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Term: Fall, 2018

Name of host institution: Stockholm School of Economics

Host country: Sweden

Monthly Activity Log

Sep2018

The first month is the most exciting month. First time being to a foreign university, I meet students from different countries and different universities at Stockholm. The most interesting part is certainly the mingling session during lectures. We have mingling sessions in order to find our group mates for the group project. Each group must include students from different universities, countries and gender. Therefore, I have this precious opportunity to chat and share my opinions and feelings with lots of students from such as U.S., Canada and France etc

Oct2018

The highlight part of this month is certainly my trip to the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. As there's a small break in between two periods in a semester, I went on a 2-week trip with a girl I met in Stockholm. We travel to these three different countries. My favorite country is undoubtedly Belgium because of the gorgeous architecture as well as delicious snacks.

Nov2018

In November, I travel around in Sweden and most of the time at Stockholm because of my packed class schedule. I went to the tourist spots at Stockholm such as the city hall, the amusement park Gröna Lund and Gamla stan which is a lovely place for shopping. Stockholm is certainly a great place to travel on foot.

Dec2018

Being in the last month in Sweden, I feel sad because time flies but meanwhile excited to travel back to Hong Kong again after one semester. The highlight of this month is that I went to Norway with my friends from Hong Kong that went to exchange last semester as well. I finally have the chance to take a look at the famous drawing, The Scream drawn by Edvard Munch. It is really impressive.

Overall Experience

This exchange program has offered me a precious opportunity to immerse myself in the Swedish and Scandinavia Culture. In the past few months, I have experienced a completely different and rewarding lifestyle that I have never been tried before.

The most impressive part of my exchange life is the studies part. As a HKUST student majoring in Economics and Finance, I have been learning theoretical Economics and Finance courses in the first two years of my university life. These courses mainly focus on the mathematics calculations and data analysis while most of the assignments are individual works. Compared to the above, the learning atmosphere and course arrangement in Sweden is quite distinct from Hong Kong. I have taken courses co-offered by three business universities in Stockholm. These courses are about entrepreneurship and startups. Aside from teaching academic stuff, seminars, discussions and presentations are conducted during lectures. For the discussions and

presentation parts, students are working in groups formed by ourselves. With limited time, we have to come up with new startup ideas, business model or lean canvas model, based on the lecture content. It is very challenging and rewarding to brainstorm an innovative idea, come up with a conclusion and present in front of the whole class in 3-hours time. Besides, I have never been working with people with different nationalities, such as French, American, Canadian, Swedish, Indian, Taiwanese and Singaporean etc. before going on exchange. The wide range of cultural background and academic background of a team are always a huge problem when we have to make a conclusion on our discussions. Yet, It is also the reason why I'm capable of developing a new way of thinking and insights.

Apart from studying, I have learnt a lot from my teammates in different courses. As an ordinary Hong Kong teenage girl, I have never been offered a chance to learn about different countries around the world, and therefore I only know about Asian culture before I go on exchange. My teammates and I enjoy staying and chitchat after group discussions. We talk about everything in our home countries, for example the food, the environment, or even famous leisure activities, which surprise me a lot. For example, ordinary Swedish people drink at least 3-4 cups of coffee in a day and most of the European people do not enjoy drinking the most popular drinks in Asia, bubble tea. One of my teammates also share about his feelings about the mandatory military services, which I, a Hong Kong people, do not know much about that. I believe that chatting and getting to know about European and different cultures would be a life-long, memorable and precious experience to me.

I have also been to different parts of Europe during the previous semester. The most unforgettable one is a trip held by my host university. It offers chances for students from all Stockholm universities to travel to the Northern part of Sweden, Kiruna and Abisko, at a discount price every year. The highlight of the trip is undoubtedly seeing the Northern light at night, which is also the major reason for visiting Kiruna and Abisko. It is the first time for me and my exchange buddies enjoying such a magnificent view that you can never understand unless you have a look at the Northern lights. We also have a good chat with the Indigenous resident in Kiruna, Sami people. They share about the history and culture of themselves and take us to visit their moose. Apart from all these meaningful activities, the most memorable part of the whole trip is the cold weather. Staying outdoor at -13 degree Celsius cold and snowy weather is really challenging and fun.

