

Exchange Report – BI Norwegian Business School

Spring Term 2021-2022

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Monthly Activity Log

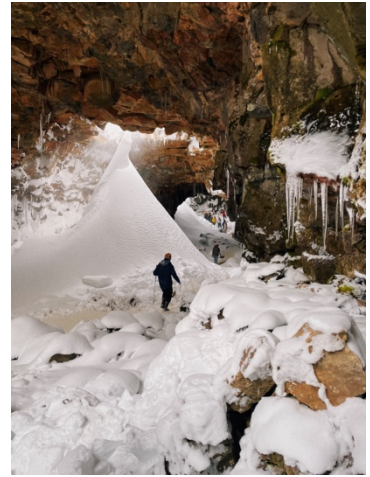
January

I arrived at Oslo from Hong Kong on January 5th and lived in quarantine hotel for 5 days before checking in to my dorm at Bjølsen. The orientation week started one week after my arrival, there were activities such as scavenger hunt, welcome dinner, escape room activity etc. Since the classes were still conducted online due to the covid restrictions in Norway, I had more time to explore the city like going to the folkemuseum, Edvard Munch Museum, ice-skating and skiing etc. I also took a trip to Tromsø with other exchange students, where we had the chance to learn more about the Sami culture with reindeer sledding and chasing the Northern Lights. I really enjoyed the snow in Norway but the only thing that was quite hard to adapt was the limited time of daylight as the sunset was around 3pm.



February

I had classes every Wednesday and Thursday, so I had plenty of time to explore other countries as well. I went to Sweden first to explore a city called Lund and visited some of my friends who were doing exchange there. We then went on a trip to Copenhagen and Iceland. After the trips, I came back to Oslo and went to ice bathing, which was one of the best experiences I had in Norway, it was freezing cold but fun! Besides, I also kept exploring the city by going to the Palace and Frogner park etc.



March

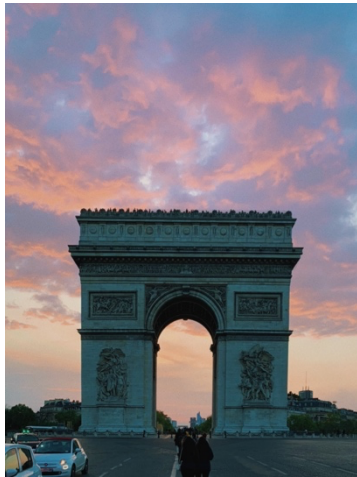
I went to the UK to visit my friends and watched an acapella concert which was performed by a group of Hong Kong students. I also joined a toga party threw by my friends in Oslo, it is a Greco-Roman themed costume party, where we drank wine, ate grapes and played some party games about Greece and Rome. After that, I had an amazing trip to Switzerland because the sceneries there are very spectacular. I tried paragliding in Interlaken and the instructor even allowed me to take the control! Then we took a train to Italy and explored Cinque Terre, Venice, Rome and Naples. I love Italian cuisine and literally ate gelato every single day.



April

I had to start working on some group assignments, but these can be done remotely with my laptop, so I decided to travel to Sweden (Malmö), France (Paris) and the Netherlands

(Amsterdam). I went to Disneyland Paris and there were more events than usual because they are celebrating the 30th Anniversary! Then I had a trip to Amsterdam mainly because of the King's Day. It was an orange-filled (everyone would dress up in orange) celebration for the king's birthday, drinking beers on the street and partying in daytime. I also joined a music festival and it was very amazing!



May

I am glad to finish all my exams on the first week of May, so I had time to travel around before going home. I had a cabin trip to Holmestrand in Oslo with some other exchange students, which is a great base for a vacation with good nature and amazing lake views. Then I went to Barcelona in Spain, and I was truly amazed by Gaudi's work, especially the La Sagrada Familia. I flew to Portugal and visited Lisbon afterwards, the food was so good and very affordable. I then took a bus to Lagos and did skydiving there, bucket list checked! The views in Lagos are so pretty and I was very grateful for the good weather.

Before leaving Europe, I went to one of the most famous popular fjord tour in Norway – Norway in Nutshell. This route encompasses places like Myrdal, Flåm, Gudvangen, Voss and Bergen. The highlight of this trip is the world famous Flåm Railway and a fjord cruise on the Nærøyfjord, which is Norway's most breath-taking UNESCO-protected fjord, and I also tried white water rafting in Voss. It was definitely the best way to wrap up my exchange in Norway!



General Exchange Information

1. Visa Procedure

After receiving the admission letter from BI, you'll have to apply the visa through VFS Global as soon as possible, as it took around 1.5 months for the entire process, because they will send your application to the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Beijing for approval. It costs around HKD5,500 for the whole visa application process. Remember to make an appointment to the police station and apply for the residence card when you arrived in Norway.

2. Orientation Activities

You will receive an email inviting you to join a Facebook group to meet other incoming exchange students. In early January, a digital study week was also held on zoom to provide some basic information regarding how to use the library resources at BI as well as tips on surviving in Norway on a student budget. An exchange buddy group will also be assigned to you where you will be able to make friends from different nationalities.

3. International Services & Activities

You can also take part in the events that are arranged by BI, such as welcome dinner (will be served with a two-course Scandinavian meal), cross-country skiing, museum visits (a guided tour in the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History – Folkemuseum), movie night etc.

