Exchange report

**Before and During Exchange**

Before going on exchange to Sweden I needed to get a permit visa, as I am not a Canadian citizen. For that I first needed to get a letter of admission from Uppsala University, and with that apply online through the Sweden Migration Agency. It is a simple process and all the information about it can be found online. The waiting period for me was 10 days. Then I had to fly to Ottawa in order to get my picture and fingerprints taken by the Swedish Embassy. The Embassy works from 9 to 12, and the whole procedure took me about 10 minutes. Then the Migration Agency collected my info, printed the permit visa card and sent it to my address, which took a week or so. The whole thing does take some time, so make sure to apply for the permit visa right after you get the admission letter from the university (if you need it, of course. If you’re Canadian, you do not need to go to the Swedish Embassy in Ottawa).

Before going to Sweden I was trying to find as much information as I could about the country, the city of Uppsala, life in Sweden in general, University stuff. For that I browsed through blogs written by the students of the university or just people who moved to Uppsala and wanted to share their experience with everyone. One of the best places for search is studyinsweden.se. Put “Uppsala” in the search bar and voila, all the information and blog posts are right there for you.

Sweden is a Nordic country, so if you’re going there for the Spring term, like I did, make sure you have warm clothes on with you. In Uppsala it did not get below -15C, and the climate overall is dry, however, it is still colder than in Vancouver. A toque and a pair of gloves are must have items. A good warm pair of shoes is also required. While there’s an overwhelming amount of gravel on the streets, when snow starts to melt during the day, and then freeze again during the night, gravel is of no help. And the way from downtown to the university is up the hill, so the struggle is going to be real without good shoes.

Bring all your essential beauty skin care products with you from Canada. The choice is wide, but the prices for some products are high. Try checking kicks.se for prices beforehand to make sure your favorite products are not overpriced there (in case you really don’t want to drag all your stuff overseas). All prices in Sweden already include taxes.

Do not bring cash. All the facilities in Sweden use credit debit cards, even the busses. There is absolutely no need for you to exchange Canadian money into Swedish kronor.
In order to get to Uppsala, you need to fly to the Arlanda Airport in Stockholm, because it is the closest airport. I flew with the Iceland Air from Seattle to Reykjavik, where I had only 50 minutes to change the plane and show my student permit, and then from Reykjavik to Stockholm. It was the cheapest and fastest way. Prices for the tickets go up every month, so make sure to track them down and decide fast when you want to buy them. I had to wait extra long, because of all that visa stuff. From Arlanda you can either take a bus or a train to Uppsala. I chose a bus because it was cheaper. The bus number is 801 and it costs 105 kr. There are signs in the airport to direct you to the train or the bus station. Or you can always ask at the information desk or even random people, because everyone speaks good English there and will gladly help you. In Uppsala you will arrive at the main train/bus station, where you can either take a bus to the place where they give out your keys or walk there. Now this part is a bit confusing. It is sort of an orientation, but you have to go there to get your keys and sign a contract. There will be people who will help you with your luggage (because you do not want to carry it around) and will show you the way. There will be lines and you need to join the one that gives the keys to your chosen place of living. It is a bit hard to see, because it is so crowded, but I think they have signs on their desks. After you signed your contract and got the keys you can either go home and relax or stay and hang out more. It’s up to you. They give out free sim cards and sign you up for some social stuff that’s going on around. You can always come back to the event after getting home and unpacking.

Living in Uppsala is cheaper than living in Vancouver. Not by a lot, but still cheaper. The necessities are cheap, but anything extra or imported is a bit up there in price. Alcohol is ridiculously more expensive than in Canada. Clothes in H&M are cheap, everywhere else maybe not so. Going out is pricey. Books are more expensive. Sometimes there are sales in supermarkets, look for them and get your stuff discounted. Rent is fine; I think it is a lot cheaper compared to any apartment in downtown Vancouver. Well, maybe it is not as posh though.

The room that I was living in and sharing with my husband was on Klostergatan 16. It used to be a hotel, but the university bought it and now they rent out rooms to students. I got it from the university, I applied for it, and I suggest you do the same, as looking for accommodation in a small city full of students on your own is a gamble. The room was small, but not too small. Again, there were two of us in there, so for one person it is more than enough. The bathroom is nice and spacious; it has a bathtub. The view was not the best in my room, but you can get one on the other side with a better view. I do not think you can ask for it though. It is right downtown, 10 minute walk from the train/bus station and 15 minute walk to the university. There is not as much crazy student life like in Flogsta, but I’m not a fan of it anyways. If you are, well, maybe you should choose living
in Flogsta. There are two laundry rooms, on floor one and floor 3. They are not timed, but try not to use them after 10pm. The machines are loud and people who live next to the laundry rooms are sleeping. There is a small stove, a fridge, and a microwave in your room. Do not fry anything though. If the alarm is triggered, you will have to meet Swedish firefighters and pay $1000 fine. When I was there the dining room was still under construction, but now I’m sure it is working. So you can probably cook your meals there. My husband and I survived on only boiled and microwaved food. There is a TV in your room. No cable, but if you have a laptop with an HDMI slot and/or DVD disks, you can watch stuff on TV. It is not very cold in the room, but it is also not a sauna. They promise to keep the temperature at +20°C, which is good enough. If anything happens, call the Studentkår. They will help. Their number is on the buckled that you’ll get with your keys. Do not leave your keys in the room. You’ll have to pay for getting in. The key, by the way, is a magnetic card, just like in hotels.

Studying at the Uppsala University is more relaxed than studying at SFU. You do not have that much homework and readings sometimes optional. I took two upper level linguistic classes and it was super easy. I did not have any midterms or finals, only final essays. I had some mini essays throughout the term, but I never got my grades for them. Not even pass or not pass. Maybe sometimes you should just ask your teacher for a feedback. Grades are pass with distinction (VG), pass (G), or fail (P). You can, however, ask for your grade to be interpreted in a North American grading system. Lectures are very short, only 2 hours with a 15-minute break in the middle. There are typically 4 hours of lecturing per week.

Travelling in Sweden is fun. Going up north in winter in order to see the Northern lights is pricey. Other than that it is affordable. Plan in advance, prices may change over time. You can always go to Stockholm; it’s only 40 minutes away from Uppsala. Norway, Finland, and Denmark are just around the corner. Europe in general is right there. You’ll have enough free time in your study schedule for travelling.

I am a definition of anti-social, so I did not really participate in any social events. However, if you become a member of a nation, you can find out what cool kids do in their spare time. Talk to your neighbors, classmates, and other people from the university. They are nice and helpful. There is a big day on the 30th of April, called Valbourg day. All the students come out and party. There is a boat race through the canal. That’s something social, right?

Reflection After Exchange

It was nice. I had a very unique chance to live in Scandinavia, get to know more about Sweden and just experience a different way of living. Every now and then I miss
Uppsala. Especially now, while I’m writing this report. You will never regret going on exchange, it will always worth it. It taught me how to be save up money, how to manage my time and just enjoy my life. It taught me that sometimes, strict university policies are better, because it can actually make you do something. Not that I was slacking off, but I missed having to read and study a lot. Maybe I just got used to it. If I had more time I would definitely go on exchange again.
Uppsala University, Engelska Parken, where all of my classes took place

A very cool train station in Stockholm that you might want to visit. There are actually a few of them, just google Stockholm metro and see for yourself
River Fyris and the Uppsala Cathedral, the most famous sightseeing place in the city.

The SJ train that will take you to Stockholm whenever you need it.