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Chemical Engineering

My Exchange Experiences at Lund
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1.0 Studying in Lund University

1.1 Lund, Sweden

Lund is a small town located in southwest Sweden. It is believed to have been founded around 990 and is part of the Skane County. It originally belonged to Denmark and was the capital in the early 12th century. In the middle of the 17th century, Lund was returned to Sweden. Today, the town has 102,257 inhabitants and is the seat of the Lund Municipality in Skane County [1].



Figure 1: Location of Lund

Because of Lund's central position and its geographic location, it is very easy to travel not only to other cities in Sweden but also to other bordering European countries such as Denmark, Norway, Finland and Germany. Lund has been on the main railway line between Malmo and Stockholm since the 19th century. Malmo is the third largest city in Sweden and it is only 20 minutes away from Lund by train. To reach Sweden's capital city, Stockholm, and its second largest city, Gothenburg, it takes about 5 and 3 hours respectively. Today there is a direct connection to the Danish capital of Copenhagen via the Oresund Bridge that was built about 10 years

ago. The journey between Copenhagen and Lund only takes 40 minutes to an hour and the service is operated and maintained by both Danish and Swedish railway companies. Norway can be reached by either railway or bus; although it is some distance from Lund it is still possible to reach cities such as Oslo and Bergen without having to change train or bus. To travel to Finland, there are frequent ferries that run between Stockholm and Helsinki, which is believed to be the easiest and most economical way of reaching Finland since there is a sea separating it from Sweden. Since the northern border of Germany is only a bridge away from southern Sweden and it only takes about 4 hours to commute, cars would be the best option for travelers. Especially one of the main purposes for the Swedish to go to the German border is to purchase alcohol, traveling by vehicle is definitely the best transporting means that allows individuals to purchase a lot at a time. Alcohol in Sweden is very expensive due to monopoly and several taxes, therefore the Swedish usually travel to the South of Europe where alcohol is half the price. Scandinavian countries are believed to charge the most on alcohol, and the more north it goes the more expensive it becomes. Therefore, there has been a trend generated by the way people react to this phenomenon, which is Norwegians travel to Finland and Sweden for alcohol purchases, Finish travel to Sweden and Denmark, and Swedish travel to Denmark and Germany or even France and so on.

Lund can be reached by both air and railway. As mentioned above, the railway system in Lund is very convenient, however it can be very time consuming if travelers are coming from countries that are far away. Traveling by air is the best option for such travelers since Lund is located close to two airports, the Sturup airport located in Malmo and the Kastrup airport located in Copenhagen. While the Sturup airport is mainly used for domestic flights in Europe, Kastrup airport serves long international flights to and from all over the world. Travelers can then reach Lund by airport shuttle bus from Sturup airport or by train from Kastrup airport; both journeys take less than an hour.



Figure 2: Travel to Lund

1.2 Cultures in Lund

Lund has a large student population and student traditions because of Lund University. In the last 50 years, the student population has increased about twelve fold. Many industrial companies in the chemical, medical or electronics branches have set up establishments in the city [1]. Some famous companies that have branches in Lund include TetraPak the food packaging company, Alfa Laval the equipment manufacturing company, and Sony Ericsson the telecommunication company. Although modern industrial companies have emerged in Lund, the urban heart of Lund is still well preserved by local law compared to many other Swedish cities.

There are still several medieval buildings remaining in Lund, which include the Lund Cathedral and Liberiet. More recent buildings located in central Lund date back to the 19th century are the Grand Hotel, the University Library and the University main building. Lund Cathedral is a must see place for anyone that comes to Lund because it contains many well-known artifacts and characteristics of historical interest. The church was built in the 11th century and it has witnessed all the historical changes in Lund. It suffered an extensive fire at one point and was rebuilt, adding more valuable artistic elements. Today, it is one of the most Sweden's most attractive cathedrals. Every year more than 500,000 people visit Lund cathedral [2]. Besides the places mentioned above, Kulturen is also a good place to visit. It is an open-air museum that

is located not too far away from the cathedral. It contains reassembled old farms and houses, peasant costumes, old handicrafts, small museums that display Viking artifacts, illustrate the historical changes in Lund, arts and cultures developments, as well as histories of Lund University. A lot of Swedish families bring their kids to Kulturen because it is a very educational place.



