

**Exchange university**

Budapest University of Technology and Economics

Degree programme

Molecular Science and Technology (TMV/TM)

The most unusual school term of my life

Before departure

Studying abroad has been something that I have had on my mind for quite some time, but it all started when my uncle told me about his exchange studies in high school. It sounded very intriguing and like something you must do at least once in your life, live abroad. That is why I decided that I absolutely had to live abroad as well. The reason why I chose Hungary is rather straight forward, my mom is Hungarian, and I wanted to indulge in the Hungarian culture.

I expected to experience new things and meet different people, but I had no idea that I would meet so many different people from so many parts of the world. Since I stayed in Europe, the preparations were very simple and required little time, it took some time to pack my travel bags but that was it.

Upon arrival

Since my mom is Hungarian, she wanted to go there for a short vacation at the same time I went there so both me and my parents went there nine days before my first introduction day was at the university. They stayed there for five days which gave us a lot of time to explore the city together. We also met with some relatives there which was really comforting to have.

When my parents went back home to Sweden it was time for the introduction week. During this week there were a lot of activities to get to know the other exchange students. The common denominator of the activities was almost always the consumption of alcohol since it is so cheap there. During this week I got to know a lot of different people from different corners of the world.

Financials

I received a scholarship for being an Erasmus+ student, other than that I took my regular student loan and student support from CSN. There were no mandatory fees at the school but there was a card you could buy to get discounts on different student activities but also at some restaurants. This card was called ESN card and is something I would really recommend any future students there to acquire.

You do not really have to think that much about saving money since everything is a lot cheaper than it is in Sweden. However, pork and chicken were a lot less expensive than beef and fish which is good to think about.

Accommodation

It was easy for me to get accommodation since I have a family friend who has an apartment in the city which she rents out when she is not there. The costs were 4000 kr per month but that was disregarding the gas, electricity, water, and internet. However, those costs were quite low. 4000 kr might seem like a lot but it was a three-room apartment of about 60-70 square meters which seemed fair. I also got the apartment all to myself and did not have to share it with anybody else.

University and studies

The university was quite big, both student wise and area wise. Around 20 000 students go there and it is actually one of the universities that take on the most exchange students in Europe if I recall it correctly which made it so interesting to go there, you could meet students from so many different places. The types of courses they offered were very similar to the ones offered at KTH in the chemistry area. The difference between the universities was that at KTH you divide a school year into four

different periods but that was not the case at BME. At BME usually the courses were only 3-4 ECTS which meant that you had to read more courses in a term than what you usually do at KTH. Another thing was that you read all courses simultaneously during the whole term, this meant that I read eight courses at once during my semester there. This seems like a lot but there were only one class per week, and I managed to get in two classes per day Monday through Thursday. This meant that I had a three-day weekend which can never be wrong.



Figure 1: A picture of the university with the main building in the middle with a red roof.

Courses

Almost all the courses I read were interesting and some of them connected with each other on some parts which made it a lot easier to study. I read both theoretical courses and practical courses, some more directed towards medicine, some towards organic and physical chemistry and surface chemistry. During normal circumstances (meaning no coronavirus) the classes were good and informative, some more than others. Since I read eight courses at once it feels like speaking about all of them individually would take up too much space and would make this report stale. However, if you want to go to a university with good teachers then BME is definitely a good choice.

City and country

I stayed in the country for the entire period that I was on the exchange due to Corona. For the most part I was only in Budapest. Budapest is a lovely city with a lot of different places to explore. Even though I was there for four months it felt like I left a lot of the city unexplored. There wasn't much of a culture shock since I've been in Hungary before and have a Hungarian mother but one thing that I noticed a lot was that they love fat, almost every traditional Hungarian dish is drenched with fat. This was not so healthy but boy was it delicious!

There are a lot of places are enjoyable to explore but down below I will mention the most iconic and must visit places.

The first one is the parliament which in my eyes is one of the most beautiful buildings I have ever seen. The building is impossible to miss since it is in the middle of the city and one of the highest buildings in the city.



Figure 2. The parliament at night.

The second one is St. Stephen's Basilica which as high as the parliament with 96 metres. There is a law that no buildings can be higher than these two buildings so that they will not be hidden which is a very good law. It lets Budapest keep its charm since it lacks skyscrapers and other high buildings. Going inside the Basilica is a must since it is so beautiful with a very detailed architecture.



Figure 3. St. Stephen's Basilica.

The last place in Budapest which is a must visit is the castle together with the Matthias Church, the church was built in the 11th century!



Figure 4-5. These pictures show the Matthias Church on the left and the view of the parliament from the walls next to the church.

Other than the must-see places in Budapest, there are two other places that I warmly recommend. The first one is Heroes square and the surroundings around it, here there are statues of the first kings in Hungary and it is truly a beautiful place! From here it is just a few minutes to the famous Szécsenyi thermal bath which is one of the biggest thermal bath complexes in Europe and it is over a hundred years old!



Figure 6. Heroes square.

The other place is an island which is located between the Buda and the Pest side of the city on the river Danube. It is essentially just an enormous park with a football field, thermal baths together with both indoor and outdoor swimming pools!



Figure 7. Springtime on Margit Island.

Leisure and social activities

Outside of school there was a lot of different activities available to sign up for, however I was a bit lazy and only signed up for a gym membership at the school gym where I could go after school. It was big

and very fresh. The only downside was that it opened at 2 pm on workdays which meant that I could not go there on the days where I had a four-hour window from 10 am to 2 pm. I also went running a lot, especially when the lockdown of the city happened in the end of March due to covid-19. However, before the lockdown the activities I took part of mostly contained alcohol since it is so cheap. On Mondays, the biggest bar/club in the city had a special offer between 9-11 pm where beers were only 50 cents each! That meant that we could buy a lot of beer and play beer pong for hours! It was a lot of fun and was what I did every Monday until lockdown happened. Even though I had a class at 8 am the next day I never skipped this fun tradition. Other than that, there was a pub evening every Wednesday with the school network where we went to a different pub each week which was also a lot of fun!

There were two times that I went outside of the city. The first time I went to a small city called Eger with the school network on something that was called Freshman Camp which was for all exchange students! During the day we got to roam around the city and at night we went to a wine tasting, this was a must since Eger is famous for their good wines. After that we went to a hostel where, we had a lot of fun activities that, of course, contained alcohol! The next day we went to a nice thermal bath complex that had both indoor and outdoor pools, both cold and warm. It was so relaxing!



Figure 8-9. These pictures show a view over Eger (left) and the thermal bath complex just outside of Eger (right).

The other trip I did was to a small historical town called Hollókő which I did with my mother's cousin and his family. They live in a city 30 kilometres east of Budapest called Gödöllő so it was easy for me to go there so we could go to Hollókő together. The town was very beautiful and gave me a good look of how Hungary looked like a long time ago.



Figure 10-11. These pictures show a street in Hollókő with houses to the sides and a small church in the middle (left) and Hollókő castle which offers a nice view over the nearby landscape.

When lockdown started, I had a small group that I hung out with from time to time where we just explored the city, went out to eat and drank some beers. It was not exactly what I had in mind when I

signed up for exchange studies, but I do not regret going there for even a second, it was truly an experience of a lifetime!

Other recommendations and observations

I do not really have anything to add just that I am extremely grateful to all the nice people I met during my stay there and all the new friends I made. I know for sure that I am going to meet a lot of them again and I am looking forward to it a lot! As a finisher to this report I would just like to add two nice pictures I took in the city that I am very proud of.



Figure 12. The Danube a wind still night just after sunset.



Figure 13. View over the city up on Gellért Hill at sunset.