

Inside Lund: Fall 2006

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1. Introduction

With this report, I hope to share with you my exchange experience – before and during. My exchange to Sweden was wonderful. Throughout the four months I was away, I met many incredible people and I took part in some extraordinary activities. It is difficult to describe the experience fully because it was so different from everything I have seen before. Each day was a new adventure, and each day led to the creation of more amazing memories.

Going on this exchange was the best decision I made in my undergraduate studies. It really changed my perspective on education and engineering. I anticipate that you will have the time of your life as well. I am very excited for you, and I hope that this exchange to Sweden will reward you with all that you are looking for plus more!

2. Preparation for Exchange

Before you leave, there is a lot of paperwork and research that needs to be done. However, it is imperative that you are as prepared as possible for Sweden. Trust me, once you get to foreign land, with the incredible European architecture surrounding you and a completely different way-of-life, you would be glad that your courses and living situation have been cared for.

2.1 *Why Sweden?*

The first step in the exchange process is to select the right country and university. In the beginning, Sweden was not even on my list of choices. I had wanted an English-speaking university and thus, I was looking predominantly at the United Kingdom. However, when I met with Professor Roe, he suggested some of the Scandinavian countries as possibilities. This led to my investigation of Sweden. One of the best characteristics of Lund Universitet is that its semester system fits in very nicely with the Waterloo system. Although I had to switch my 3B study term with my fifth work term so I could study in Lund in Fall 2006, it did not have a large impact on my study schedule. As well, Lund Universitet accommodates a large number of exchange students. In fact, the exchange student population is so big, the services and assistance provided to exchange students is considered to be one of the best. Being a university town, Lund is similar to Waterloo in many ways, and thus, it is never boring. Furthermore, Lund is situated

at the southern tip of Sweden, and thus, it is fairly easy to access the other parts of Europe through Copenhagen airport (CPH).

2.2 Application

There are two applications that you need to complete – one for Lund Universitet and one for the University of Waterloo. The application for Lund Universitet is fairly simple. The most difficult section would be the course selection. I will discuss course matching between Lund Universitet and University of Waterloo below. Also, remember that the Lund application needs to be signed off by UW's exchange office (either Cindy Howe or Professor Roe). Therefore, be sure to leave time to mail/drop off your application at their office. Usually, they would forward the application to Lund for you. As well, if you have any questions about the application or any other exchange questions on the Lund-side, you should contact Anna Skarman (anna.skarman@kansli.lth.se). She is so patient and wonderful, you will absolutely love her. Her answers are quick and detailed.

- **Course Matching**

Finding the equivalent courses can be a taxing task. Each semester at Lund is separated into two periods. So, it is usually recommended to take 2-3 courses during each period. Also, some courses are only available in the Fall/Autumn, Winter or Spring/Summer. When I was matching my courses, I used a variety of sources:

- 1. Past UW Engineering Students' Records – Cindy Howe's Records**

Sometimes, Cindy has records that have not been posted online. For me, I was lucky to have had several students from a prior Electrical Engineering class go on exchange to Lund for the same academic term as me. Therefore, I started matching my courses based on their selections.

- 2. Past UW Engineering Students' Records – Online**

The Engineering Exchange webpage

(http://www.eng.uwaterloo.ca/~exchange/pages/Exchange%20From/Countries/sweden/sweden_u1_courses.htm) has a log of many past students' courses. This is a valuable resource as well.

- 3. UW Math Department's Webpage**

Another source of information is UW's Math Department's Exchange webpage

<http://www.math.uwaterloo.ca/navigation/Prospective/Exchange/Universities/Courses/lundcourses.shtml>). This provides some Lund courses that may be similar to some engineering courses or interesting electives.

4. Perusing all of Lund Universitet's Course Descriptions (All Departments)

In addition to looking at the courses offered by LTH, try looking at the other faculties at Lund (<http://www.lu.se/o.o.i.s/7385>). There may be courses that you can take as your fourth year technical electives, or better yet, courses that match your core courses.

5. E-mailing Professors or Departments at Lund and UW

Another method is to e-mail professors or departments with the course description and see if they could recommend a course for you. If you find the right person, this way could save you a lot of time and wasted efforts.

