

Stockholm School of Economics
S1 2016
Bachelor of Commerce
Finance and Accounting

TLDR:

If you don't speak a foreign language and want to go on exchange in Europe Sweden is the place to be! The fact that you are reading this indicates that you are already interested in going on exchange (do it). The next 1500 words don't come close to describing how amazing the exchange experience is. In Europe, there are literally dozens of countries to visit all of which you can get return flights to for next to nothing. What follows is just tips and advice. You made it this far into looking at exchanges so just apply.



Stockholm in the Winter

The Country

Sweden gets much colder than New Zealand in the winter, it can get as low as -20°C , but all their buildings have central heating such that you won't ever be cold if you are indoors. The city of Stockholm is beautiful and is made up of a series of interconnected islands. Most notably in the summer, because in the city most people live in apartments, on hot days (in the summer it can get as hot as 30°C) everyone is out in parks and the city feels very alive.

If you travel further north, you will reach the arctic circle (in a region called Lapland) where the sun never sets in the summer and never rises in the winter. Here if you are lucky you can see the northern lights. The Exchange Committee always organises a trip up here during one of the breaks and you will have the chance to go dog sledding, ice climbing, and have a traditional sauna experience complete with bathing in a frozen lake.

If you go on exchange for the January-June semester you will get to experience one of the best celebrations Sweden has to offer. At the end of April students travel an hour and a half north to Uppsala for a weekend of partying that puts Hyde Street to shame (see this video from 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPv0 ENOIGE>).



Some of the exchange students in Lapland

Otherwise Sweden has all the other things you would expect ABBA music, H&M stores everywhere, and museums about Vikings.

TLDR: Sweden is a beautiful country. Make sure you visit the arctic circle and go to Valborg if you are there at the right time of year.

The University

The Stockholm School of Economics is located right in the middle of Stockholm and the entire school is located in one building. The school has about 1500 students from undergraduate to PhD and is highly respected as the best business school in Sweden. There are limited quiet areas in the school itself for study as the library is fairly small. There is a large atrium similar to that in the commerce building at Otago except theirs is very well heated and regularly full of students. The student association is often said to have more money than the university itself and has a club downstairs that regularly has events on Friday nights.

The Exchange Committee when I was on exchange were excellent. They organised lots of events all throughout the semester including a boat cruise to Latvia and a trip to Lapland and the arctic circle (more on that later). The exchange committee also organised several banquet dinners which are a tradition in Sweden and are always very exciting nights. I'll not spoil anymore as they are best experienced without knowing all of what will happen.

TLDR: The school is small and the Exchange Committee organises lots of fun events throughout the semester.

Language

In Sweden English is compulsory in school and is very well taught such that everyone is capable of having full discussions in English with no reservations except for maybe having to repeat things once or twice because they are not used to the New Zealand accent. This is true not just of younger people in Sweden, with the exception of very young children everyone even the elderly can speak English very well.

If you want to learn some Swedish there are classes offered at the university. I didn't choose to take them but many of the exchange students did. From what I heard they are fairly intense and a reasonable number of students had to pull out because they saw they were not going to pass. This should not stop you but just be aware that it can be some hard work.

TLDR: Everyone in Sweden is fluent in English as a second language that you will never have any difficulties in communicating. You can take Swedish classes but they are challenging.



There are about 60 students exchange each semester

Where to Live

The exchange office in Stockholm will offer you accommodation in one of three buildings they sublet to you. The first and biggest one is Saltis. This building is right next to the Stockholm School of Economics so your walk to school is literally 2 minutes. This is where I stayed in a shared bedroom. I was a bit unlucky to get a shared bedroom given the vast majority of rooms are single rooms. In the end, it wasn't too bad however as my roommate had his own space as the room is in a U shape so he

had a small alcove where his desk and bed was. The biggest benefit of staying in Saltis is that only exchange students live there which means you get to make friends with people from all over the world. The second place you can live is Lappis. This is a building very close to Stockholm University which is a 15 minute bus ride from the Stockholm School of Economics. I only visited there a couple of times but it seemed quite nice and they had a much better kitchen. The building is shared by students who go to Stockholm University but there will be a group of exchange students. In my year there were about eight of them and they all become very close friends and regularly went to trips together. I would strongly not recommend trying to find accommodation elsewhere. Stockholm is a very expensive city to live in and you will not find anything nearly as cheap or central.

TLDR: When applying for accommodation put Saltis first

Cost of Living

You will find living in Sweden is generally more expensive than in New Zealand. Some foods, such as red meat, are much more expensive than in New Zealand but on average the cost of food is about 20% higher. As for alcohol it can only be purchased through government run stores called systembolaget, the prices are fairly similar to New Zealand but the opening hours are much more limited (they close at 3pm on Saturday and are closed on Sundays).

Stockholm is known for having some of the most expensive public transport in the world buying a month of unlimited use of the metro and bus system will cost about \$100 NZD. This is a necessity if you are living at Lappis but if you are living in Saltis because you are so close to the School of Economics it can be cheaper to just pay for single fares.

TLDR: Public transport is expensive. Everything else is about 20% more expensive except alcohol which is about the same.

Courses

I took four classes while in Stockholm. The semester is broken into two parts and you take two courses at a time for about 7 weeks each. In the first half I took a third year accounting course (732) and a third year consulting course (759). The accounting course was pretty good but nothing standout. If you are studying accounting this is a good course to cross credit as a 300 level accounting paper but if you are not an accounting student you can definitely miss this one. The consulting course was much more interesting the professor was a very eccentric man and we only had two classes a week. The course was structured that we would read business cases similar to the ones used in the Otago Business Case Club and then get a week to prepare presentations as a team. You are paired with a consultant from ADL to assist you in this process. The one drawback for me in this course was I did not get on well with my team. This is a bit of a lottery because you will have to make teams during the first class and you are stuck with them through the entire semester but even a bad team was not enough to stop me from recommending this course if you want a fun and unique paper to do that is nothing like what you can do at Otago.

In the second half I took a second year finance course and a third year management course. Similar to the first semester the finance course was nothing standout. It was well taught and covered important material but it was nothing that you couldn't do in Otago. The only benefit for me with this course was that I already knew large amounts of the content from previous years so I did not have to work as hard

as I would have had to in other courses. The management course was a much more interesting course that looked at the way diversity in companies affected their performance. This was a very small class with fewer than ten students and consisted of primarily group discussions of readings and guest speakers. The only two comments I would make for this course is beware that there is a relatively strict attendance requirement for the first four weeks course so it can disturb travel plans and if long discussions about diversity do not interest you, you will probably not enjoy this course.

TLDR: You can have more fun if you pick courses that are not typical university courses but there is a risk that they will be more demanding on your time so you have less time to travel.

Final Remarks

Sweden in my totally unbiased opinion is the best country in Europe. Going on exchange here was the best decision I made while at university and it can be yours too. I have spoken with dozens of exchange students and none of them regretted going on exchange. There is nothing more that I can say. Just if you haven't already, apply.