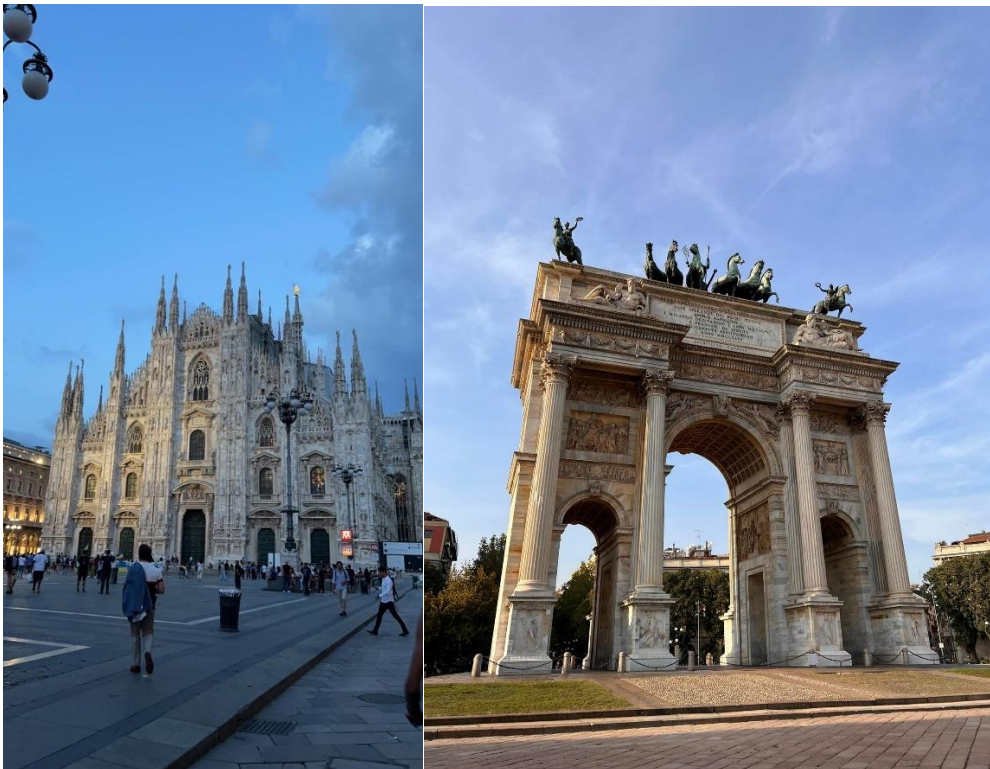




Exchange studies as a structural engineering student in Politecnico di Milano

Before departure

I applied for exchange studies because I wanted to experience a different culture and environment. I believed that the exchange program would enhance my communication skills and benefit me in the future, especially if I aim to work internationally. I chose the Politecnico di Milano and Italy as my destination due to the university's reputation and Italy's beauty. I was particularly interested in visiting landmarks such as the Duomo church in Milan and exploring the Alps, mountains, and Lake Como. I expected to receive a high-quality education at the university and to encounter a distinct environment compared to Sweden, where people might have different behaviours. The preparations for my exchange were effortless as Italy is located in Europe, and I did not require a visa. The course finding part might be a very time-consuming in order to have a working study plan, especially if you are interested in some specific courses, so be prepared. The courses were conducted in English, so I did not need to learn Italian, though the option was available for those who were interested.



Upon arrival

I arrived on September 2nd, one day before the start of my studies. During my time here, there was an "Activity Week" where students could participate in various events to get to know each other. I arrived two days prior to this week, which offered a range of activities including sports, parties, and other events. Additionally, there were activities designed to help familiarize us with the university and its various campuses. The "ESN" student union was also available to provide benefits and support for exchange students throughout their stay.