Matching courses takes a lot of perseverance and energy. Do not give up too easily. I had to work very hard to get several of my courses approved. The list of courses I ended up taking is below:

| UW Courses | Lund Courses |
|---|--|
| ECE 318 – Communication Systems | ETT 051 - Digital Communications |
| ECE 380 – Analog Control Systems | FRT O10 - Automatic Control |
| ECE 438 – Digital Integrated Circuits | ETT 130 – Digital IC Design |
| MSCI 442 - Impact of Information Systems on Organizations and Society | SAS 005 – Education, Culture and Communication |
| Elective | SAS 006 – Swedish Social Policy |

▪ Housing

Student housing in Lund is very different from UW. Many of the student residences are not close to campus, and are spread out across the city. Although Lund is a university town, student housing is very limited and hard to come by. However, as exchange students, you are guaranteed housing as long as you apply early. Because you are most likely going to be in Sweden for only four to eight months, I highly recommend that you live in student residences. This way, you will have a place to stay for sure and it is a wonderful way to meet other students.

I lived at Ostra Torn, a newly developed student housing complex, pictured in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Ostra Torn Student Housing Complex

It is northeast of LTH, and it is about a 10 minutes bike ride from LTH. I lived in an apartment with my friend. We each had our own rooms, shared a fully-supplied kitchen, large living room, and a bathroom. Our entire apartment was like a page off the IKEA furniture, as shown in Figure 2,



Figure 2: Inside Ostra Torn Apartment

(you will realize, after a while, that IKEA has the monopoly on furniture and kitchenware in Sweden and most of Europe!).

There are also single rooms available at Ostra Torn, complete with a kitchen and bathroom. Some other housing residences that I found to be fairly decent are Sparta (very close to the train station and town, and pretty new), Delphi (a lot of exchange students live here and it is relatively close to LTH), Spoletrop (this is next to LTH – you cannot get any closer than that!), and Vildanden (older and much farther from town, but very close to the mall).

As well, once you receive a confirmation of housing, you need to pay a deposit. This can be done through a money wire at any bank. If you have a bank that you often use, you might be able to bypass some service charges. However, I found that CIBC offered the lowest service charge on money wiring, and it was completed within a week. Once in Sweden, you will need to pay for housing two more times (if you are there only for four months). You can do this with your credit card at the postal office, but there will be a service charge each time. This is easier than opening a bank account yourself, but if you make some Swedish friends, you may be able to convince them to pay online for you to skip the service charges.

2.3 Before You Leave

There are several things you need to get done before leaving for Sweden. Of course, you will need a valid passport (the expiry date needs to be more than six months from your departure date), student visa, and money exchange.

- **Visa**

The closest Swedish Embassy is in downtown Toronto. You will need to complete an application form, photocopy all your documents (plus your application form – they are fickle about this), photos, application fee (in cash), and original copy of passport. You need to go in-person to the embassy to get this done, but your passport (with the Visa stamped inside) can be mailed anywhere you like.

- **Packing**

The weather in Sweden during the fall term is relatively similar to Vancouver weather. Expect lots of heavy rain and gusty wind throughout the day. Therefore, an umbrella and raincoat would be highly recommended (especially for when you are riding your bike). Near the end of the Fall term, Lund gets to be very windy and cold. Unlike the Waterloo-

cold, Lund requires more of a thick wind jacket rather than a down jacket. This is pretty much the same throughout Europe. However, if you plan to visit the Northern parts of Sweden, a thick and long down jacket is necessary!!!

Sweden is an expensive place for foreigners to live. You will learn to live on falafels at one of the stands like the one shown below,



Figure 3: Falafel Stand in Lund

yogurt-drinks, and the super clean tap water. So, to help you save a little bit more, here are some items you could consider bringing: bike lock, bike lights (front and back – required by law), some school supplies, purchasing textbooks online before leaving for Sweden, Ethernet cable, world phone and universal power outlet adaptor. If you plan on travelling a lot, here are some things that you might want to bring: old bed sheets, combination lock, large backpack, money belt, and a Lonely Planet book.

▪ **Money**

When I was on exchange, Sweden still had its own currency, the Swedish Kronos. The rate is about CAD 1 to Kr 7. So, expect to see price tags of Kr 100 everywhere. Credit cards are widely accepted in Sweden. However, several places that would require cash are the Train Hostel (a place where you may stay if you arrive earlier than the move-in date), falafels stands, exchange student field trip, welcome party, Swedish Language course textbooks, entrance fees to nations (student-run clubs), and bike vendors.

