytime and nighttime activities. The introduction program lasted untill half September. We had about three parties a week. Besides the fun activities, there were also some information sessions. If you join the program, you will also be part of a "Fadder group" which is like a mentor group. You can ask your fadders for help and advice if necessary.

Courses

During my semester, I followed four different courses in three different faculties and I used all of them to fill my elective space. The first course I took was "Style in English" for 7.5 ECTS. There was no exam included in this study. If you pass the two assignments, you pass the course. In the course, you develop stylistic control in written English. Through exercise work, you experiment with sentence patterns and learn how to create variety, emphasis, and coherency in well-composed paragraphs. You also analyze and imitated selected paragraphs from models texts of known writers or speeches,

for example a speech from Barack Obama. The course was easy to pass and I did not learn as much as I would have expected.

The second course I took was a part time course called “Multibody Simulation” for 7.5 ECTS. IN this course, you will model and simulate physical systems. Those systems consists of different (multiple) bodies that need to be regulated. It involved six assignments and an oral exam in which you had to explain your code of the last assignment. We programmed in Matlab, which was really nice. Some assignments involved some struggling, but at the end I passed the course with a good result.

The third course was “Strategic Decisions” which was like Microeconomics but then with some more game theoretical aspects. Throughout the course, the emphasis is on the calculating part. This course was also not that difficult.

The last course I took was “International Logistics”. It consisted of six lectures, one major group paper, one opposition paper and an exam. You get a lot of freedom in choosing your topic for the paper, as long as it involves international logistics. The course gives you a basic overview of transportation and logistics, as well as the logistic principles. It will then move on and study logistic activities in international business with zooming in on specific areas. The course is taught pretty well. The teacher is Australian and his stories are quite interesting.

Unfortunately, I was not able to follow any language courses for Swedish.

Finances

Expenditures per month in SEK

Rent	€ 335
Costs of living	€ 300
Sports facilities	€ 20
Social life	€ 50
Mobile phone costs	€ 20
Transport costs	€ 50
Traveling costs	€ 200
Unforeseen costs	€100
Total	€ 1075

Some general comments can be added to this table. Be prepared for the alcohol prices! If you go for a drink in the city, you will have to pay 59 SEK for a beer, which is € 6,30. If you go to Kåren, you will have to pay 29 SEK, which is € 3,20. That is already much better, but it is still more than what I am used to from the Netherlands. Kåren is the social club at the university. It is open during day time for the café, during Thursday afternoon and evening for Time Beer and on Friday night for nightclub. It is a great place to meet new people and you will have a lot of your introduction parties in this club. One way to avoid the high prices for alcohol is to buy alcohol in Systembolaget and to drink a lot during the preparties. You can buy alcohol only up to 3.5 % in the supermarket. For a higher percentage, you have to go to Systembolaget. Take care with the opening hours of this store, since they are quite inconvenient (not open in the evening).

Already in the first week in Örebro, I bought a bike and I never regret that choice. It saves you a lot on expenditures for public transport and it also bring you to places you cannot reach by bus. You can go to the lake and bike through the forest, which are absolutely stunning over the seasons. One place

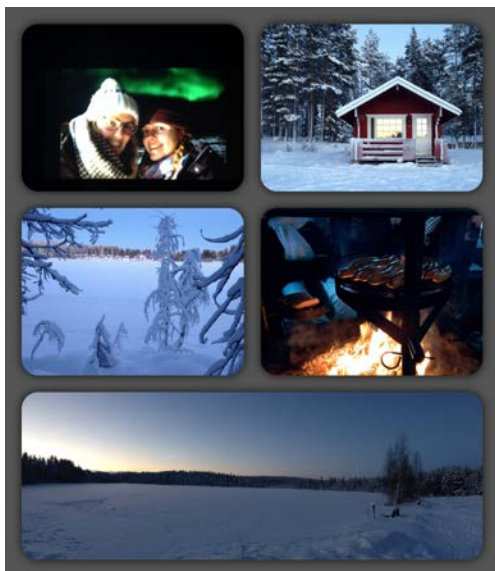
you can look for a bike is www.bloeket.se. I would strongly advice you to become a member of the “Dom kaller oss studenter” Facebook page. Many Örebro students are a member of this page and lots of stuff is being sold and demanded on this page. I got my bike via this page for quite a good price (650 SEK). Little warning though, once you get a bike, make sure you lock it correctly. Also, if you consider going away for a weekend by train, do not park your bike at the train station. That is how my bike got stolen!

Daily life

I absolutely had a great time in Sweden. People are really kind and literally everyone speaks English, even the elderly. Unfortunately, I did not meet many Swedish students, but that was mainly because I made a lot of international friends. As mentioned in the beginning, Örebro is a really nice city. It has two main clubs that I went to several times: Strömpis and Ritz. If you are planning on using the bus regularly, it might be smart to install the public transportation app on your phone called “Länstrafiken Örebro”.

I would definitely recommend you to join the introduction program since this gives you great opportunities of making new friends. Already from the second week onwards, I had one group of friends with whom I cooked every Sunday. It was a great opportunities to try some Swedish dishes. Dishes that I can recommend are: Swedish meatballs, Halv Special (something to buy), Pyttipanna, Pancakes with leek and bacon, and Flygande Jacob.

Speaking about food, ‘fika’ is a very important moment in Sweden. It is actually just a coffee-moment that you share with others. It is a very social moment during which you also eat some sweets like ‘kanelbullar’ and ‘Chokladbullar’.



Besides studying, it is important that you take the opportunities to explore the surroundings of Örebro and even of Sweden. I have been to Göteborg, Stockholm, Uppsala, Kopenhagen, Ystad, and Oslo. I also joined one trip of Scanbalt to Lapland. This was absolutely my best trip. Lapland is truly beautiful and I can recommend any and every one to go there! As you can see in the picture aside, we saw the northern lights, had some nice barbeque, and had a lot of snow. However, there are many more great experiences included!

If you are Dutch and you want to know more about my period, you can read my blog where I wrote regularly about my experiences in Sweden.

www.natasjainsweden.wordpress.com

In general, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via natasjasluijk@live.nl.

Hejdå!

Natasja Sluijk