

## Exchange Report – Stockholm University Fall Semester 2015-2016

### General Information:

In the fall of 2015, from the end of August to the beginning of January, I went on exchange to Stockholm University, in Stockholm, Sweden.

### Preparation:

There are a few things that you need to do in order to properly prepare for your arrival in Stockholm. The first thing you should look at is housing. The university offers housing through a lottery, on one of their four “campus” location across the city. These locations vary in price, and in distance from university. About 2/3 of the exchange students get an accommodation from this lottery, however, I wasn’t as lucky. Therefore, I had to spend a lot of time before getting to Stockholm looking for an accommodation. Looking for an accommodation while not being in the city is really difficult, and comes with some issues. First of all, it is important never to pay anything before seeing the room – there is an important “scam” business going on, since it is so difficult to find housing.

The best option is generally to try and arrange a few viewings before you arrive, so that you can visit one or two rooms right after your arrival. This, however, does not guarantee that you will get accommodation either.

Upon arrival, I spent the first week in a hostel, trying to find an accommodation. I visited a few rooms, however, given the excess demand for accommodation, the landlord often holds multiple visits either at the same time or in the same day.

The university offers a last minute lottery as well, renting out the rooms that ended up remaining vacant despite the initial lottery. Although this is not something to rely on, it is where I got my room, which allowed me to stop searching. My room – a studio – was located in Fjällis, a complex just outside the city of Stockholm itself.

Aside from housing, all you need to do is book a flight to Stockholm. There are a few airports around the city, all of which have busses to the centre. If you land in Arlanda at the right time, there should even be members of the student organisation to welcome you.

### Arrival:

Upon arrival, what you need to do really depends on whether or not you already have housing. If you do, you should take a bus from the airport to central station, and from there, the metro or busses can take you to your accommodation. Public transport in Stockholm all goes through the same company, called “SL”. To plan ahead, they have a useful app you can download called “SL-biljetter” on which you can plan your journey.

All public transport can be accessed with a single card, somewhat like your OV-chipcard, but only for Stockholm and surroundings. This card can be bought in almost all stations, either at SL centres or in the metro shops. When studying at Stockholm University, you are entitled to a student discount, but you will need your student card for this. Therefore, upon arrival, it is suggested to buy a card that is active for a week or so, until you have your student card, after which you will be able to buy the transport card for three months.

Aside from this card, there isn’t much that needs to be done upon arrival: if you stay only one semester, you do not need to register anywhere, and will receive an ID-number from the university.

If you don't have an accommodation yet when you arrive, you need to check into your hostel. In this case, I would advise to book a room at least until the results of the last minute lottery are known, this will avoid you to have to move from one room to the other, or even from one hostel to the other, since there will be many students in the same situation as you. However, the fact that you have to find accommodation doesn't mean that you will have to spend all your time in your hostel. Typically, now offers are posted either in the morning or late in the evening. During the day, it remains fairly calm, allowing you to discover the city, and take part of the activities provided by the ESN.

The week before the semester starts is filled with activities organised by the university and the ESN, as a welcome for exchange students. This is a nice way of meeting a lot of exchange people, and of getting familiar with the ESN, which is very active in the city.

### Courses:

During my time at Stockholm University, I took four courses offered by the department of Economics. In the first block, I took *Intermediate Microeconomics* and *Development Economics*, each of which were 7.5 credit courses. Intermediate Microeconomics was essentially the equivalent of *Micro 2*, hence, a follow-up on the course you can take at the ESE. Development Economics offered insight in the problems in developing countries and across the world, as well as empirical studies offering solutions to these problems.

In the second block, I took *Labour Market Economics* and *Economics of Uncertainty and Asymmetric Information*, both 7.5 credits as well. The first one is an application of microeconomics to the labour market, and is mostly focused around the individual's point of view. The second one is a course revolving around adverse selection and moral hazard, and an in depth look at various problems posed by asymmetric information.

The overall level of these courses was largely similar to the level in Rotterdam. The only notable difference is that the exams are all open questions instead of multiple choice.

### Finances:

Overall, life in Stockholm is quite expensive. Weekly groceries are around 450SEK, transport, for the entire five months, is around 2300SEK, and expenses for your phone are around 50SEK a month. The nightlife is relatively cheap providing you do not buy any alcohol in clubs, since the ESN often arranges free entrance. Exploring the surroundings of Stockholm in your free time will cost you around 3000SEK (including a trip to Copenhagen). Aside from all of this, the books for your courses will add an additional 3000SEK, depending on your need and the subjects you decide to take on.

Finally, the one-time costs for housing and plane tickets amount to, respectively, 26000SEK (the studios in Fjällis are unfortunately the most expensive of the ones offered by the university) and 4000SEK (this includes the fact that you may need to fly back for exams at the start of January, if you decide to spend the Christmas holidays home).

### Impressions:

I absolutely loved Stockholm. As a city, it is incredibly diverse and beautiful. As it is spread across islands, each neighbourhood actually offers a different "vibe", constantly surprising you. It is so stretched out that it will take you at least a few weeks to explore the entire city. Aside from being beautiful, it is also an extremely safe city, and the people are all very nice. I don't think there is a single neighbourhood that would make you feel threatened even in the middle of the night.

The nature surrounding the city is amazing, and allows for many walks and escapades, so to speak. (you can find pictures on <https://signedls.wordpress.com/stockholm-gallery/#ip-carousel-182> )

The people you will meet will largely be in the same situation as you – on exchange – but this will only make it more enjoyable as they come with the same mind set as you. The international community is diverse and you are certain to make a lot of friends. Since the amount of activities you share with them is so intense, you will form great bonds very quickly. Swedes themselves are very reserved, so you will most likely not bond with them as much, but they are very cordial and nice people.

Finally, infrastructure is amazing, everything is very well organised. Transportation is almost never late, there are very few disturbances, and the services work very well.

Luc Schneider - IBEB