Therefore, you should have some cash ready for use on arrival to Sweden. While in

Europe, I chose to take cash out of ABM machines with my debit card. I banked with President's Choice, and the service fee was sufficiently minor, compared to service charges at exchange places.

2.4 Transportation

■ Plane Ticket

The closest international airport to Lund is the Copenhagen airport in Denmark. There are no direct flights from Canada, but you can connect through many countries (such as Germany or the United Kingdom). There are different interpretations as to when the best time is to purchase a plane ticket – whether earlier or later is better. For me, I find that the earlier you purchase, the more choices are available at lower costs. I was able to get my return ticket with my Aeroplan points, and therefore, I was able to forego this process of research. However, from my experience, it appears that the Heathrow airport always has delays and problems when I need to travel. As such, I suggest you try to avoid Heathrow. Frankfurt, Germany is a better option.

■ CPH to Lund Train

On arrival to the Copenhagen airport (CPH), you can take the train to Lund. There are two ways of purchasing tickets for this train: (1) at the counter from the Danish or (2) at these purple machines, pictured in Figure 4,



Figure 4: Swedish Train Ticket Machine

from the Swedish. Method (1) is the easiest – you would simply line up at the booth and ask for a one-way student ticket to Lund. Method (2) requires a little more understanding but is cheaper (especially if you are travelling with a friend, and therefore, you can purchase a ‘Family’ ticket).

The tricky part here is to determine the right train. If I remember correctly, the train leaves from platform 7 (the exit to the right of the train ticket booth). Once down on the platform, you need to determine which train goes to Lund. On the TV screens, you can see what trains are coming, and you can search for ‘Lund C’ in smaller letters in a list of cities the train will visit. There are some trains that (i) stop in Malmo C (a larger city near Lund) and you would need to transfer trains to Lund, (ii) stop in Malmo C and several carts of the train would continue to Lund, or (iii) the entire train goes to Lund. Your best bet would be to ask around, and ask the conductor before you step onto the train. You do not need to rush, these trains come very often.

▪ **Local Lund Transportation**

The public transportation in Lund is fairly comprehensive. The website for the public transportation is

<http://www.skane-trafiken.se/templates/StartPage.aspx?id=2176&epslanguage=EN>. There are two types of buses, and they are differentiated by colours. The green buses are local city buses, and the yellow buses go out of town. However, there are some yellow buses that go around Lund before leaving the city, and thus, they can be taken as well.

Unfortunately, it seems that nearly everyone in Lund speaks English other than the bus drivers. It is often difficult to ask the bus drivers for directions, so, other passengers are most likely more informative. As well, you should purchase the ‘Discount Card’ at the central railway station. The card does not cost any money, but you would need to deposit a minimum of 200 Kr. to activate the card. Each time you board a bus or train, the fare is subtracted from your card.

Cabs are also a common way to travel within the city, train stations or airports. For travel outside Lund, cabs usually have a flat rate. Within the city, the cab ride is based on the meter. Unfortunately, some cab drivers are not trustworthy and will travel longer routes to increase the fare. When calling a cab, try to get an estimate of the fare beforehand. The cab company operators give, generally, fair prices. An approximate

price range is that it will cost less than 100 Kr. to get from the central station to the most northern part of campus (at the outskirts of LTH).

3. Exchange Experience

My exchange to Lund Universitet was amazing. Each day was a new adventure, and I had so much fun. All the work and preparation was definitely worth the experience. The start of the real exchange experience began once I boarded the plane. It was surreal to visit Europe and live there for a semester. In this section, I will describe some of the early events of the exchange to give you a sense of what to expect.

3.1 First Day

The first official day was the move-in day. There will be volunteers at the train station to help and drive exchange students to the AF Building, illustrated in Figure 5,



Figure 5: AF Building

to check-in. Due to the large number of exchange students, the check-in process can take a very long time. Upon arrival at the AF building, you will receive information from LTH, get housing assignment, be given your Swedish class information (can also purchase Swedish class books), sign up for the exchange student trip, and buy tickets for the welcome party. After completion of all these tasks, student volunteers will drive you to the appropriate residences.

