

An exchange in Lund, Sweden

General Information

You'll hear it time and time again from everyone who's been on an exchange, but going on an exchange truly is a life changing and rewarding experience; a great way to meet new people, make life-long friends, experience new culture, be the envy of your NZ friends, and get something more out of your degree. Lund University is a fantastic place to get out of your comfort zone and get involved in different university experience. Lund is a small university town in southern Sweden (in the region of Skåne), with a similar size university to Otago. Accessibility to the surrounding areas by train or bus is very easy (just a 40-minute train ride to Copenhagen in Denmark), and the climate is not too dissimilar to that of Dunedin - a mild Scandinavian climate. Swedish people predominantly speak impeccable English, and are very friendly and inviting, especially at social occasions. As English is an easy common language, learning Swedish can be a challenge, but certainly achievable if you stick with it.

Student Life

Lund University has a rich student life, and there are always plenty of opportunities to meet other students, both with Swedish and the many international students. At Lund there are several student "Nations", which are best described as a mix between OUSA and a fraternity. They are purely student run organisations that have accommodation, pubs, clubs, lunches and cafes, all of which are staffed by students who work on a volunteer basis.

I would definitely recommend working at least two or three times at the nations, it's a lot of fun, a great way to meet people, and another way to truly immerse yourself in Swedish culture (plus the after-parties and thank-you "sittnings" are great fun).

Swedish people have lots of different social events, all of which I recommend getting involved in. Like in New Zealand, Swedes have formals or balls, for both university faculties and through the Nations (these are very formal occasions, and are a lot of fun), as well as sittnings – a three-course meal with lots of people – and fika. Sittnings are usually put on by Nations, where students get randomly allocated seats and are served food, wine, and schnapps while meeting new people and singing lots of Swedish songs; I recommend going to as many of these as you can! Fika is an integral part of Swedish culture – a coffee break – usually with cinnamon buns or some other sweet food. Get used to this word as you will be doing it often!



Accommodation

Finding accommodation in Lund can be a complicated and difficult process. There is very high demand for student accommodation in Lund thus they cannot guarantee you a place right away, however LU accommodation will usually offer incoming exchange students with some form of

accommodation. If you decline their offer or if they are unable to place you, you can apply through AF Bostader (AFB for short) who will likely be able to find you a place either starting in January or just as likely the start of February. My advice is to try not to stress too much and take this in your stride, most students I met (including myself) had to find alternative accommodation for the first month in Sweden, and then were able to find permanent accommodation from February onwards from AFB or other means.



It can be hard to know which accommodation to try get into when coming from New Zealand. I was Parentesen which I can highly recommend, as it's a mixed Swedish/International accommodation hall with nice rooms overlooking a shared oval outdoor common area with a BBQ. Each floor has a shared kitchen/lounge and you have a private bathroom. Like many of the accommodation buildings in Sweden it also has a sauna available to use, another essential Swedish practice, so be sure to make full use

of it. It is very close to town and the train station. Other good accommodation areas are Delphi, which is one of the largest accommodation areas and has Swedish and International students too, however it is a bit further from town (Although this is still only a few minutes by bike). It has nice outdoor areas for summer and a gym to keep fit during winter. Spoletorp is also another alternative, as it is right next to the train station and town, however there are only international students there so it can make meeting Swedish people more difficult.

Money Matters

It's no secret living in Sweden can be expensive, however it can be very manageable depending on how you spend your money. Accommodation costs are often similar to that of Otago, or slightly more, however meat and alcohol are much more expensive than they are in New Zealand. Students often find themselves eating a more vegetarian based diet and traveling to surrounding countries to purchase alcohol if they drink. A necessity to Lundian life is a bike, which should cost around 600-1000kr (around \$100-170NZD), but you can sell it for approximately the same price at the end of your exchange. I would recommend getting a bike as soon as possible – even if they are pricier at the start of the semester it is definitely worth getting one as soon as possible.

Course Load

Course loads vary a lot between what you are studying. Most exchange students I talked to had on average a lesser course load than they did at home. However, I was taking four 3rd year physics papers, which, while very interesting, were also quite intense. It can be hard to estimate what level some of the courses are, however everyone I encountered found the work manageable, even with the social life of an exchange student. I found the lecturers are all very approachable for any concerns or extra help if needed. Exams in Sweden tend to be very long in order to give you as much time as you need to complete the exam without the time pressure. In Sweden they also allow you to re-sit exams pretty much as many times you want, even if you have already passed and just want to improve your grade, as long as you are still around for the resit opportunity.

Transportation

Transportation around Lund primarily consists of biking and bussing. Bikes are an essential part of day to day travel in and around Lund and I personally would get one as soon as possible. People are constantly selling theirs at the start and end of each semester, and I would suggest getting one as soon as possible. You will get a Jojo bus pass in your welcome pack when you first arrive in Lund. This can be used to go further distances when you choose not to bike, or loaded up with money for use on the train.

Things to do

There are many things to do and see while you are in and around Sweden. Malmö is the third largest city in Sweden and is just a 10 to 15-minute train ride or short bus ride from Lund, and Copenhagen is just 40 minutes by train from Lund, across the Øresund bridge to Denmark. Stockholm is definitely another must do, and is a couple of hours' train from Lund.

ESN (or the Erasmus student network) are a student run organisation that run many events, mainly aimed at exchange students. Signing up with them gives you access to a lot of cheap weekend trips and other experiences that are definitely worth being a part of. For example, you could join the ESN trip (or plan your own trip) up to Lapland in northern Sweden. It's a great place to see the Northern Lights or Aurora Borealis, have a dog sledding experience, and have a proper Sweden sauna (Bastu) in the arctic. Getting involved in both your nation of choice and ESN (Erasmus Student Network) in Lund will give you the opportunity to join in on fun activities and trips that will make your exchange unforgettable.



Quick tips for future students

Buy a bike ASAP. Make sure to travel to Malmö and Copenhagen. Join up to ESN and join a nation in the first week or two, after the introduction fair. It doesn't really matter which nation you sign up at as you can work/party at any nation as long as you are signed up to one. Try working at one, even if only once, its good fun and a great way to really get involved with the Swedish culture. Try make the most of events like Valborg and sittnings, and if possible get involved in the annual tandem bike race!