Travel to Stavanger

Since I am a Norwegian myself, travelling to Stavanger following the Christmas break was not too difficult. Since my parents live on the west coast, I decided to take the opportunity to travel a bit before arriving in Stavanger. I flew to Bergen where I spent a week with some friends from High School, before taking the «Danish boat» from Bergen to Stavanger. The journey took approximately 4 ½ hours, but totaled closer to 6 hours due to waiting times before and after as well as the bus ride into Stavanger Sentrum (city center). It was a beautiful way to start my journey in Southern Norway, as I got to experience nice views of the fjords and mountains on the way.

Housing in Stavanger

Before the exchange period began, I had spent a lot of time and effort trying to find a nice place to live. I mainly used websites such as FINN and Hybel.no to look for available apartments, as well as to look for possible roommates. A lot of the international students arriving in Stavanger use the “looking for roommates” possibility on the pages, which facilitates communications between people looking for apartments. In the end I did not find an apartment (or roommates)
that suited me perfectly through these sites. Since I am lucky enough to be from Norway, I reached out to my friends and family to see if I had any contacts that might know of somewhere that would be perfect for me to live. This led me to a beautiful and modern cellar apartment, with one bedroom and no roommates. The pay was not too high (approximately 4500 NOK including everything pr. month), and the landlords were my own age which felt very comfortable. The apartment was situated about 10 minutes with bus from the city center and 30 minutes (with 1 bus change) from the University, but I found that the Kolumbus bus system was easy to understand as well as reliable. Unfortunately I ended up only living there for about 4 months, since the outbreak of Covid-19 in March led to classes being cancelled and I eventually moved back to my parents home earlier than expected.

University and Classes

The University in Stavanger is situated on the top of a hill south-west of the city center, but is also easily reached through public transport. The bus routes also pass other popular areas such as a big mall, sporting arenas, a swimming pool and more, which makes it easy to co-ordinate your travel throughout the day. As an EMMIR student, we had four courses we attended throughout the semester. One of these was about migration and immigration in/to Norway and the Nordic countries, which was mandatory and ran from mid-January till the end of March.

Although the travel to University took 20 minutes from the city center, it was a good way to spend time with my classmates
The three other courses were chosen, as we had to choose three from a selection of six, and were offered by EMMIR’s partner university in Slovenia. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, this meant that only one of the three courses were held in person, with the last two being offered through Zoom classes. The class I attended in January 2020, held by Jure from the Slovenian partner University, fulfilled all my expectations. Jure was in-depth, encouraged discussions in the classroom, and was not afraid to let the conversation go where we wanted it to. The topic – borders and citizenship – became particularly interesting to have in mind two months later, when the Corona virus caused international borders to close and stopped most forms of migration (even within nation states).

Since the University closed for classes and students in mid-March, the last two courses were held digitally through Zoom. The first course was somewhat difficult to follow, due to the short time the professor, the EMMIR team, and the University had to prepare themselves for online education. The last course was executed well, probably also due to feedback received from the former course. All in all, I feel like the semester fulfilled its promises regarding academic output and learning. If I were to share the two topics that were the most interesting to me, I would first elevate the focus we had on childcare in Norway through the “Nordic Module”. I liked this topic because it stimulated good discussions in the classroom and allowed the students to share how child care is thought of in their different home cultures, which was interesting to me seeing that what was taught (Nordic childcare) is what I have also been used to seeing as I am from Norway. The second topic was covered in the last course, where we discussed Gender, Work, and Migration. This allowed me to explore “the Nordic Model” of policing sex work(ers), which was a new field of interest for me. Through the writing of our individual exam at the end of the course I learned a lot about this that I was not aware of before.

Social Life

With Norwegian being my mother tongue, I had no problems understanding and relating to the local population in Stavanger – although their local dialect can be challenging to the untrained ear. I had two friends already in the city, whom I spent the most time with outside of EMMIR, and I even got the chance to meet a cousin of mine whom I hadn’t seen for years. With the other EMMIR students I was able to explore different parts of the city, as we were good at inviting each other to our homes for parties or dinners and such. Since I left in the end of March, I did not have too much time to explore – but some favorite places of mine were the city cinema; a nice (authentic) Italian café; and the cellar area of the University Library. Fargegata was also
frequently visited (especially after 10 PM on weekends for a beer or three…), and my favourite bar was Frøken Pil, where they often would arrange Latina/salsa nights. I attended a few salsa courses through the University before everything shut down, which is something I would strongly recommend to future students. My EMMIR cohort were also good at visiting the University sports center, which created a good environment for working out together and trying gym classes. My one regret is that I was not able to visit the Stavanger outdoor swimming pool – but I did have the possibility to visit Tromsø! In January I spent a few days in Tromsø with one of the other girls from my cohort, where we stayed with another cousin of mine. For future exchange students to Stavanger, I would strongly recommend taking a trip up north – whether it be to Tromsø, to Alta, or to Bodø.

Here is a photo from the top of Tromsø: