Erasmus report

Sweden in general

The first thing which occurs to everyone about Sweden is cold. True, it is a Nordic country but to be honest in Örebro it was not that bad, especially at the beginning of the autumn semester. During the autumn months the temperature was only a few degrees lower than in Hungary, the real cold weather only came at the end of the semester in January - but then -15 was not unusual. For me it was not a problem, since I love winter and when the snow was falling it was really beautiful.

Sweden is a clean and well organized country with amazing landscapes. Hiking and taking bike/walk trips is definitely advisable either in autumn or in winter because the view will be breath-taking.

Swedish people are incredibly helpful if you ask them. Almost everyone speaks fluent English which makes it easy to communicate with them. The most positive thing I experienced in connection with Swedes is that they trust in people and in their goodness.

Another really important thing about Sweden is that they take equality really seriously. In Örebro for example there are no ladies’ and man’s bathrooms in the University and you can make a report if you feel discriminated in any way.

Also good to know that credit card can be used basically everywhere contrary to cash. This was quite surprising and unusual for me, but it made life easier because withdrawing money can be expensive.

Örebro

Örebro is the sixth largest city in Sweden with about 140,000 inhabitants. Because of the University there are a lot of students and young people living there. The city is not that big, but the way I see it, this is a perfect size for an exchange semester. You can easily find your way in the city either you take the bus, riding the bike or walk. There is everything you need: grocery stores, malls, bars and places to go out. It is a safe city, where I have never felt fear even when I was walking home during the night by myself – and I am a girl.

There are a few sights to visit in Örebro like the Castle, the Svampen (a watertower from which you can see the whole city), Wadköping (the oldest part of the city with typical Swedish houses) and the nature reserves around the city where you can take a walk, go for a run or organize a barbecue with your friends.
**University and study system**

Örebro University is a new, modern, really well equipped University. Most of the teachers are from abroad so students can experience every kind of accent. All of my teachers were really helpful and sympathetic and in general they tried to find solutions for our problems. The study system is really different from ours in Hungary. The semester is divided into four 5-weeks long periods and usually students have only one so called full-time course per period. Generally during this five weeks assignments, presentations, group papers should be done and at the end there is an exam or an essay to hand in. As for me, I had all the time two part-time courses simultaneously which lasted 10-10 weeks. This had advantages and disadvantages as well, because I didn’t have to study as hard after the first 5 weeks but after 10 weeks I had two exams at almost the same time. Also, we did not have a regular timetable but the time and place of the classes changed from week to week. In my opinion for an exchange semester it was perfect, because we could organize trips and meetings easier even during weekdays.

**Accommodation and living**

It is pretty easy to get an accommodation if you choose Örebro, since rooms are provided by the school for exchange students and the rent is absolutely fair considering the fact that it is Sweden. There are two student housing areas for exchange students in Örebro: Studentgatan and Tybble, Studentgatan is 5 (or not even) minutes from the University and Tybble is about 10. In these apartment blocks there are student corridors with eight/six student rooms in each corridor (men and women live in the same corridor). In the corridor there is a broom cupboard with cleaning equipment, and washing machines can be used free of charge if you book them in advance. The rooms are spacious with basic furniture and private bathroom. The kitchen and the living room are shared with the other students living in the corridor. In the kitchen each student has his/her own cupboard and a shelf in the refrigerator and the freezer. The kitchen is also equipped with a cooker and an oven and sometimes a microwave oven. It may be necessary for you to buy your own kitchen equipment, but in some corridors there is common kitchen equipment that you may use. The living costs are obviously higher than in Hungary. There are two big grocery stores close to the campus, where one can find everything needed for living. As far as I am concerned if someone takes care of what is on discount at the time, grocery shopping can be made at a quite reasonable price. The highest difference in between the Hungarian and Swedish prices is in alcohol, because of the state monopoly and you can only buy alcoholic drinks in the Swedish alcohol shop called Systembolaget. As for going out usually we had parties every Wednesday and Friday. When you get to the bar before 22:30 you do not have to pay entrance fee, and on Wednesdays even free buses
to one of the clubs were provided from Campus. One of the best things is that there is a club at the Campus run by students, so it offers the best prices and it is the closest place to go out. We could also sign up for working there which was also really nice experience. We didn’t get paid for it but you could have as many non-alcoholic drinks during the night as you wanted and a dinner was included. And in addition you got to know some Swedish students and the atmosphere was always really friendly.