Figure 3: Lund Cathedral and the Grand Hotel



Figure 4: sites of Kulturen in Lund

The student life in Lund also characterizes Lund's culture. Student nations and nightlife occupy a large portion of student life in Lund. There are a lot of international students who come from other countries in Europe or outside of Europe. Therefore, cultural exchange between students is constantly active. The Lund carnival is probably the most well-known event in Lund that is arranged by the students at Lund University. It started in the 19th century and it only takes place every four years at the Lundagard park. For three days in May, Lundagard park is transformed into a colorful carnival site with various theme tents and games. Students dress up in costumes to make fun of current issues and parade in wagons. In the evenings, they perform humorous skits to the audiences. Everything is solely organized and performed by students who volunteer to help. Thousands of students from other parts of Sweden travel to Lund to participate in this exciting event and party with friends. The next Lund carnival will take place in 2010.



Figure 5: Lund Carnival 2006

1.3 Lund University

Lund University was established in the 17th century, and it is today one of Scandinavia's largest institutions for education and research [3]. It has campuses not only in Lund, but also in Malmo and Helsingborg, which are about 20 minutes and 40 minutes by train, respectively. The main campus is centered in Lund with various departments and faculties spread in different locations in town.



Figure 6: University Main Building

Lund University not only has traditional programs for local students but also offers exchange and international master programs for students coming from overseas. There are a lot of courses that are, or can be, held in English for the benefit of international exchange students. Every year, thousands of foreign students come to Lund to study for a certain period of time, ranging from 4 months to 2 years. Usually, exchange programs last from 4 months to a year whereas international master programs last for 2 years.

In 1969, the Lund Institute of Technology, LTH, became the Faculty of Technology, also called the Faculty of Engineering. It was originally established separate from the university and was later on incorporated with Lund University. LTH is Sweden's third largest institute of technology and the third of its kind in Sweden [4]. It focuses on

higher education and research in technical and engineering sciences. A lot of higher level courses are often taught in English with English literatures. Oversea students studying engineering majors on exchange programs are enrolled in LTH and take courses with local Swedish students. LTH has many traditional and innovative engineering programs and hundreds of engineering courses for students to choose from. Most professors there have a very high proficiency in English and therefore have no problem to lecture in English. Over the past, the engineering department at the University of Waterloo has sent many students to LTH on exchange.

The academic year at LTH is divided into two semesters, autumn and spring semester. The autumn semester runs from September to December and the spring semester runs from January to June. The spring semester is longer because of the Easter break in April. Each semester is divided into two study periods, each period is about 2 months and students would take 2 to 3 courses in each period. So instead of having to take 5 to 6 courses all at once like in Waterloo, students at LTH have less courses going on at once. Sometimes a course may run over two study periods and it usually counts for two course credits. Every course is followed by an examination at the end of the course and it can be in the form of oral or written, or both. The grading system at LTH is as the following: 5 (excellent), 4 (very good), 3 (pass). In other faculties there is a different way of grading: G (pass) and VG (pass with distinction) [4].

2.0 Student Life in Lund

2.1 Student Nations

Lund is well known for its remarkable student life, students nations are best described as student societies that offer all kinds of services and activities. Students are required to enroll in a nation in order to receive grades at the university. Lund and Uppsala have the oldest student nations in Sweden, which have a history stretching back to the 17th century under the influence of northern German universities frequented by Swedish students [5]. Each student nation is named after a Swedish province from which they traditionally recruit its members; however, students nowadays have the freedom to choose which nation to register with regardless of their origin.

There are thirteen student nations in Lund, which include Ostgota Nation, Vastgota Nation, Lunds Nation, Smalands Nation, Malmo Nation, Helsingkrona Nation, Sydsksandsa Nation, Kristianstad Nation, Blekingeska Nation, Goteborg Nation, Halland Nation, Kalmar Nation, and Wermland Nation. It does not matter which nation one enrolls in because different nations offer different activities for interested students, and each nation is known for its specific theme or trend established over the years. For example, Vastgota Nation is known for its many activities targeted at international students, Smalands Nation is known for its significant communist theme and it has a very different atmosphere than the other nations, Malmo nation is known for its huge law student population and it is often called “snobby” and “posh”, Helsingkrona Nation is known for playing Swedish folk music on its club nights, etc. All nations have an open house day to present to new coming students and to attract interested students to join at the beginning of each school term. Regardless of the nation one joins, he/she is allowed to participate in activities that are organized by all student nations.

The main services that student nations offer include student housing, banquet, pub and night club. Each nation has its own building that has student housing, however since there is a huge demand for housing in Lund, students are often required to enter a queue system. Banquet refers to a large meal that includes main course and dessert.

Each nation offers at least one banquet per week at lunch or dinner time or both, the price is very reasonable and the meals are often amazing. Each nation also has at least one pub night once or twice a week, with a following club night where students go hang out with friends and drink. In the pub/club, students can purchase alcohol at a much cheaper rate than outside. Beer, cider, cocktail, shots cost 30 kronas for one compared to 60 kronas in non student pubs/clubs. There are also professional DJs who play musical records according to the theme of the night and usually pop/rock is the most popular theme at most nations. There are also events that take place once in a while throughout the term, for example, Sittings and student balls. Sitting refers to a social event where everyone dresses up and has a nice three course meal at a long dinner table, which is then followed by dancing at the night club. At the dinner, everyone not only enjoys the meal, but also sings Swedish traditional party songs and drinks at the same time. The organization of student balls is a peak event in the course of an activity year, which takes places once a year at each student nation. The large nations such as Lunds Nation and Malmo Nation organize student balls on their own, whereas other smaller nations tend to organize joint balls for two or three nations at a time.



Figure 7: Swedish crayfish dinner



Figure 8: Valborg sitting at Halland Nation

Not only can students participate in the activities led by the student nations, they can also help with organizing them. Student nations in Lund are entirely operated by students, they involve a large amount of student volunteers to help plan the activities and make sure the guests have a great time. Volunteers are needed in all kinds of areas such as the kitchen, wardrobe, bar, door, etc. Working at the kitchen gives one a great opportunity to develop culinary skills, and working at the bar allows one to learn how to mix exotic drinks. It is definitely a great way to meet new people and develop social skills. Volunteers who help out at each event are very much appreciated because nothing will happen without them. Usually, a free dinner is served to every volunteer before the event and an after party is held after the event where everyone can drink as much as they want free of charge. During the semester each student nation also hosts different events for its workers and a top secret, exciting staff party is often held at the end of the semester. Helping with multiple events also grant one free access to the nation for the entire semester.

2.2 Mentor Program

Lund University welcomes thousands of international students every year. Everyone who comes to Lund is given many opportunities to experience the Swedish culture, discover new aspects of life and meet new people who come from different backgrounds. In order to help new international students settle down and adjust to

Swedish everyday life, Lund University offers lots of activities, both academic and social to make the transition easier. The mentor program in Lund is organized by the international office to involve local students in helping out the new students with practical matters throughout their entire stay in Lund.

