Going on exchange is one of the best things I have done. I went to Lund University in Sweden in the spring semester (January to June) of 2017. My exchange fit well with my major in history and international studies. If not already decided, I would highly recommend studying abroad anywhere in Europe not just in Lund. Anywhere you go you will have fun, meet great people and travel lots.

If you are reading this you probably are deciding on or are going to Lund. For packing and preparations no matter the semester, fall or spring you will have to pack warm clothes. A good winter jacket, toques, gloves and nice boots are mandatory things to bring. It snowed more than it did in Vancouver during my time in Lund. Which was only a few days but was generally colder. You will also probably spend more time outside as a bike will most likely be your main mode of transportation. Lund is also incredibly windy. I can only recall a few days without a strong breeze. The good things is it rains a lot less than it does in Vancouver. Along with a bike an easy bus system connects all areas of Lund, you will be given a card upon arrival to use for buses as well as trains within the Skåne region. Lund is a university town with various campuses and housing spread throughout the town. Depending on where you live walking may be the easiest way to get around besides biking. Another thing to pack is a set of dress clothes to wear to sittnings. Sittnings are formal dinners where you eat, drink and sing Swedish songs.

Upon your arrival in Lund, you will be helped from Copenhagen airport (closest big international airport) to Lund by train. Once you are in Lund, which is approximately 45 minutes by train from Copenhagen. You will go to an arrival day fair where you can buy tickets for the orientation week, get your housing sorted out, get supplies for the SUSA course among other things. You will be probably be extremely tired after your long flight and arrival day will seem like a blur, don’t worry things will sort themselves out. Following the arrival day there will a few week period of orientation activities and events. Some are more fun like a big party, nation events, hiking, food fairs and signup for nations and sports/clubs. Other are more studious and formal. Introducing you to academic life in Sweden. I recommend that you sign up for the mentor group program and SUSA course that largely takes place during the first few weeks of the semester. Some mentor groups are better than others doing more activities others not so much. None the less it is a good opportunity to make friends and meet other internationals that you will bump into at pubs, parties and classes.

The housing areas of Lund are spread throughout the town. LU accommodation is your best option to apply for housing. Another organization AF bostäder also provides student housing. Applying through just AF bostäder is a bit risky. You should apply through LU accommodation and if are waitlisted then apply through AF bostäder. Exchange students from outside Europe have priority. However, there is still a large demand so apply as soon as the period opens. If not you may get stuck living in Malmö having to commute every day and be away from student life. I stayed in Eddan. Which is new, clean and all international students. The only downside is its little farther from the center of town approximately a 10-15 minute bike ride. The cleanliness, newness and socialness of the building made up for the distance. The floors, 6 per corridor come with a shared kitchen and a balcony with a view. Other good options are Sparta which is mixed International and Swedish, known for partying. Biskopsgatan has a
nice shared common area and private backyard but is a bit older. Parentesen and Delphi are also
good options. I had friends who stayed in Pålsjöäng who regretted it since it was private
apartments and therefore not as social as other student accommodations. I would not recommend
greenhouse as it is quite far from town. However if you do get put there do not worry all student
housing is basically the same and are what you and you corridor mates make of it.

Student life in Lund is dominated by the student nations which are like fraternities and
sororities except all can join. The nations run pubs, clubs, lunches, dinners, sittnings and parties
for special occasion such as Valborg. It really doesn’t matter which one you join you get access
to all of them once you sign up for one. The nation you do sign up for usually provides a
discounted cover price for clubs. Some people also work at the nations, anyone, even the ones
they don’t join. In return you will get meal vouchers and after parties. I joined Vastgota nation,
which is one of the largest and most international nations. If you want to get heavily involved in
your nation, work lots and meet lots of swedes I would not recommend Vastgota. It was too
international and did not host events after you work to get to know your fellow members better.
All in all though, pick anyone. In the first few weeks go to lots of pubs, clubs, and lunches and
pick your favorite, it really doesn’t matter unless you want to get heavily involved in your nation.
Besides the nations there is also sports you can join such as water polo. In the first week there
will be a fair of clubs and of the nations where you can find more information on student life and
the nations and decide what’s best for you. Figuring things out on your own is part of the fun.
There is something for everyone, even a communist nation.

Furthermore, an organization called Erasmus Student Network puts on different events
and organizes trips for exchanges students. I highly recommend joining and going on the
trip to Finish Lapland. It was one of my favorite trips I went on. You get to do many cool things
while in Lapland and get to stay in a cabin in a ski town with your friends. ESN also organizes a
visa free trip to St. Petersburg and a trip called Sea Battle which I did not do, choosing the
former instead. ESN also puts on a few sittnings and pub crawls. You may also be able to
volunteer or work for the organization.

While the nation provide relatively cheap fun for students, Sweden is an extremely
expensive country. I underestimated how expensive it really is. The sales tax on goods was 25%.
A meal and one drink in an average restaurant can easily cost more than 30 Canadian. There is
cheaper options but the few bars and clubs that exist outside the nations are extremely expensive.
A bottle of Carlsberg in a nation is around 35 crowns, while a pint is around 69 in a sports bar.
Cheaper options for eating out include falafel and the many coffee shops where you can go and
have Fika with friends. Groceries are also a bit more expensive than they are in Canada. As is
alcohol sold in the state run liquor store Systembolaget. While similar to BC liquor stores it
closes a lot earlier. The good news is bottles of European beers and wines are cheaper than they
are in Canada. The large tax burden shows in the expansive welfare state in Sweden and the high
quality of life.

Academically, I found my courses to be fairly easy and less demanding then my courses
at SFU. This may be because I took courses that were just for exchange students on topics such
as Sweden and world issues. Information for these courses can be found on the Lund university
website. The general consensus among most exchange students is that these courses were much easier than their courses back home. Students who took regular courses for Swedish students found them equal to their courses back home. The exchange student courses involved less testing and were generally pass/fail based on just the final or a final and one or two assignments. All of my finals were take home written papers. One semester in Lund is divided into two periods split in the middle of March. Students will usually take two courses in each period. Some courses do run longer or all of the semester. All my teachers were very nice and accommodating. Unlike SFU many of my classes’ lectures were not mandatory to attend, and teachers required only that you attend a few seminars. Most of the learning was done through independent studying and reading.

While this report may seem brief and you probably still have many unanswered questions as I did, do not worry. Things will work out. You will get many answers upon on arrival and any worries you have will fade away. It’s impossible not to have fun while on exchange. You will meet lots of people and make great friends. You will travels lots and see many different places. Reflecting on my exchange academically I believe I have gained valuable life experience that will benefit me in any future endeavours I undertake. I also have a stronger desire to one day live and work outside of Canada.

Skåne in February.
Main University building.

Streets of Lund.
Lomma Beach.

Skåne in May.