Uppsala University, Sweden

During my mobility period I stayed in Uppsala in Sweden. Uppsala is a small (yet the 4th biggest) city close to the capital Stockholm. In Sweden it is known for the great amount of students that go there every year to study all different kinds of programmes. Uppsala University is one of the oldest universities in Europe and amongst their alumni are people like Celsius and Lineaus. Because of its great history, quality of education and (so was said) formidable student life, I put up Uppsala as my first choice destination. You might understand how happy I was when I got in! In this small report I will try to give a short summary of my time in Sweden.

Education

When I was looking for courses to follow in Uppsala I found out that the amount of credits you could receive for a single 6-week course were very variable. Some times just 5, sometimes 7.5 and some times even 15! So if I followed the usual six courses in one semester, I would earn about 45 points! Unfortunately I soon found out that the system is different in Sweden. In the Netherlands you are supposed to follow three courses parallel at the same time, but in Sweden you just follow one at a time. So in the end I did a total amount of 27.5 credits, which was actually pretty unfortunate because now I have to do an extra course to make up for the 2.5 credit.

The first course I followed was the Intensive Swedish Course that was taught during the month before the actual semester began. While I learned quite a lot in a small period of time, and got 7.5 points for it, I would not recommend this course to someone in the future. This is because Uppsala’s population consists for a very great part out of students. And none of these 35.000 students will be in town when you are following this course. Therefore it can be quite lonely, especially if you just arrived and haven’t had much time to settle down a bit. This course is not the only possibility to learn Swedish, so you better follow another one. The university also promised that if you had followed this course you would be automatically admitted to the second course. This was not the reality though. Only the 20 people who did best were eventually admitted to the course. I only made 2 mistakes…

The second course I followed was much better. It was a 15-credit course called Mass Media in Contemporary Armed Conflict. Apparently the department of Peace and Conflict Studies in Uppsala is well known for its quality of education. Therefore my hopes were high and I have to say that I liked it a lot. The teacher was very nice and the level of the lectures was okay. Some times it felt like a little bit below my usual level, but overall it was very nice. The fact that you only have one course at a time was an interesting experience because you have much more time to really dig in to the literature and the exercises.

The last course I followed was called Human-Computer Interaction. I chose that course because in Groningen I followed some similar courses so I thought that it would be a nice match. This course did not really challenge me very much. From time to time I was wondering what I was actually doing in the classroom when we had to make prototypes of a mobile app with coloured paper, glue and carton tubes. It felt a bit like arts and crafts in primary school.
As you might be able to read between the lines, I was not very impressed by the level of the courses I followed. But that counted just for me. Because some other people I met that were in other departments, like economics and biology, were having a very hard time. The contact with the teachers and coordinators was always very good.

**Accommodation**

I arranged my housing through the housing office of Uppsala University. Soon after being admitted to the exchange semester they send me an email, offering several places to choose from. You had to give three choices and then they would assign everyone to a place. I was lucky to have a friend who had just come back from Uppsala, who could tell me a bit about which places were nice and which ones were not. I stayed in Rackarbergsgatan, just outside the city centre in a corridor with 6 other (Swedish) people. The location of my room was perfect and the facilities were fine, the only downside was that I did not live with other internationals in the same corridor. Still the Swedes in my corridor were also very polite and helpful! To future exchange students I would recommend the housing in Rackarbergsgatan and Klostergratan the most, for they are the closest to the city centre.

**Life in Uppsala**

An important part of the student life in Uppsala is the presence of 13 Student Nations. These are student societies where they organise parties and other social activities. You can also have cheaper food and drinks there than in the average bar in Uppsala. I joined Östgöta Nation and even worked in the bar quite a few times in exchange for free food and some new friends! It was also a great way to practice the few words of Swedish I could speak. Not that I really needed the lessons of Swedish because everybody speaks very good English. I can even say that my English improved more than my Swedish in the end. Make sure you visit all the nations at least once, there are subtle differences between all of them but you will definitely like one the most. Besides making new friends, you will also save some money to do fun stuff, because life can be quite expensive in Sweden…

One of the fun things to do is to take the train to Stockholm and explore the city. While you probably will have seen all the touristic attractions of Uppsala in a few days, there is no limit to the things you can do in Stockholm. I went there at least five times and expect to visit it again in the future. Another thing I did was visiting Lapland on a guided tour. Seeing the northern lights, sledding around on a dogsled and even driving a snowmobile! An unforgettable experience that I wish everybody could have when they visit Scandinavia.

If you decided to go to Sweden and you want to ask me some questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me on Facebook!

Good Luck,

Jules Ruig