

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name****Year and term for exchange**

Osman

2019 Fall

Exchange university

Tecnologico de Monterrey (ITESM)

Degree programme

Electrical Engineering

A fascinating, inspiring, cultural and educational experience that felt like a vacation; a study-vacation.

Before departure

My family and many of my friends (both in Sweden and Mexico) have asked me why I chose to go on an exchange and why Monterrey. I would explain to them that I wanted to have a completely new experience in a country that is as far away from Sweden, not only far in distance but also culturally and socially. Mexico was the perfect choice in that sense. In addition to that Mexico had, and still is being stigmatized as a dangerous country that has been ruined by drug lords. I was taught to not believe everything the media says, so I tried to have small expectations and thus, with an open-mind sought out to discover the real Mexico, and I was positively surprised.

The preparations we had to do were to take an online Spanish level test that determines which Spanish class one ends up in. One of the most important things to prepare before your arrival is to make sure that your health insurance is in accordance with the universities minimum requirement. I had an issue with this and ended up having to pay over 300 USD for the University sponsored health insurance. Keep in mind that although it is optional, it is recommended to get vaccinated before arrival, I got vaccinated for hepatitis A&B as well as Typhoid (included in hepatitis A vaccine).

Acquiring a visa beforehand was not necessary since I have a Swedish passport, I received mine in the airport. Another thing to remember is that transits through the USA require an ESDA visa which is available online.

Upon arrival

I arrived on the 3rd of August, 2 days before the introduction/orientation week, 9 days before the first day of lectures. The orientation week included a campus tour, some registration processes, as well as mandatory sessions about academic policies, security and discipline and health insurance policies. There's also a session about the culture & arts courses offered along with a session about the sports and activities offered and how to apply for them.

There is also a separate organisation called International Student Embassy, ISE for short, that organises parties, trips and other types of events. They also offer airport pickup and help with finding housing free of charge.

Financials

The only scholarship that was available from my institution (CBE) was a 7000kr scholarship, as I didn't study in Europe I wasn't eligible to receive the Erasmus scholarship. It turned out however that it wasn't completely necessary since Mexico is so much cheaper than Sweden, averaging at 2.5x cheaper. Some tips to save money: bring your own coffee to Uni, and if you're going to eat in campus eat in the cafeteria as they offer the most for the least amount of money, its healthier and cheaper than the other alternatives in campus.

Accommodation

I was lucky enough to get an accommodation 5-minute walk from the campus. I managed to get that housing thanks to the help of ISE organisation. It was rather cheap, I paid 2750kr for a room in a 2 floor, 3-bedroom shared house with two locals and their adorable 2-year-old dog Loira.

The house was in good condition, every other week a cleaning lady comes to clean the house for 60kr per person.

University and studies

Tecnologico de Monterrey is one of the top universities in Latin America and it was clear why, they have a relatively intensive method of teaching. The main differences are that throughout the semester we were assigned homework after every other lecture, 2-3 partial exams and 1-2 projects per course. It can be a lot to handle if you're doing 6 courses and on top of that trying to make time for travels and socialising. However since the schedule is fixed and doesn't change, its possible to choose courses so that you are free on Monday or Friday and thus have a long weekend to travel. I did that and managed to get both Fridays and Tuesdays off, but my Mondays and Thursdays were intensive. All the courses I took, except for Spanish, were in English, and in my experience the professors' level of English have been adequate. The campus is quite big and it resembled a small gated village, there were bikes that were free to use to get around, many different restaurants, cafes, convenience stores, banks, atm's, sporting facilities etc. But most remarkable was the abundance of friendly animals that roamed the campus!



Courses

The courses I chose to study were:

HI1008 Español lengua extranjera/ Spanish for foreigners

TE3027 Industrial Electrical Systems

TE3028 Efficient Use of Energy

TE3066 Smart Grids

IN2024 Models for Decision making

For the three TE courses I had the same professor which was quite convenient, and in those three courses the layout, structure, teaching methods, examination format and timing were similar. My personal favourite course was TE3028 because of its applicability and prospect.

City and country

To reiterate: I came to Mexico with a curious and open-mind, and was positively surprised. I came with the mentality of a Yes-man, I rarely said no to many events or trips especially if they were cultural. I even stopped being a vegetarian so that I don't miss out on the, and I cannot reiterate this enough, absolutely amazing cuisine that they have. The locals I encountered were very welcoming, kind, generous, hospitable and easy-going. They really helped me settle in and feel at home. Monterrey is the industrial capital of Mexico and has a very westernized infrastructure, roads, shops and restaurants. If you want to experience a more genuine city then look up Pueblos Magicos (magical cities), which are cities that the Mexican tourism ministry designate are rich in culture, history, natural beauty and great cuisine. Tip: If you are a vegetarian, I'd recommend choosing another city such as Guadalajara since Monterrey's cuisine consists of roughly over 90% meats.

Leisure and social activities

The University offers countless sports, activities, arts and culture classes. I tried to sign up some sports classes such as football and boxing as well as some dancing classes such as salsa and breakdancing, but by the time I applied all the classes were filled. The university also hosts sports tournaments for different levels of skill, I was involved in an 11 a-side football team that was organised by ISE and a 6 a-side futbol rapidó team that I organised with some exchange student friends. We made it to the semi-final and quarter-final respectively. I have the football and mostly the ISE to thank for helping me make as many friends as I made.

The best part of the exchange has to be the diverse network of contacts and friends I've made and the memories we created together and hopefully will continue to create.



Las Caguamas F.C.

Other recommendations and observations

Tips and recommendations: Before leaving Sweden make sure to update BankID, and install it on your computer in case you lose your phone. Order an extra bankcard in case you lose it or accidentally block it like I somehow managed to do. Mexican postal services are worthless. Stick with ISE they offer the most well-rounded trips and they are very inclusive, engaging, safe, and never let anyone be left out. Try to befriend locals even though it can be more comfortable to be around other Scandinavians and internationals, it'll be worth it because you get to truly experience Mexico, and you'll have place and people to visit! My one biggest regret is that I didn't stay longer!