In overall, I really enjoy my time in Sweden and it is definitely a YES for an exchange journey in a university life.

General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

- Type of passport/travel document you are holding, visa requirements, required documents, visa fees etc.

With a Hong Kong passport, you only have to apply for an exchange student visa. The student visa can be applied via the link: <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Startpage.html> . First, fulfill the application form. It takes you around 2-week time to know the decision on your application. You should check the website frequently as there's no notifications when the result is out. Second, once your application is accepted, you can book an appointment to get your acceptance letter. Third, you have to make an appointment "Have your fingerprints and photograph taken" in any of their offices located in Sweden so as to get your residence permit card. Finally, after arriving Sweden, you have to take your residence permit card with your acceptance letter within 90 days.

You should apply for the visa as soon as possible because the quota for applying residence permit card limited, you may have no choice but to choose an office far from your home university to take your residence permit card if you're too late to do so. Yet, there may be additional quota in offered in September, so incase you cannot apply for the nearer office, you may wait til September and see if there's any new changes.

2) Orientation Activities

- Orientation sessions and activities organized by host institution and when were they held

For SSE, there will be email sent to you about the 2-day orientation days few days before semester starts.

3) International Services & Activities

- Services that are provided by the exchange office (e.g. pick-up service, cultural activities etc.)

SSE offers a Lapland trip to Kiruna and Abisko (The Northern part of Sweden) at a discount price. Exchange students are welcome to join.

4) Accommodations

- Types of accommodation offered, application procedures, availability of meal plans

There are dormitories offered. An email about housing application will be sent to you. Following the procedures mentioned in the email and apply for it. The housing fee is around hkd6000/month. Yet, offer is not guaranteed to exchange students. You may need to find housing by yourself if you do not get any offer.

There's no canteen or restaurant in SSE. Only a café selling salad in the campus. You may either

cook yourself a lunchbox and reheat it in the campus, or dine out. As the campus is located at the city center, you can easily find restaurants nearby. Lunch set may cost around hkd120-160.

5) Courses Registration

- Course registration procedures, restrictions, where to read course information?

An email sent by the course registration office of SSE state all the course registration details. You have to check the credit transfer issue which help you to decide which course to take. Also, please be reminded that time clash of courses will not be stated, so check the course timetable and venue carefully.

6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

- Class format, size etc.

Class format, assessment methods and size depends on courses. Some only requires essay and presentations while some need to take exam.

7) Finance & Banking

- Currency, expenses, best way to handle money matters

In Sweden, you can use e-payment everywhere, so I would not recommend you to bring a lot of cash.

8) Climate

- Weather information, temperature changes

Sweden is located in Northern Europe, so it is cold and dry. I recommend students to bring more than one gloves to keep warm as well as thick shoes to walk on snowy road.

9) Health & Safety

- Availability and usage of health center, safety matters

There's medical services offered to students which you may refer to the email sent by SSE.

10) Food

- Eateries – cooking, restaurants, food

Stockholm is famous for fish soup, which is around hkd120. You may try different Michelin restaurants in Stockholm. Yet, I don't recommend dine out at night because it is quite expensive, which costs you around hkd200.

11) Transportation

- Most common ways to commute, fare information

All public transport means around Stockholm such as metro, ferries and bus are operated by the company, SL. You may buy a SL card which costs SEK20, then add value to the card by purchasing student pass, ranging from 1-day, 3-day, 1-week, 1-month to 3-month

12) Communication

- How to stay connected with friends and family, communication with local people

Use any social media as you like to stay connect with your friends and family in HK. You may communicate with local people using English.

13) Sports & Recreation Facilities

- Facilities available, usage information

There's no sports facilities in SSE. There's a gym room nearby but there's no student discount.

14) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

- Opportunity of joining social and networking activities

You may join any clubs or societies. You will have the chance to know about all of these during the Orientation day.

15) Cautionary measures

- Things that need to be caution about (e.g. language, customs, clothing etc.)

Sweden is an international city that you don't have to worry about.

16) Other notes (if any)

- Other helpful tips or difficulties and solutions you have encountered

Items to bring

Clothes and identification. You don't have to bring kitchen utensils. Other things you can buy in Stockholm so don't worry. There's China market as well.

Useful links and contact

<https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Startpage.html>