3.2 Lund City

Lund is a university town, and is heavily populated by students. In this way, there are many opportunities offered to exchange students to participate in Swedish traditions and events. The train station is in the town centre where many of the shops and restaurants are located. The opening hours are constrained (from around 9am to 5pm), but it is worthwhile to shop along the pedestrian walkways, as shown in Figure 6,



Figure 6: Street in Lund

in the day. On Sundays, many of the stores are closed but some restaurants are opened. Some stores include a 7-Eleven near the train station that has a small internet café, a relatively large H&M across from the town square, and several grocery stores (ICA and Coop). Also, there is a tourist information centre near the cathedral where you can visit for local and nearby city information.

3.3 Parties and Nightlife

During the first couple of weeks, there are parties and events organized specifically for exchange students. Depending on where you live, there may be corridor/building parties or dinners. Also, the orientation group you are assigned to will usually organize events and outings during the first weeks.

- **Welcome Party**

The Welcome Party is opened to all exchange students. It is very popular and the tickets sell out quickly. It takes place near LTH. This is definitely a great place to meet other exchange students.

- **Nations**

The concept of nations can be confusing. In essence, they are like fraternities and sororities but are open to everyone. Each nation has a group of students who organize dinners, parties, and other social events. Lund students are required to join nations, but exchange students are not. However, it is recommended to join a nation if you plan to attend the weekly nation parties because you will need a nation card to enter a nation (there is a possibility of getting a visitor pass each time, but it is more expensive) and the nation you choose to join will give you a discounted entrance fee.

The decision to join a nation needs to be made within the first two weeks of school. Choosing a specific nation can be difficult due to the lack of understanding. Each nation has a website, and more information can be determined from there. For me, I chose the VG nation because it is more frequented by other exchange students, and I liked the atmosphere more. The OG nation is also a popular choice, pictured below,



Figure 7: OG Nation

However, each nation has a different entrance fee, and thus, it is difficult to say which would be more suitable.

3.4 LTH and School

Studying at LTH was an interesting experience. It seems like LTH is a separate part of the university. As students of LTH, you receive your schedules at the exchange office at Studiecentrum, as in the picture below.



Figure 8: Studiecentrum (LTH)

Most of the engineering classes are at the E or M buildings, shown below.



Figure 9: E-Building

The lecture hours are about 2 hours, with a 15 minutes break in between. The tutorials are quite important as the tutor goes over many of the assignment problems. The buildings are hard to navigate as the front of the building is separate from the back. There are also computer labs at the basement of each building for which you will require a password and your student card to enter. Laboratories are fairly long, but there are usually no pre- or post-labs.

3.5 Travelling

Travelling is a large part of the exchange experience. Taking the train is a popular method of travel, but is more time-consuming. Railpasses (the ScanRail pass is a good idea for travel within Scandinavian countries and the BritRail pass is definitely worthwhile for travelling within the UK) are a good idea if you decide to travel to several cities on one trip. However, many railpasses can only be bought outside Europe, but you can get someone to mail the passes to you. Flying is usually the more convenient option. The nearest Swedish airport is the Malmo airport where many low-fair airlines (such as WizzAir, EasyJet, and RyanAir) fly out from.

- **Cheap Tickets**

Cheaper travel tickets need usually be bought earlier. Several websites for searching cheap tickets include:

<http://whichbudget.com/>

[http://wikitravel.org/en/Discount airlines in Europe](http://wikitravel.org/en/Discount_airlines_in_Europe)

<http://www.ryanair.com/site/EN/>

<http://www.easyjet.com/>

<http://wizzair.com/?language=EN>

- **Hostels**

Hostels are a very popular form of accommodation in Europe. They are very safe and reputable. The two websites I used were:

<http://www.hostelworld.com/>

<http://www.iyhf.org/>

You may consider getting the Hostelling International membership if you plan to travel often. For more remote locations (such as Baden-Baden, Germany and Kiruna, Sweden), HI-Hostel is the only company with available rooms.

4. Well Wishes

I wish you the best of luck on this endeavour. Studying in Sweden was the most unbelievable experience throughout my university years. I seriously believe that a higher education is incomplete without an exchange experience. Good luck!