A mentor group usually consists of 4-5 Swedish students (mentors) and 20-30 international students (mentees). Mentors are the ones who have been living and studying in Lund for a period of time and are familiar with the way things work around Lund. They know about the student nations, the best place to socialize at, as well as the best place for grocery and exercise. What happens is students who are interested in becoming a mentor will fill out an application form two months before the next semester begins, and then they will be assigned a mentor group with the contact information of each of the mentee. Mentors in the same group will start contacting each other to arrange a get-together to plan for the activities that will take place throughout the semester. A welcome email is often sent out to the whole group to explain the purpose of the mentor group and introduce each of the mentor before the official arrival day. Once the mentees arrive, the mentors will organize a gathering event for everyone to meet and have a tour around the city. A welcome party is always held during the orientation week, which allows all mentors and mentees to party together and get to know each other. Throughout the semester, mentors can organize all kinds of activities such as BBQ, bowling, partying in nations, traveling to Malmo and Copenhagen, and going to different festivals. The mentor groups are not obliged to follow a certain schedule, it is up to the mentors to decide what to do with the mentees. Mentees are encouraged to contact their mentors for any kind of advice that will make their experience in Lund better. The mentor program in Lund has been proven to be a huge success based on the feedbacks from the past international students. It offers a great opportunity for cultural exchange and allows one to interact with people from all over the world.



Figure 9: First get-together pancake event with mentor group (Winter 06)



Figure 10: Partying with mentor group at Lunds Nation

2.3 Student Corridors

There are two types of student residences in Lund, corridor rooms and apartments. Most students are offered a room in the student corridors by the international housing office because it is a good way to meet Swedish students and learn about the Swedish culture. Living in a corridor room is probably the best, cheapest, quickest and liveliest

way of getting into student life because it involves living with local Swedish students. There are 11 student corridor locations, Parentesen, Sparta, Delphi, Ulrikedal, and Vildanden are the popular places for international students. Parentesen and Ulrikedal are located right in the Lund city center whereas the other ones are located about 20 to 40 minutes walking distance from the city center.

A student corridor consists of 10 to 20 rooms with a shared common area that includes a living room and one to two kitchens, depending on the size of the corridor. The kitchen is equipped to match the number of tenants and often has several fridges and freezers. Couches, TV, coffee table, and dining table in the common area are provided in most student corridors. Each room is a single room that comes with a front door with lock and a private toilet and, in most cases, a shower too. These rooms lie along a corridor with several neighbors on the same floor. The rooms can be furnished or unfurnished. The rooms that are rented out to international students are always furnished with a bed, a desk, a dresser and a chair. Additional furniture can be rented for temporary use from the office for the entire study period if wished. During the semester, student corridors are maintained entirely by students and everyone is responsible for keeping the corridor nice and clean. Usually each person will take turns to be the corridor guard for a week in order to keep the common area clean, the duties include take out garbage and recyclables when needed, clean the kitchen on a daily basis, and ensure the dishes are washed by the ones after use. The major cleaning occurs at the end of the week when the corridor guard has to make sure everything in the corridor is clean and organized before passing onto the next week's corridor guard.



Figure 11: The living room and the kitchen at Parentesen C3



Figure 12: A corridor room that is decorated for the Halloween party

Student life at student corridors is always fun and exciting. Corridor parties usually take place at the beginning of the semester for everyone to get to know each other. It is usually held in the form of Tour de Chambres in which 2-3 people form a group to come up with a theme for the party. It involves wearing costumes, decorating the corridor rooms, coming up with games to be played, and mixing drinks. At the party, everyone gathers together and goes around from room to room to play games, dance, and drink. It is an extremely fun event since the themes are always extraordinary, hilarious, and unexpected. Some parties are also

held on special occasions, for example on Halloween, Midsummer, St. Lucia's day, etc. Midsummer is the celebration of the summer solstice in which a midsummer pole is created outside on a field where people join together to dance and sing around it. St. Lucia's day is another traditional Swedish holiday celebrated in the honor of a young lady Sicilian saint who lived around the 4th century.