**Public Transport system**

In Sweden all the public transport vehicles are really clean, comfortable and well equipped. Wi-Fi is usually provided on trains and coaches. Under the age of 25 you can buy the Youth ticket and also purchase the cheaper “Last minute tickets” 24 hours before your journey. In general for train tickets you buy them for a specified time, so if you miss your train you cannot get on the next one and the closer you buy the ticket to the day of your journey the more expensive it is (except of course the last minute tickets but then there is a chance you will not get a place on the desired train).

For local buses in Örebro (and also in Stockholm) either you buy a special card for buses and upload money on it or buy the tickets one-by-one with your credit card — but this way is more expensive. However in Örebro most people are using bikes, especially students. There are some second hand shops in the city where you can make a deal about taking it back for half of the price at the end of the semester.

**ESN student organization**

The ESN team in Örebro is really-really good. After the arrival days they organized us Orientation week but the programmes basically lasted for a month. It was easy to meet new people and get to know everyone if you attended these events which were also really fun. We had to pay for the Orientation programme but it definitely worth the price. We could go on trips and city tours, got into clubs for free, we had a 3-course welcome dinner and at last but not least you could make friends during these days.

At the beginning for the Orientation programme we were divided into so called “Fadder-groups” which is a great opportunity to get to know some others a bit more and your “Fadders” can help you and give you advice about living or university or places to visit. I was extremely lucky with my Fadder-group and we tried to organise some game-nights and other activities during the whole semester together.

After the Orientation, the programs were less frequently but ESN organized us some other activities like “Taco night”, trips to other countries, theme-parties and the Farewell dinner.

**Trips**

Due to ESN I got the chance to visit quite a lot different countries. I could go on a one-week long trip with ferries, where we visited Saint Petersburg, Tallinn and Helsinki and also to a 5-day long trip to Lapland. There was a chance to attend the Sea Battle too, which is a big exchange student gathering from the surrounding countries but for me it was a bit too expensive.
Both of the trips I attended were amazing I experienced something totally new and we could make new friendships or deepen the ones we had.

Apart from the organized trips a lot of the exchange students made some extra journeys either to other parts of Sweden like Gothenburg, Stockholm, Lund, Malmö or to Copenhagen in Denmark. During these trips we made some unforgetable memories so do not miss them if you got the chance spend one or two semester in Örebro.

My experience, opinion

For me going to Örebro for an exchange semester was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I met wonderful people with whom I became friends, made many-many incredible memories together and had loads of fun. I really hope we can manage to stay in contact regularly because I feel these friendships are special, they might even deeper than some I have back home.

For the first time of my life I lived by myself, and I found out it is way less scary to cook and take care of yourself than I imagined. I improved a lot in self-determination and I am be able to handle my problems and find solutions on my own.

Even though I had a C1 level language exam, I can really feel how much a semester abroad counts. At the beginning I had to look for the perfect expressions and often did not find the right words when I wanted to say something quickly. At the end speaking in English was natural, and I honestly enjoyed learning more and more new words. I really hope in the future I will get the chance to speak English as often as possible.

Since I love winter for me the weather was not a problem at all. I loved that in January there were four or five days in a row when it was continuously snowing and it was spectacular! And in this amount of snow every young adult became a child again: we built snowman, went for sledding and had huge snow fights.

I can suggest this university with all my heart because I had the best time of my life there!

Dóra Bagyinszki
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