

# **Student Experience Report: University of Stavanger**

## **Pre-Departure Preparation**

I am a European Master in Migration and Intercultural Relations (EMMIR) student and part of our program is a mandatory 2<sup>nd</sup> semester at the University of Stavanger (UiS). The planning around this exchange was straight forward as this is embedded in our program. During our first semester we meet representatives of UiS on two occasions. Once during the intensive phase where they discussed our class options, life in Norway, how to find housing, and more. After meeting them the first time, the program coordinator at UOL advised us on how to apply for the Erasmus+ funds. We were walked through the paperwork process with our coordinator and supported by both administrations at UOL and UiS. After the application was successfully submitted, we received information on how to use the systems at UiS to register for classes and such before arrival.

## **Travel and Arrival**

I planned to arrive a few days before class which allowed me enough time to unpack and settle in. I flew out of Amsterdam on SAS to Stavanger with a short layover in Oslo. I found the price of the ticket to be very reasonable as I got a student rate. Upon arrival my roommate and I took a taxi from the airport to our apartment. It was rather expensive, and we lived about halfway between the airport and city center. I would not recommend anyone take a taxi, but to take the express or local bus. However, we arrived around midnight in a storm and just wanted to reach our final destination.

## **Accommodation**

There are plenty of options for accommodation in Stavanger. At first, I opted for student housing, but I was not happy with the offer I received in Sola. I wanted to be closer to the city center as many alumni of the EMMIR program recommended to us. After denying the student housing option I began to look on finn.no and hybel.no for a two-bedroom apartment that my classmate and I could share. I truly enjoyed our apartment as it was spacious and conveniently located near a bus stop and supermarkets. In the beginning I was disappointed with not finding a place in the city center, however in the end I was more than pleased with my Stavanger home. Rent in Stavanger is more expensive than Oldenburg so keep that in mind when searching for a place to live.

## **Studying at the Host University**

While at UiS, I took four classes which totaled 30 ects. My entire cohort had to take MM21 Emigration and Immigration: A Northern European Perspective (12 ects) and choose three electives among six options. For my electives I choose the following classes:

- MM22.1 Migration and Integration (6 ects)
- MM22.3 Migration, Gender, Development: African Perspectives (6 ects)
- MM22.5 Controversies over Multiculturalism (6 ects)

I enjoyed MM22.3 and MM22.1 the most as they aligned with my interests, exposed me to new concepts, and pushed me to further my knowledge outside the course. I found all my professors to be very accessible and open to conversation outside of class. With my classes came a look of work which I liked to do on campus. All over campus there are several study areas to meet up with friends and collaborate or block everyone out and get to work. Things did get a little crazy in March with covid-19, but UiS was quick to make decisions to protect the students at the university and enable us to continue our studies.

### **Everyday Life and Leisure Time**

Besides studying I had a very active social life in Stavanger. I had a membership at the gym which I would highly recommend. I would attend several fitness classes a week with classmates. In addition, we had many group dinners and nature adventures. I am not going to lie! I was terrified of the cold, but it honestly was not bad. Once I got over my fear of the cold, I realized Stavanger has so much to offer especially outdoors. In my free time I would go on walks, horse back riding, hikes, sit by lakes for a picnic, and go bike riding. Also, there are a variety of clubs to get involved in depending on your interests. I was able to attend different events weekly and meet many other international students studying at UiS that showed me the ropes and kept the invitations flowing.

Stavanger is easy to navigate and you can get a student bus ticket for a reasonable price while you are there. Personally, I found Norway to be quite expensive when compared to Germany. There aren't many cheap eats littered around the place like Oldenburg. Brush up on your cooking skills and forget Aldi prices! It is more expensive, but with proper budgeting it is more than manageable to live a well-maintained lifestyle in Stavanger.

While in Stavanger, I was able to volunteer through Johannes Learning Center and support many resettled refugee families. It was nice to explore Norway together with them. I was also active in the church while there and spent most weekends with my new church community. Not only did I enjoy Stavanger, but I also found many flight deals to European destinations. I was able to fly to London for a long weekend and it only cost me 22 euros! I also had a few other trips planned in April but was unable to experience them due to corona virus. Stavanger is not a big city and doesn't have a large party scene, but everyday life is fulfilling.

### **General Experience**

Hands down, I enjoyed my stay in Stavanger and sincerely wish I got to stay as long as planned. It was an enriching experience from university to my personal life. I had many preconceived notions of Norway before attending UiS and my experience there shattered and proved many of them wrong. The people are friendly and luckily for me everyone I met spoke English to some degree which made the transition quite easy. Arriving in Norway it was cold, wet, and dark but once I learned the rules of the land all was splendid. Just remember never leave home without an umbrella and soak up the sun any chance you get!