4. Accommodations

There are 3 housing providers that you can choose from. SiO, BSN and Diakonhjemmet. I picked SiO and stayed in Bjølsen (NOK5,204 per month) because it is close to both BI (around 10-min walk and 5-min bus ride) and the city centre (around 20-min bus ride). It is nice to live closer to central station especially if you are out during night-time and I would say it is a very safe neighbourhood. There are also 3 supermarkets in Bjølsen – Kiwi, Rema 1000 and Meny (cheapest to the most expensive), better go to Kiwi first to get the cheaper goods! Regarding the room types, you can choose to live in furnished single room and studio flat, I picked the former one because it is cheaper, and it also allows me to make friends with my flatmates. I am very satisfied with my accommodation as it comes with a private bathroom, a stunning room view and my flatmates were very responsible in making the common area clean and tidy.

Some of my friends stayed in Kringsjå, which is also very affordable with a larger common area than Bjølsen, but less accessible with public transportation and it is also quite far away from BI.

Once you have accepted the offer, you will be asked to pay a deposit of NOK8,000, and it will be returned to your account after the contract ends.

5. Courses Registration

Before registering the courses, you should check the database first. If the courses are not available there, you can also apply for courses mapping to see if UST approves, so that you can make sure the courses that you are going to study in BI will be able to transfer back to UST. In BI, you can enrol up to 4 courses (7.6 ECTS each) for each semester.

6. Teaching & Assessment Methods

The teaching style is much more relaxed, and the contents are easy to understand. Because of the pandemic, the classes are conducted in hybrid mode where lecture videos will be posted online for students to rewatch it. The classes are also shortened to 2 hours (it was around 3 hours originally) but there are more pre-lecture assignments or materials to read. One thing that I like about BI is that you can access

to previous exam question paper on the school portal easily which is very useful and convenient.

The courses that I took are as follows:

FIN3516 – Valuation

It consists of one group assignment and 1 final exam; you can also obtain hands-on experience on the use of the Bloomberg terminal.

FIN 3617 – Behavioural Finance

It consists of 2 group assignments (a written essay and a video presentation) and 1 final exam.

ELE3736 – Real Estate Finance

100% on a 3-hour final exam.

EXC2901 – Norwegian Culture and History (An Introduction)

It consists of 1 field trip, 1 presentation and 1 take-home exam (2 essays).

7. Finance & Banking

Since it is cashless in Norway, so I mainly used my HSBC credit/ debit card for payments. Do remember to exchange some euros because cash might only be accepted in some European countries.

8. Climate

It is very cold in Norway, as you already know. The average temperature was around -5 degrees Celsius in winter, but everywhere has indoor heating so layering and a thick jacket will be fine to deal with the cold in Norway.

9. Health & Safety

The air quality in Oslo is very good and it is very comfortable to live in this city. Remember to get some medicines with you just in case you get sick, there are many pharmacies in the city but the medicines are quite expensive, so I would suggest bringing some to exchange.

Regarding the covid situation, Norway has already waived most of the restrictions and masks are no longer required. BI also provides free covid test kits for all students so do get tested if you have any symptoms.

10. Food

Dining out is very expensive in Oslo (around NOK200 per meal). Therefore, I would recommend cooking at home. Apart from the supermarkets that I have mentioned earlier, you can also go to the Asian supermarket (A Food Market), where you can get some Asian food. There is not much to choose from, but at least they are enough to satisfy your cravings for Asian food! For dining recommendations, I would suggest Oslo Street Food, The Salmon, Eataly and Paradis for gelato and waffle!

11. Transportation

I purchased a Ruter student pass for NOK488 each month, which covers all transportation in Oslo city (zone 1). They don't check tickets at the gates or unlike how octopus works in Hong Kong, they do routine spot checks and you will be charged a high fine of around NOK1000 if you do not have a valid ticket.

While for transportation to the airport, you'll have to take the Flytoget train which is around NOK100, and it only takes 20 minutes to airport from the city centre.

12. Communication

It was not an issue to communicate with the locals in Norway as most of them speak English. You can also register Norwegian courses at BI to learn some basic phrases. For me, I am fortunate to have met a local friend who have taught me some basic Norwegian phrases and it was quite fun to learn this language! It would be useful to download google translate on your phone because some restaurant or stores might not be able to provide English menu.

13. Sports & Recreation Facilities

SiO offers gyms around the city and there's even one on campus, which is very convenient and affordable. Oslo is also a great city for hiking and skiing!

14. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

The buddy group arranged by BI is very useful for you to meet some new friends and BISO also provides different activities for students. You can also crash in other friends' buddy group to meet more people.

15. Cautionary measures

Bus culture in Norway: In Norway, people strive to find a seat where they can sit by themselves, because they might consider sitting next to someone as an invasion of privacy.

Data plan in Norway: It is more expensive to apply for data plan in Norway so I would suggest bringing a SIM card with you first, then buy a new one in other European countries.

16. Checklist of items to bring

Important documents: BI admission letter, visa letter, vaccination certificate

Others: wifi router, travel adapter, SIM card, medicine, lozenges (it is more expensive to buy in Norway's pharmacy, so better bring some from HK just in case)

17. Useful links and contacts

VFS Global (for visa): <https://www.vfsglobal.com/en/individuals/index.html>

BI: <https://www.bi.edu/>

BI courses: https://programmeinfo.bi.no/nb/kurs?lang=en&sem=2021-spring&title_search=

SiO Housing: <https://www.sio.no/en/mypage/overview>

Credit Transfer Database: <https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/useful-tools/credit-transfer/database-institution>

BI contact (info hub): info@bi.no