



Study exchange at AHO in Oslo

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AHO - Arkitektur- og designhøgskølen i Oslo
Architecture

Before departure

I choose to apply for an exchange in Oslo since this was already one of my top choices when I had to choose the school where to study my Masters. I am generally interested in Scandinavian architecture and culture, and I was also interested to experience life in Norway. Furthermore, the similarity to Sweden (also in terms of the study approach and architecture) would have made the experience not too unfamiliar and wouldn't have required too much preparation and specific arrangements, which would have made my life easier since it is my last year and I could therefore focus on the studies.

Upon arrival

I arrived about a week before the start of the course, enough time to settling down and get a basic understanding of the accommodation / surroundings / city. In the first days at school, before the courses start, there were some activities organised by the school specifically for new students (international and exchange), that were very helpful for us to get to start to know each other and get familiar with the school and the facilities.

Financials

Norway is a really expensive country, and this has to be taken into account when applying to study there, but it is also possible to live within a budget. I received a scholarship for the studies, and it was more or less enough to cover my rent. I was living in a student accommodation, and this is a good way to have a fairly low rent while still be living in the city. Grocery shopping can be quite expensive, but there are always offer and discounted price so it can be good to always keep an eye open for that; additionally, there are some cheaper supermarket and shops, especially around Grønland and Tøyen.

Transportation can be a big expense as well, but the city is relatively small so if one finds an accommodation within the city, most of the time it's possible to reach any destination by foot or bike.

Leisure and cultural activities can also be quite expensive, therefore it is worth to always keep an eye open for free activities or student discounts (for example in August/September there was a weekend dedicated to students in the city, with plenty of free activities and visits to museums etc.).

School-wise, as always in architecture school one has to consider the cost of buying study material such as model material, paper, print credits, study trips.

It is worth to say also that if one manages to find a part-time job for the period, that can be really well payed and cover much of the costs together with the Erasmus grant.

Accommodation

I got my student accommodation through the school; it was really easy and straightforward to find it since as soon as I got accepted to the exchange I received information about it from the school.

My accommodation was a room with private bathroom and shared kitchen in a student housing in the Tøyen area, and it was a great value for money. Really close to the school as well as the rest of the city, it was comfortable and very well equipped. It is also possible to find rooms in shared houses, but the prices will get higher.

University and studies

The school is not too different from KTH (Architecture), in terms of size and didactics. There are many activities happening within the school (lectures, exhibitions, book launches, seminars, parties...), which make the school more “alive” than KTH, and make the institution well connected with the professional world and with the city. The workshops are also one other of the strong points of the school: they are very well equipped and both the staff and the fellow students are always ready to help. In general the feeling among the students is that of “owning” and taking care of the place, and being proud of it.

The presence of design and landscape architecture students, as well as the openness of the school and the shared facilities, makes the environment really inspiring, in the fact that it is possible on a daily basis to see and have exchanges with other related disciplines and studies. The mid-term (and final) show is a great moment to have a taste of what is happening in the school, and the diploma presentations, which I manage to attend at the end of the semester, are conducted in such a way that clearly shows the interest from the institution to promote and value the students and their work.

The Masters courses are generally taught in English and the environment is international, so generally speaking it's not necessary to know Norwegian, even though it can be beneficial to learn some words. It is also possible to take free Norwegian lessons organised by the school.

Courses

The didactics are studio-based, accompanied by an elective course (seminar based) once a week; in this it is pretty similar to KTH.

As always for studio-based courses, the main importance is on the choice of the studio and the elective, and the experience of the school with one studio or the other can differ greatly. Generally speaking, the offer is of a really high quality and it has both a strong local interest and an international vocation.

City and country

The city and the culture are relatively similar to Stockholm; Oslo is a really nice city to live in, it has a good scale where it is relatively easy and quick to move around, but it still has a good cultural and leisure offer as well as presenting a mix of cultures and environments. In my experience is definitely a city whose qualities are discovered mostly by living in it, rather than at a first impression.

The surroundings are also beautiful and some time should be spent travelling and discovering Norway outside of the city boundaries.

Leisure and social activities

I spent most of my spare time visiting the city and what it had to offer in terms of activities and museums. Because of the scale, the offer is not enormous but it still enough to always find something new to do. The possibilities of doing sports are also great, especially because of the relation with the surroundings, and it is easy to go hiking, skiing or swimming without even have to go outside of the city borders.