

Erfahrungsbericht

Political Science Department

from : Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

to : Stockholm University, Sweden

Autumn Semester 2017

Before the Erasmus

I knew since several years that I wanted to experience an erasmus semester abroad. I'm french and after my graduation in High School, I choose to continue my studies in Berlin, in Political Sciences. This is why the Erasmus Program was not a big decision for me, since I knew already about how it is to study in another country and in another language. However the choice of the destination was more difficult. It was important for me to discover a place where I have never been. Before deciding on a destination, there are a lot of criteria to take into account : the language spoken in everyday life, the language at the university, the courses provided, the attractiveness of the city, the cost of living, the weather... Everything can be an advantage or a disadvantage. The Erasmus Office of the OSI was really effective to manage the registration and to answer our questions.

Finally, I choose the Stockholm University to improve my english skills, to continue my studies in the field of subject that interest me and to discover the Scandinavian region.

The application process was easy to follow because I was in the mailing list of OSI Erasmus Office and I receive every information in time. Stockholm was my first choice and once I receive the confirmation, the Stockholm University was in contact with me so I could choose my courses and be officially registered for the next semester.

Unfortunately, I did not get a room on the Lappis campus. It is located near the University and it's really recommended. However, to be able to live there you must be lucky at the lottery, which I did not. At that point of time, I started to search for a home on my own. It was difficult because most of the ads were written in Swedish, a language that I cannot understand. The Social Media Facebook and its several groups were really useful and find my accomodation through this way.. The living cost is higher than in Berlin, so I could not afford to live in the centre, but I could reach the centre in 20 minutes by subway. I lived in a French-Swedish family, in a lovely house located near the Stuvsta metro station.

During the Erasmus

At the University

The educational system in Stockholm is really different from the one in Berlin. The semester is divided into 4 periods and each period corresponds to one course. This means that during approximately one month, only one course is taught and at the end of this period, I had to hand in an Essay (Take-Home Exam) or write an Exam at the University. As at the Free University of Berlin, there are lectures and seminars. At the beginning I found it very interesting to only focus on one course and hence, subject. Then I realized that one month is really short to be able to understand a subject in-depth. We did not have enough time to assimilate the knowledges and read every literature, that it was already the end of the period. Finally, we barely had time to skim through the subjects of study. At this point I was disappointed.

In addition, we were told several times and in several courses, that is very difficult to attain very good grades because of the high criteria expected. I found it pity to mention that at the beginning of a course, and to maintain these criteria if few or no students are able to succeed. I pass every course, but not with the grades I expected.

I had only courses from the level II of Political Sciences. Beside the first one, Approaches to Politics, I am quite positive about the others I choose. The course module „War and Democracy in Global Politics“ was less theoretical. We had the possibility to conduct debates and exercises. The talks were based on the actuality. A small critic could be that the number of readings was too ambitious every week. During the two last periods, the course module Independent Research Project was taught. We learn how to write an Essay of 7000 words. As long as the study can be conducted in a coherent way, every subject can be chosen, which is very interesting.

In terms of my English, I think that I improved my skills, especially in oral speaking. This was my goal, so I'm satisfied that this experience allowed me to speak and write more fluently. In terms of the Swedish language, I made the choice not to follow Swedish classes. As I only stayed 6 months, it was not primordial to learn grammars and conjugation. I used of course the basic words of courtesy in every day life. It was not a problem at all because Swedes, could be kids or older peoples, are able to speak a very good English.

There is no real canteen at the university and already cooked food is expensive, so it is recommended to cook yourself to limit the expenses.

Free time

Speaking about integration, it was not difficult. The Stockholm University organised plenty of activities before the official semester started. However, I did not find the Swedish people welcoming, especially in my several courses. I only stayed with other Erasmus students I have met during the integration week. This is why I recommend to participate in those events. I also recommend to become a member of the Stockholm University Student Union. This is a non-profit organization and their goal is the well-being and integration of the students. They organise a lot of events every week and being a member allow also to have discounts on the transport networks, food store, trip tickets, clothes or electronic shops, et caetera. The fees are very low for one semester. It is also possible to decide at the same time, to become a member of one of the three faculty. Therefore, I could take part in other events and especially parties every week.

The city of Stockholm is really beautiful and full of activities (museums, panorama view, free walking tour, ice skating, visit the archipelago by boat or by foot...) I am sure there are more possibilities in summer. There are also a lot of opportunities of trips. I travelled in Riga, Oslo and in Lapland for the new year. Every trip changed my Erasmus in a good way.

To be able to move around the city, the public transport is obligatory because the city is quite big. They are functioning very well with few disruptions during the day, but this is another matter during the night. It makes evenings more difficult to plan and less unpredictable.

Conclusion

Finally, in a few words, I would say that I'm satisfied with this experience abroad.

It surprises me that the weather had such a big impact on the mood, especially in winter when there are just 6 hours of light. I am a bit disappointed by my courses at the university, but it is personal and the city worth it.