Figure 13: Pictures from the Halloween party at Parentesen C3



Figure 14: The midsummer pole at Kulturen in June 06

Each student corridor is different in different ways, depending on the type of students that live there and the atmosphere they create. Some corridors have more parties taking place more often than the others which could mean that the students that live there are more outgoing and relaxed. It also depends on what the specific residence location can offer to its students. For example, Parentesen has a traditional softball tournament that takes place every summer, for an entire month in June corridors will compete against other corridors to accumulate points for their standing in the tournament. Based on the points, the corridors will play on the last day for their final standing in the tournament. The two corridors with the most points will compete for the trophy while the ones with the least points will also have to play against each other to determine the loser of the tournament. The winner of the tournament receives enormous prizes and gets to organize next year's tournament, whereas the loser of the tournament has to clean up the entire building after the party is over. A huge mess is often created while the two losing teams are playing, which is also where the fun comes from. During the game, everyone from all the corridors throws everything onto the players on the field to interfere the game, while at the same time everyone also throws all kinds of things down the building and to other corridors (usually the winner is the main target). The things that are thrown can be quite disgusting as they are mostly eggs, rotten food, BBQ ash, soap water, etc. After the game is over, everyone gathers in their own corridor to have a nice corridor dinner and at night, a big party takes place in the basement where alcohol is served and music is played. The number of participants is up to hundreds every year and it has become a very traditional event for the Parentesen residence.



Figure 15: Two teams warming up in the softball tournament at Parentesen



Figure 16: Got hit by rotten chicken curry

3.0 Traveling in Europe

3.1 Budget Traveling

One of the objectives for many non-European international students who are studying in Lund is to travel as much as possible around Europe. Since Sweden is one of countries that has the highest living standards in the world, everything costs more compared to a lot of other countries. A fixed traveling budget is always the best option for students to travel to other places while also being to afford the cost of living in Lund. Most students carry out their traveling in the form of backpacking, which is a term used to represent a form of low-cost independent travel that involves minimal budget use, longer duration traveling, use of public transport and multiple destinations.

There are many low-cost traveling options, such as budget flights, rail/bus passes, youth hostels, free hospitality services, buying food at supermarkets, cooking in kitchen equipped hostels instead of going to restaurants. The low fares airlines in Europe include Ryanair, Easyjet, Sterling, etc. These airlines offer very reasonable air fares to travelers; for example, Ryanair has many flights that start at 10 GBP or cheaper. The fares can be purchased online and it usually takes less than 10 minutes. To travel to multiple destinations, railway pass is always the best option as it grants unlimited traveling on trains for a certain period of time. There are many types of rail passes such as Eurail passes, regional passes, country passes, BritRail passes, and city passes and so on. Travelers can choose one that best fits their journey. Once travelers arrive at their destination, they have to find a place to stay. Youth hostels provide low rate temporary accommodation compared to alternatives such as hotels and bed and breakfast. The style of the accommodation includes a bed, sometimes a bunk bed in a dormitory and a shared common bathroom, kitchen, and lounge. It is beneficial to stay at a youth hostel not only because of the cheap accommodation it provides but also because it gives travelers opportunities to meet other travelers and make friends in a foreign environment. Most youth hostels are equipped with a kitchen with cooking supplies, which allows travelers to cook and eat food from the supermarkets instead of having to go out to eat at restaurants.

3.2 Traveling Tips

Having a good budget traveling plan requires a lot of effort to be put into researching ahead of time. The two major things that need to be planned include how to get there and where to live. To travel from one country to another in Europe is a very easy task due to the excellent transportation systems all around Europe. Travelers can decide to travel by air or railway, since there exists so many budget airlines that provide cheap flights that cost less than trains, one should research to find out which is the most economical and efficient way to get to their destination. There is a website called www.whichbudget.com that searches all the cheap flights with budget airlines for specific travel routes, it links over 100 European destinations and shows the cheapest flights. Ryanair (www.ryanair.com) is Europe's largest low-cost carrier and it is one of the world's largest and most successful airlines. It is always worthwhile to check for their promotions as they offer flights that are incredibly cheap, for example, a trip from Malmo to Dublin costs 10 Euro including taxes, etc.