Financials

I received an Erasmus scholarship which is available for students studying in Europe. The accommodation was quite costly and finding a suitable place was challenging. On the other hand, food and dining options were reasonably priced, although it depends on the location. There are plenty of affordable options available, especially in supermarkets and some restaurants in the city. In my case, the combination of the CSN loan and the Erasmus scholarship was sufficient to cover expenses.

Accommodation

The accommodation search was challenging due to high demand at the start of the semester with many students searching for a place to live. Personally, I was only able to secure a place through a contact, an Italian girl, otherwise it would have been nearly impossible to find a suitable place. Speaking Italian may make your search easier as some Italians prefer to speak their own language, as English language proficiency is relatively limited compared to Sweden. Although the university offered some assistance with accommodation, it was limited and only a few students were able to take advantage of it. Most students had to find a place on their own. I lived in the Navigli area, which was popular for its nightlife and had two beautiful canals running through it. Although it was about 40 minutes from campus, I enjoyed the area for its many dining options and interesting places to visit. The 30-minute walk to the Duomo church was particularly enjoyable, as the church was beautiful and never grew old. My worst experience was with the poor conditions of my accommodation. My six-month contract was already signed before I arrived, and I couldn't cancel it. The apartment was not clean and had not been well-maintained, which was a bad start to my experience. I also lived with a roommate who was not concerned with keeping the place clean, and changing her habits was difficult as she had lived there for 12 years. I had to clean the apartment myself, and this led to me never cooking there and always eating out. Please note that this kind of experience is not typical, and most students do not encounter such issues. I would advise future students to be extra careful when checking the cleanliness and living situation of their apartment, as I made the mistake of not doing so due to desperation of having a place.



The garden outside my accommodation and Navigli area

University and studies

The University of Politecnico di Milano is large and offers many technical programs. The quality and experience is similar to KTH, with the main difference being that classes are held for the entire semester rather than two periods in one semester as at KTH. This means that exam periods are more intense as you have to study materials from the entire semester, which can be stressful. The difficulty level of courses varies, just like at KTH, even if two courses have the same credits. A typical day of studying at Politecnico di Milano begins with a morning lecture, followed by lunch and another lecture or self-study. The schedule can vary between courses. A typical day of studying at Politecnico di Milano is similar to a typical day at KTH.

Courses

Finding courses can be a time-consuming process, especially if you want to study a specific subject that may conflict with other classes in your schedule. You also need to find courses from the previous academic year, which may have an outdated schedule for your current academic year. Updated schedules are usually released before the start of the semester, so you should be prepared to make adjustments to your course choices. I ended up taking three courses, one from the Civil Engineering department and two from the Building and Architectural Engineering departments.

095879 - BRIDGE THEORY AND DESIGN 10 credits

This course focuses on bridges, with lectures on the theory and hands-on sessions. It includes many lectures and a group project. I found it to be the most demanding course I took, particularly the project component. This was partly due to our assistant who unfortunately was unhelpful, which was a shared opinion among all students who had him. Be aware that this could negatively impact your course experience. I regret not changing the course because of this part.

097626 - DESIGN OPTIONEERING 6 credits

This course focused on Grasshopper and its use in Rhino. We were taught, among other things, how to model complex shapes through parametric design. The course was highly engaging and informative, providing us with valuable skills and insights into the building industry. We were exposed to the intricacies of modelling complicated shapes and how they are created. Overall, this was one of the most fascinating and beneficial courses that I took, equipping students with useful knowledge and skills for the future.

