

University of Bergen, Norway – Autumn 2016

### **General Information**

The minor in the third year of my bachelor Econometrics and Operational Research gave me the unique opportunity to study abroad. As I child, I always dreamed about living in another country for a period so I decided to take this opportunity. I applied for different universities in Scandinavia and was selected for the University of Bergen (UiB), in Bergen, Norway. I studied here during the autumn semester in 2016 which started in Mid-August and lasted until December.

### **Preparation**

Since Norway is a civilized country and really well organised the preparations for my exchange were really easy. After I was selected for UiB by the ESE, I started my application for UiB. After you have been nominated you will receive an email with your log-in details for your account on Søknadsweb. Here you can apply for different courses and upload all the required documents for the university, e.g. scan of passport, learning agreement etc.

As a new exchange student in Bergen you are guaranteed a single room in one of the student accommodations of Studentsamskipnaden i Bergen (SiB). You will receive an email from the university with a specific reservation code that makes it possible to apply for a room from SiB. If you satisfy their requirements and sign up on time, you will be selected to a room. As Norway is part of the Schengen Agreement, a visa is not necessary. Upon arrival you need to register yourself at the local police office.

### **Arrival**

The fall semester in Norway starts a little bit earlier than what we are used to in the Netherlands, namely in the middle of August. If you are renting a room from SiB the renting period will start on the first of August. It is therefore smart to arrive early in August too. I arrived on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August.

You can have a direct flight from Amsterdam to Bergen which is really convenient. From the airport you can take the Flybussen to the Festplassen or it is possible to take the Bybanen. The Bybanen is the Bergen Light Rail which probably will be finished in 2017 which can take you from the airport to the city centre. When you arrive in Bergen you have to pick up your keys at the student centre. This is probably the first moment you will experience the Bergen climate. This basically means a lot of rain. I will never forget the moment I had to walk up this hill to get to the student centre in the pouring rain with all my luggage. After you successfully picked up your keys it is time to check out your room! As an exchange student you will probably be living at Fantoft. Fantoft is a student complex where mostly exchange students live. It is located about six kilometres outside the city centre of Bergen. You can take the Bybanen that stops right in front of Fantoft. I applied for a room with a shared kitchen with in total 8 persons. The earlier you arrive, the better. Since there are limited amount of rooms from this type.

In August a new academic year starts. This means that there are a lot of new first-year students in Bergen. Therefore, an introduction week, known as the Fadderruke (Mentorweek), is hosted by all the faculties of the university. Before this week (which started on Monday) there was an extra special introduction programme for international students which started on the Thursday before the start of the week. The Fadderruke and the extra introduction program for international students are not mandatory. However, I strongly recommend you to participate in this week. It will give you the opportunity to get to know the city and the university and you will meet a lot of other students! Together with some other exchange students you will be placed in a group of Norwegian students, which is your mentor group. With them you will attend different parties every night. You will also be introduced to the Norwegian vorspiel (vors), a pre-party. I thought the Fadderruke, was extremely fun and I got to know a lot of new people.

### **Courses**

You can find a list of courses on the website of UiB. It is possible to choose different courses of different faculties. I ended up with having three courses from three different faculties. This did not cause any problem in my schedule.

#### Non-Life Insurance Mathematics – 10 ECTS

In this course, different concepts of non-life insurance were explained. Topics that were included are premium estimation, loss reserving, reinsurance methods and general risk theory. Concepts such as Value-at-Risk and Expected Shortfall were considered to study the risk of a portfolio. This course was of a postgraduate level. I was the only international student in a small group of about fifteen students. The teacher is really keen to teach you the basics of non-life insurance and provides you with enough support to understand the material in this course.

#### Development Economics – 10 ECTS

This course is used to introduce central issues of economic development in poor countries. The focus was on how to define concepts such as economic development and economic growth and to use these concepts in explaining inequalities and differences between rich and poor countries. The level of this course is undergraduate and you will have no problem passing this course. We had to write one compulsory assignment and there was a written exam.

#### Norwegian Culture & History – Scandinavian Culture & History – 15 ECTS

I choose this course to learn about the Norwegian culture, history and traditions. The course gives you a brief introduction into the history from the Viking age until today. You will understand the traditions and values of this beautiful country. In order to pass this course you need to write three essays which together will be graded. Each essay covers a topic of a different period or event in the Norwegian history. This course is specially designed for international students and the different teachers are enthusiastic in learning you something about their country.

## Finances

Before you decide to include Norway in your choices, you have to bear in mind that Norway is an expensive country. Especially groceries and beers are highly priced. The rent was comparable to the rent of a room in Rotterdam. I also travelled across the country which made my exchange a bit more expensive.

Costs		Grant + Allowances	
Rent	€1775,-	Erasmus Grant	€1170,-
Public transport	€250,-	Student loan	€1260,-
Sports	€125,-	OV allowance	€400,-
Books	€170,-		
Cost of living	€1600,-		
Travelling/Trips	€1600,-		
<b>Total</b>	<b>€5520,-</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>€2830,-</b>

## Daily Life

When you are living at Fantoft, you will take the Bybanen to the city centre where also the university is located. This is a ride of approximately 18 minutes. I had never more than two lectures a day, was finished no later than 2 pm and had most weeks at least one day with no lectures or seminars. This means you will have a lot of spare time. Norwegians are active and enjoy the nature and so will you. You can do several hikes around Bergen and I strongly recommend you to travel across this beautiful country since you will have plenty of time.

Bergen is a small city but I thought this was an advantage. There are living a lot of (exchange) students, so there are a lot of parties and different bars you can go to. I volunteered at Stjernesalen (café) in Kvarteret. Kvarteret is the student house in the city which is organised by students. There is a pub and a café with a small menu. Different concerts and parties are hosted at Kvarteret and it is a nice place to just hang out, drink coffee and maybe to some reading for your courses during the day. Norwegians can be really introvert, but once you get to know them they are really open-minded and nice people to hang out with. They really try to make you feel at home in their country.

I had an amazing time in Norway. Being outside of the Netherlands for a longer period gives you the time to really get to know another country. You will meet a lot of fun people and make friends for life. When picking a destination make sure you are clear about what you want (opportunities to travel around/experience campus student life/study at a high ranked university and so on) and you are guaranteed of an amazing experience you will always remember!

By Carlijn Bosma