Preparation for exchange

Researching Courses/Academic Information
As part of the exchange application to Malmö University, you should already know which course(s) you have been accepted to prior to going to Sweden. If not, on the university’s website you can find most of the courses’ syllabus’ as well as schedules. One thing that I would like to known is that because I took Interaction Design, there was a section of my course that required Arduino. When I was in Sweden I ended up having to buy a new Arduino kit, even though I had one from previous SIAT courses.

Image 1 Orkanen library is a great place to study!
Packing, what to bring
Sweden is a cold country! Although Malmö is located in the very south of Sweden, it can still get quite cold. I bought an extra warm jacket, and many warmer clothes. Also, during my exchange I chose to go to Northern Lapland (something you’ll hear about from the ESN Student Group) to see the northern lights, go on husky safaris and swim in the Arctic Ocean! So definitely pack some warmer clothes if this is of interest of you and a pair of good winter shoes as well (I survived with my pair of Timberlands). In the summer months, Malmö does get warm; the warmest I experienced (in May/June) was around 25 degrees! I had some summer clothes with me, but there are lots of places for shopping, stores like H&M (which is Swedish!) and a lot of second hand stores as well if you need.

Travel and transportation
The easiest way to get to Malmö is actually flying to Copenhagen Airport and then taking the train (about 30mins) to Malmö Central Station. The Malmö Airport is further out and takes an hour to get to! If you arrive on “Arrival Day” volunteers from Malmö University will greet you on the platform, and show you to the university. During this they also show how to get a bus pass, which is called a “JoJo” (pronounced “YoYo”) card! This is similar to a compass card where you can reload and use on the busses. I also highly recommend getting a bicycle! Malmö is a very bike friendly city, and from student housing to the University is only a 10 – 15min bike ride. It’s a great way to get around the city and will end up costing you less than taking the bus everyday. I bought a second hand bike online, but you also find other students selling them as well.

Financial details
It is true that Sweden is an expensive country. Most of the time my exchange friends and I would cook and eat at home. The best example I have is like if you were shopping at a Wholefoods, those kinds of prices, so what we are used to but a couple dollars more. Also, Sweden is a very cashless city! Most places will take cards, I mostly used my VISA throughout my exchange. The only times I needed cash was when I visited the local fruit market, paying friends back when we shop together, or as mentioned before when I bought my bike! Other than that, I did not need cash much for Sweden.
During exchange

Arrival and orientation
As mentioned before, if you arrive on “Arrival Day” you will be greeted by Malmö volunteers who will show you to the university, give you a welcome packet and get your key for your student housing. There is also a two-week orientation filled with activities, tours, and even a trip to IKEA! You can also sign up to take the Swedish for Exchange Students, which will require you to purchase a textbook that can be bought during these weeks.

Accommodation and living
I lived in the Rönnen International Students Housing and I highly recommend it! It’s where most of the exchange students will be staying and it is a lot of fun. There are four floors, and each floor can house around 20 students. I got my own room and bathroom! There is a shared kitchen and lounge, which is great for hanging out and cooking together with your friends!

Academic details (lecture format, schedules, grading, etc.)
At Malmö University I was took the course Interaction Design. The course had five projects, each were graded on a pass/fail. Every project is a group project but there are individual elements as well. Every week there would typically be a lecture, a supervision (similar to a lab or feedback session) and a presentation day.

Country information
As I said before, Sweden is a cold country! Malmö is typically warmer because it is in the very south, however it is also a very windy city! Also most Sweds speak English, so there is not much of a language barrier.
Social and extra-curricular activities

During the weeks of orientation, you will meet student groups that plan events and activities. A lot of the times we hosted our own parties at Rönne! There are also different events you can find through Facebook or a ton of great coffee shops for a Swedish fika! Another bonus is that Copenhagen is only a 30min train ride away, making it great for day trips, also when the weather gets a bit warmer the beach near the Turning Torso is a must!

Reflection after exchange

What you've learned and the challenges you faced
Exchange gives you an experience like no other. One of the biggest things I’ve learnt is how to be independent. It is not just about cooking and cleaning for yourself, but also balancing all the things you have to do along with school. Another thing that exchange will do is push you out of your comfort zone, I’ve met people from all over the world and tried so many different new things that I wouldn’t have if I wasn’t on exchange. Finally, exchange also taught me how to be better with my money. Like I said before, Swedish is an expensive country, and I only had an amount of money for 4 months, plus 2 months of travelling, so keeping within my budget was a must!

What you wish you knew before you left

There were some things I’ve already mentioned before, but another thing was I wish I knew more about the Lapland trip I was going to go on! This trip was very expensive ($1000+) and it wasn’t something that I was expecting to go on, but I am so glad that I did. Not only did it cost a lot, but also a lot of my friends had to buy snow pants, boots and scarves while they were in Sweden. I do have to admit, this was one of the best trips ever, and I’m so glad that I went!

Advice/tips for other students
It’s a cliché but don’t be afraid to try new things! You never know if you’ll like something unless you try it!