096612 - INTEGRATED PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND DESIGN TOOLS 6 credits

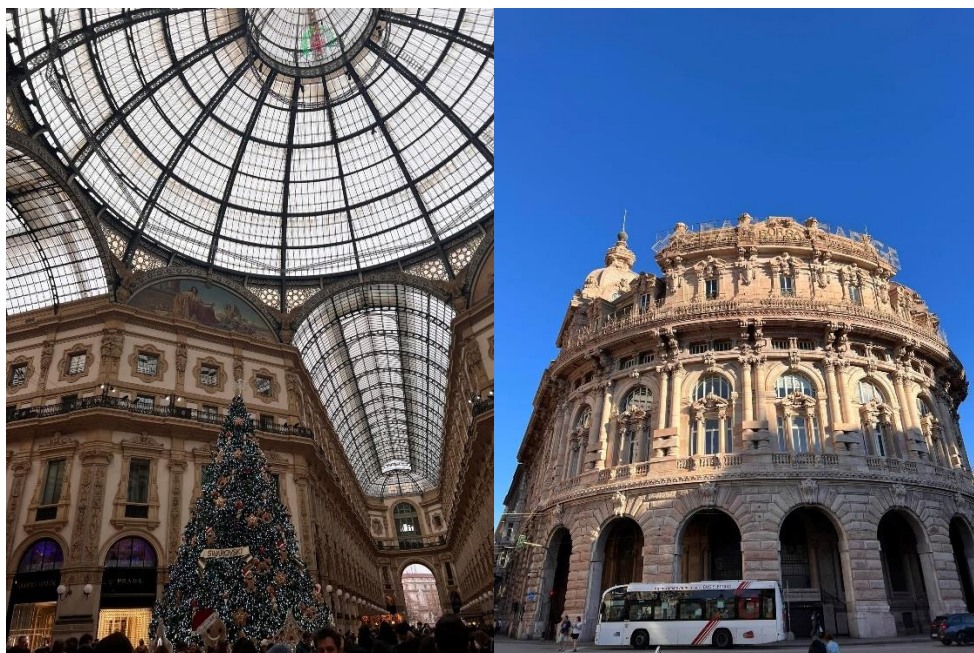
This course focuses on project management for buildings and its relation to BIM. It also delves into BIM related problems and different solutions, making it an excellent course for understanding some basic project calculations and learning more about BIM. Despite not being in the main campus in Milano, the Leonardo campus, this course is still highly recommended. It is important to note that the course is held in Lecco, a small town that is about an hour's train ride away from the central station of Milan. This offers an opportunity to experience a beautiful small town surrounded by mountains outside of Milan, but students need to plan their time and schedule in case they have other courses that might collide with this course. For those who have free time, it is an excellent chance to explore Lecco, even if they do not take the course. Overall, this is a simple course that is highly recommended for those interested in project management and BIM related calculations.



Lecco

City and country

Milan is a bustling metropolis that offers an ideal blend of history and modernity. The city is home to some of the world's most famous fashion designers, such as Versace, Armani and Prada, and is a global hub for fashion enthusiasts. As for Italy, I was amazed by the country's rich culture and history, and of course, the delicious cuisine. As with any new cultural experience, there was some degree of culture shock, but I found that Italians and Swedes share many similarities, such as a strong sense of family and the importance of enjoying life. There are also differences to be aware of, such as the language barrier and a more relaxed approach to punctuality. All in all, my time in Milan and Italy was a valuable opportunity, and I would recommend it to anyone seeking a new cultural experience.



Leisure and social activities

During my exchange studies at Politecnico di Milano, I had a great time in my spare time. I used to travel to nearby places and explore the beautiful Italian cities, study at the university library and work on my assignments, try out different Italian cuisines and hang out with friends. In terms of sports and culture, I got a chance to attend the Inter Milan and AC Milan matches, and there was a sport center in the university with the possibility of gym membership. The university also offered various activities, and I got a chance to participate in the "Get to know each other" activities organized by the university, which helped me to make good contacts with other students.



Sustainability

During my exchange studies in Politecnico di Milano, I was able to travel to Milan in a sustainable way as there was good public transport and even a possibility to take the train from Stockholm to Milan with some compensation for the ticket price. In my everyday life, I managed to live sustainably by walking, using public transport, and sorting my trash. Additionally, I had the opportunity to attend the university's sport center and gym, which promoted healthy living. Overall, my exchange experience in Milan was both enriching and sustainable.