

Experience report

Universitetet i Oslo

Autumn / Winter 2022

Erasmus +

Preparation

At the beginning of 2021, I started thinking about doing a semester abroad. When I looked at the partner universities of the Faculty of Law, Oslo seemed to be the best destination for a semester abroad. So I applied in January 2022 and received my acceptance two months later. It is worth mentioning that the application process involves a lot of bureaucracy and you have to make sure you provide various important documents. After I received my acceptance letter, I booked my flights from Hamburg to Oslo-Gardermoen and directly applied for a room in the student dormitory of the Oslo Student Union (Studentamskipnaden i Oslo, SIO for short) and. Regarding the latter, you will not be surprised to hear that student accommodation is in high demand, so it is prudent to apply as soon as possible.

The University of Oslo is very well organised. All documents and procedures are digitalised and the contact persons for exchange students are extremely helpful. Shortly after being accepted by LUH, you receive a welcome email from UIO and only have to set up your online access, which allows you to choose your courses a few months later.

Housing

With the acceptance from the university, you do not automatically have a guaranteed room from the Student Union. However, as an exchange student, you will be prioritised, which is almost equivalent to a guarantee. The only important thing is to register online several months in advance and send the application within the specified deadline. You are given the opportunity to submit a wish list of accommodation and SIO then allocates you to one of the housing units. I was accommodated in Sogn Student Village, the former Olympic village in Oslo. Sogn Student Village is a residential campus, similar to those found at U.S. universities. The closest metro station (T-bane) Ullevåll stadion T is a 5-10 minute walk away and can also be reached at regular short intervals by bus lines 4 and 5. The main campus, Blindern, is two train stops away or about 7 minutes with bus 25 from Solvang to John Colletts plass. It takes about 10 minutes to get to the city centre by metro. Close to Sogn, up the hill, is a large lake called Sognsvann. This is an excellent place for jogging or swimming in the summer. In winter, the lake is frozen solid and offers the opportunity for safe skating. I lived in a six-room flat shared with five flatmates, with whom I shared the bathroom and kitchen. The room costs the equivalent of around 530 euros a month and looks new and well maintained. All doors can only be opened with a digital key card, similar to what you already know from hotels. Upon arrival, you are given a laundry card that allows you to use the washrooms that are open to the public. There is also a supermarket (REMA 1000) on the residential campus for shopping, but a KIWI Mini Pris is also not far away. Finally, there is the student bar Amatøren, which, with a lot of imagination, is comparable to the Hanomacke. In addition to studying, the residential campus offers the opportunity to make lots of great new friends who are always around.

Studying at the partner university

Fortunately, the days of online teaching are long gone in Norway, so all classes were held in presence without exception or corona protection. The law school is located in the middle of the city centre, 100 metres within sight of the Royal Palace along Karl Johans gate. The buildings are visually striking with their ancient temple-like appearance and are therefore popular photo spots for tourists. A little further behind the old buildings, a new building was completed in 2020 with new lecture halls, work spaces and an integrated library. The building is very modern and digitalised and even has a digital display for public transport. The lecture halls have parquet floors and walls, have upholstered seats and each seat is equipped with two power sockets. There is a canteen on the ground floor, just like on the main campus. The meals are priced between 15 and 20 euros. The prices seem quite high, but they are in keeping with Oslo.

Across all modules I took I had a great learning experience and really enjoyed learning. The professors are very competent. The courses I took were very interesting and allowed me to expand my knowledge and gain new insights in different fields. As a law student, it is notoriously difficult to receive course credit for courses taken abroad. This is only possible for the language certificate and the social science or economics certificate.

Daily life and free time

Besides studying, the ERASMUS semester also consists of parties and meeting new friends all the time. However, there is no way of sugar coating the fact that the high prices in Norway require getting used to. Especially the prices for alcoholic beverages are much higher than what most visiting students will be used to. In supermarkets, only beer and cider may be sold, and only until 8 pm, and on weekends only until 6 pm. A six-pack of Norwegian beer costs the equivalent of about 17 euros. Spirits and wine may only be sold in state-owned Vinmonopolets (Norwegian: the wine monopoly), which are open until 6 pm during the week and only until 4 pm on weekends. A bottle of Absolut vodka or Jägermeister costs the equivalent of around 50 euros here. Some therefore might be happy to learn that on Wednesday evenings, the Mabou Bar in the city centre always serves white wine until 11 pm for the equivalent of 3 euros, a Norwegian bargain.

By all accounts, Oslo is a great attraction in itself. The city has many museums and other attractions. Students have free admission to the Munch Museum on Wednesdays from 6 pm. The newly built opera house with its viewing platform is located directly in front of the main railway station. People who like to attend sporting events have the opportunity to support Vålerenga Oslo in the first division of football and ice hockey. Public transport includes ferries from spring to the end of autumn that take you to the surrounding islands. These ferries are included in the ticket price of the monthly bus and train pass, which costs 48 euros for students. In summer, there are many places in the city where you can sunbath or simply jump into the fjord and swim. Another attraction, highly recommended especially in winter, are sauna boats with the possibility to cool off directly in the cold fjord afterwards. Norwegians like to spend time outdoors, which is not surprising given the country's spectacular beauty.

Apart from that, Norway is a large country with many great highlights. My friends and I had the opportunity to visit Bergen and its surroundings, fly to Spitsbergen in the Arctic, travel to Trondheim and see the northern lights in Tromsø in the Arctic Circle.

Conclusion

Overall, Oslo was the best decision of my life and a great experience that no one can take away from me. I met a lot of great new people and learned a new language. The semester really helped me once again in my personal development. Frankly, I cannot understand why so many students still do not have ERASMUS on their radar and why it has not become a much bigger issue yet. Most of the foreign students in Oslo were actually German, as is so often the case abroad. So you get used to it very quickly. On a final note, in my personal dealings with Norwegians I found them very warm and friendly. In conclusion, the only thing that remains to be said, or reiterated, is that Norway is the most expensive country in the world and savings are gradually eaten up, even with frugality. Even if you are supported with a generous 600 euros per month, you should be prepared to tap into some of your savings. But it is definitely an investment worth making.

Impressions

