

ERASMUS-EXPERIENCE REPORT

Name: Anonymous

Field of study: Forestry

Host University: Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Year of study: 2023/2024

Duration of stay: from 08/2023 to 06/2024

Publication of the report

I consent to the publication of this experience report including the above data (field of study, host university, year of study, duration of stay) on the website of BOKU-International Relations for the purpose of sharing information related to the study visit, so that future interested outgoings can inform themselves about your experience at the host institution.

yes **no**

The consent is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without giving reasons with immediate future effect. Any withdrawal can be declared at any time by e-mail to erasmus@boku.ac.at.

THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS WOULD BE INTERESTING FOR FUTURE OUTGOINGS:

My time in Umeå in the north of Sweden was a great experience. Umeå is a really nice small city, it's quiet and peaceful, but full of students and events, and it has everything you need. The city is well connected by transport with train or airplane, and the bus system within the city is convenient and easy to use. Staying in the north of Sweden was different from living in the south, because the north is much less populated, which means that it is easier to experience nature, Swedish culture and the regional traditions of the north. The winter was very cold and dark, but beautiful with all the snow, and Umeå is surrounded by forests and lakes, so it is a perfect place to experience the outdoor activities and culture in Scandinavia.

The Swedish students were very welcoming and happy to share their culture with international students, and the SLU campus in Umeå is small, so everyone gets to know each other and there is a real sense of community. There were a lot of international students as well, and it was easy to get to know people. The campus was nice and many people would hang out at the university in their free time, or at the huge sports center next door which had everything from bouldering to yoga classes. I learned a lot about Swedish forestry and natural resource management from talking with other students. The Swedish students were happy to share their perspectives on their own forests, and often invited us to join them for outdoors activities. Everyone spoke really good English on campus and in the city center, there was never a problem if you didn't speak Swedish. But if you want to learn Swedish, people are happy to practice with you and there are language cafes every week.

Sweden is an expensive country, and bars and gastronomy in Umeå is pretty good for a small city, but not cheap. Groceries were the biggest expense, but rent in Umeå is not so high and there are many discounts for students. There are many things to do in town and in nature that are free or cheap, and the student union organizes events for international students every month.

SLU has a very balanced approach to work-life balance, the professors expect quality work but are very relaxed and understanding, and if you need extra time on assignments or anything they are willing to help you work it out. It was easy to talk to professors, they treat students like equals and there is no culture of hierarchy or emphasis on titles. The university staff was great and always happy to help with application and enrollment, but the process was extremely easy compared to how things work at BOKU, and when they say everything is in English, it is actually true.

Overall, SLU in Umeå is a great place for an Erasmus exchange, it is definitely a different experience than going to one of the larger SLU campuses in the south of Sweden, but I think it is a very authentic way to see Sweden and get to know the country outside of the Stockholm-Uppsala bubble. Swedish people are very nice but can be shy at first and hard to get to know, which is why I am very happy I chose Umeå, where the campus is smaller and it is easier to get to know the Swedish students and local people. I would recommend joining the student union, they organize events throughout the semester such as traditional Swedish dinners, sauna days, and on Thursdays there is a pub with traditional Swedish soup and pancakes, and it is a great time to socialize and meet people. My time in Sweden has let me expand my understanding of European cultures and natural environments, and I would highly recommend SLU in Umeå for future students.