

Erasmus Experience Report

Student: Hannes Westerhaus

H.Westerhaus@gmx.de

Host university:

Uppsala Universitet

Department of Materials Physics

Erasmus code: S UPPSALA01

Sweden

Duration of the Erasmus time: 18.01.2016 – 16.06.2016

Home university:

CAU Kiel

Department of Materials Science

Erasmus coordinator: Prof. Dr. Jeffrey McCord

Actual report:

Fortunately I did not have to go through all the preparations and stress all by myself, as a fellow student and now friend of mine accompanied me to the beautiful city of Uppsala.

As we were the first two students from our department to ever take the opportunity to go abroad to Uppsala for an Erasmus exchange and thus also on short notice, the whole preparational work was somehow chaotic. We decided to apply for the trip far beyond the deadlines of our international center and two weeks before the deadlines of the university of Uppsala. Luckily, our international center, as well as our home coordinator have been very supportive and all approaching problems were solved in time.

After we have sent the application in, everything went rather smooth. We got e-mails with instructions what to do next in time, so we would not forget anything.

First I was afraid to not find a place to sleep in Uppsala, but it all went out fine with the accommodation office and I found myself a lovely room in a corridor at Rackarbergsgatan.

After being accepted for the Erasmus program and the room, it was time to plan the actual trip.

As I thought it would be a great idea to be mobile in Sweden, I decided to make the trip by car. This also resulted in us being able to take a lot of our personal belongings with us, of course also affordable beer and other alcoholic drinks.

The cheapest way to get to Sweden was a ferry between Rostock and Trelleborg, which went at 4 am. So we have decided to take the second cheapest option, which was a ferry between Travemünde

and Trelleborg at 2:30 am, without a cabin to sleep in.

Fortunately my father has a house in southern Sweden where we could spend a night, so we did not have to make the whole trip nonstop. The drive from Skåne to Uppsala took us roughly seven hours. We departed at 8 am and arrived around 3 pm (16th of January). After arriving, we had to get the keys to our rooms which took another couple of hours, so we made it to our new homes at around 6 pm.

Before going to Uppsala, I already befriended myself with a nice Austrian family via the internet. They very nicely invited me at the arriving day to dinner and cake and also took me to a good concert. A very nice way to start your time in a foreign country!

I found that my flatmates have been very nice, polite and helpful but also somehow cold and distanced at first, which warmed up a lot to the end of the stay.

The teachers and coordinators at the university have been very communicative and supportive. It was able to talk to them about any kind of problem which occurred and it was always possible to find individual solutions, I will come to this at a later point again.

The student life in Uppsala is great. There are plenty of options what you can do in your free time, as there are 16 student nations if I recall correctly. Most of them possess a club, pub and a restaurant as well which have affordable prices for students. Not to mention all the student parties in Flogsta.

The university itself is very nice in Uppsala. It has many buildings scattered around the city. As a student, you receive a card which opens the doors to all buildings outside of the regular opening hours. This is a really nice system, so you can actually go in the nights or at the weekends to the university buildings to find a calm place to study.

Another really nice option is, that there are plenty of rooms which can be rented by students for group meetings and to study, this creates a nice environment to do group projects as you do not get distracted by other students or an loud environment.

What bugged me about studying there, is the schedule though. Here in Kiel, I was used to have each week the same courses at the same time from the beginning to the end of the semester. Now in Sweden, we got a new schedule each week. Sometimes they were really nice, all courses distributed evenly throughout the week. But oftentimes, I had all of my courses on three days and all at the same time, so I had to decide which ones I really wanted to attend to. Most of the courses were not mandatory though, as the teachers are very aware of the problem, but it is still disadvantageous to miss half of the lectures. But as I have mentioned earlier, most of the teachers are very supportive, so it was in many cases possible to shift some of the lectures to other times or to have private

lessons. Even if you missed some of the mandatory lectures, you could do some homework or essay to compensate for it.

In general I felt that the teachers tried to give us the best learning experience that they could. We also always had a 15 minute pause in the middle of each lecture to be able to relax a bit, maybe take some fresh air and be able to fully concentrate again afterwards.

I also liked the fact that many of the courses I took also consisted of some sort of practical laboratory work. It is of course bothersome in the first place when you hear that you have to do some extra work besides the lectures, but I really enjoyed it in the end and it helps to understand the theory better. It was e.g. a really nice experience to work with a telescope and make some nice pictures of a distant galaxy by your own and edit the taken pictures and be able to see a really nice result after all the hard work you have put into it.

I also really liked the concept of anonymous examinations. Each student gets a number before the exam takes place and only writes this number on the written exam. This way nobody can complain about getting a bad grade because of the teachers dislike or whatsoever.

In addition to the courses at the faculty of physics and astronomy, I have also taken the course basic Swedish 2. I feel like it really helped me and in the end I was able to have some simple conversations.

The rent in Uppsala is quite high, I had to pay around 410 € for a small room with a shared bathroom and kitchen. Also the food is a bit more expensive than in Germany, but still affordable. I think you get along really well with the additional money you receive from the Erasmus program.

Now, as I am back in Kiel, I want nothing more to be in Sweden again. I wish I would have done this earlier in my life as a student and also wished I could have stayed more than one semester.

It was one of the best experiences of my life, it was like living the dream!