For places to live, a search site called www.hostelworld.com can be used to find cheap youth hostels all around Europe. It provides on-line bookings for all kinds of budget accommodations and package tours. In order to choose a good hostel that is clean and organized, one should read the reviews of the hostel shown on the site and select the ones that have high ratings. It is always better to choose one that has a kitchen, internet access and common lounge. Booking of a hostel on the site is free with the use of ISIC (International Student Identity Card), which is a photo identification card that identifies the holder as full-time student. The card allows the cardholder to gain access to special discounts on travel related services such as airplanes, trains, buses, museums, attractions, hostels, entertainment, bars and restaurants. It is recommended to obtain this card because a lot of places in Europe recognize it as being the only identification that certifies one's student status.

There is a community called Couchsurfing (www.couchsurfing.com) that offers hospitality services to backpackers all over the world. Its mission statement states "CouchSurfing seeks to internationally network people and places, create educational

exchanges, raise collective consciousness, spread tolerance, and facilitate cultural understanding." [6]. It is a non-profit project created to provide service to coordinate free accommodation for backpackers for the purpose of cultural exchange. There are more than 250,000 active members in countries all over the world, with 40% offering their couches to host travelers. Members can use the website to coordinate accommodations prior to their trips. The features on the website include personal profiles, a verification system, a personal vouching system, and personal references to increase security and trust. Registration on the website is free and required for anyone who wishes to host travelers or be hosted. The one that provides free accommodation is called the host while the one being hosted is called the surfer. It is not mandatory for members to host but it is encouraged. To start hosting or surfing, one needs to create a personal profile that explains who he/she is, the more information entered the better. Acting as a surfer, a traveler may search for and request accommodation at his/her destination. The accommodation is entirely consensual between the host and surfer and it is generally worked out in advance to the convenience of both parties. Using this couchsurfing service requires trust between the host and the surfer. To ensure security and trust, there are certain things that are visible on member profiles for both hosts and surfers to see prior to arranging anything with each other. After hosting/surfing, members are encouraged to leave personal references to each other; from the personal references future host/surfer can determine whether the person is trustworthy. Couchsurfing saves travelers lots of money while allowing them to meet local people at their destination and have cultural exchange. Most members have wonderful experience from couchsurfing.

3.3 My Traveling Experience

During my stay in Lund, I immersed myself in enormous activities by joining student mentor program, volunteering at student nations and carnivals, and backpack traveling around Europe. In the course of a year, I have traveled to many places in Europe while residing in Lund. Most of my trips took place over a long weekend or during semester breaks. The friends I traveled with were either local Swedish students I met or exchange school from other countries. The places I have been to in Sweden

include Malmo, Stockholm, Helsingborg, Karlskrona, Angelholm and Bastad. Places outside of Sweden include Copenhagen, Prague, Budapest, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels, Oslo, London, Cambridge, Dublin, Glasgow, Edinburg, Paris, Barcelona, Milan, Venice, Florence, Padova and Rome. I took flights to most of the places as I was able to find really cheap flights from those budget airlines. Most of the flights I took were less than \$100 CAD each. During the Easter break in April I flew with Ryanair to Dublin, Glasgow and Paris then back for Lund for a total of \$125 CAD including taxes for 5 flights. For accommodation at each place, I used couchsurfing extensively and it had been an amazing experience being hosted by local people and getting to know them. I was able to find host at most places and all the hosts I stayed with not only provided me a couch for me to sleep on for free, but also showed me around town and took me to hang out with their friends. Traveling to all these places enabled me to learn about different cultures and meet some wonderful people. I really enjoyed every single trip I had been on.



Figure 17: Arc de Triumph in Paris



Figure 18: Colosseum in Rome



Figure 19: Kings College in Cambridge



Figure 20: Casa Mila in Barcelona

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