

University of Oslo International Summer School, Summer 2014

Phone

Email:

1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

I stayed in Blindern Studentterhjem, which was quite nice and convenient. We had a short orientation where we officially registered for classes and got our student ID card. There was an hour-long presentation by the ISS director – he showed us some landmarks in Oslo and read some Norwegian to us so we could get a feel for the language. It was a short orientation.

2. ACADEMICS:

My Norwegian 1 class only had 19 people in it, and we met everyday. We got a ton of personal attention, and my teacher would make us present to the class both by ourselves and with a group. She would also ask us questions in front of the rest of the class occasionally. The teacher was quite intense, but it wasn't too much different than the intensity at the UW. She was also very nice, and encouraged us to ask her as many questions as we could. There were plenty of other places to go for language help, including the library/computer lab and the language lab. I used both, as they proved helpful. A stressful part of the class was that the grade was 100% based on two finals – the written and spoken exams.

Overall I'd say the instruction was very good. My teacher's name was Kjersti Velsand, who was very much Norwegian, which was extremely helpful in learning the Oslo dialect. She was also a big language nerd, so I could imagine that she would be very good at teaching any language. However, as I mentioned before, she was very intense. She said on the first day that she expected us to spend 3 hours a day on homework, and begin speaking with the locals as soon as possible. It did seem similar to some of the more intense classes I've taken at UW, so I think most UW students would be accustomed to it.

3. HOUSING:

I stayed at the University of Oslo dorms (called Blindern Studentterhjem). Another option was to find my own place, which didn't seem like a good idea because it would've been a big hassle. The dorms allowed me to easily go to social events and work on homework with my classmates. The majority of students who go to the ISS stay in the dorms, and I'd recommend anyone who goes do the same. They were nice to live in, and I had no complaints about them.

4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:

The campus was small, but very pretty. It was nice to not be in the middle of the city – I enjoyed walking outside of campus through some of the neighborhoods and parks. There is a train that goes pretty much anywhere in Oslo that you can get on right outside of the dorms, which was super convenient.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

A really great part about being in Oslo is that it's one of the safest cities in the world. I had no issues walking around the city or taking the train, and there didn't seem to be any "slums" in Oslo. The trains have a message about pick-pocketing dangers in the central station, but I never had any issues. The only problem I had in Oslo was the terrorist threat that happened near the end of the summer. Nothing ever happened, but it was a little nerve-racking for us. The ISS handled it very professionally – we all got an email about what was going on.

6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

There were plenty of activities that the ISS set up for students. I went on lots of bus and walking tours of Oslo that were all very interesting, and it was a very good place to meet people. Everyone had an extremely open and accepting personality at the ISS. I even met lots of people while eating in the cafeteria. Also, if you stay at the University of Oslo you will have a roommate who you will most likely get to know. This may require you to have an open mind, because you will very likely room with someone with an entirely different culture than you. It's important that you are comfortable addressing any issues (sleep schedule, quiet room hours, languages, etc...) with your roommate so that you can have a good housing experience. It could be a great experience for you and your roommate to share your own different cultures and ways of life.

Another small issue I had was how little English some of the Norwegians spoke. It was important that I was patient with these people, as it did get a little frustrating after a few weeks being in Norway. I also had to be patient with learning Norwegian – it was quite a while until I could understand any Norwegian people tried to speak to me, and I certainly wasn't fluent by the end. I took it as a learning experience to see what it was like to live without knowing the primary language of the country.

I had a fun time going on two different trips, one of which is an excursion that comes with the summer school. Each student gets to choose which excursion they go on, but I'd highly recommend the Jontunheim hiking trip. The hike was hard because there was a large altitude climb, but it was worth it because it was so beautiful. It was probably the highlight of my trip to Norway. The second trip I went on was to Stockholm, Sweden for the long 4-day weekend. I went with one other person, and we had a lot of fun touring around for a few days. The long weekend is a great opportunity to go and see somewhere else in Europe.

7. FINANCIAL:

Luckily, I didn't have to spend very much in Oslo, as it is most commonly thought to be the most expensive city in the world. Anything you might want to get over there is about twice as much as what it would cost in the US, so it's smart to arrange for that. Once I got to the airport in Oslo I immediately found the currency exchange place to exchange about \$200 USD I had brought for the Norwegian Krone (NOK). That gave me around 1200 NOK, which got me through much of the summer school.

The one thing that was important to get was a bus pass. I got a one-way pass right when I got there so I could get to campus, and then a few days later I purchased a month pass. The month pass was 650 NOK, which is about \$110 USD. I ended up buying a week pass after that expired to get through the rest of the summer school. Another thing I had to buy was my textbook, which was around \$80 USD.

with the CD. Other than that, I bought some cheap groceries (Baguettes, bananas, and cornflakes were very cheap) and a few other necessities.

8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:

I never had any issues with the administration of the program. The staff and faculty were all very nice and helpful, so it was easy to go to them with any living/school issues. The initial application for the ISS was a bit daunting, but of course it was well worth finishing it. Make sure to send it to the American office instead of the International one, and read the pre-arrival guide before you come.

9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:

The ISS is suitable for anyone – everyone there is super nice and open-minded. The only issue I could see is that the Norwegian classes (especially the one I took) was academically challenging, and I would've had an issue had I not taken French in high school. I'd recommend students are well prepared to work hard in any class, but especially in the language classes.

The ideal student would be one who is excited to have fun, meet lots of people, and explore lot of Norway.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

As far as the academics go, the Norwegian class was good but intense. I had to work harder and put more hours in than I expected, but it was doable with the extra effort. It was also a surprise to have to present to the class and answer questions in front of the class so often, but it was a fun experience when I kept an open mind.

Overall, Norway was a great experience. It was beautiful in Norway, and I feel privileged to have been able to go visit. It's impossible to imagine how beautiful it really is without going there and seeing it yourself.

Oslo, Norway

International Summer School (ISS), UiO

Summer 2009

1. Arrival Overseas/On-site Orientation:



Figure 1. City Hall--part of the tour

a. Oslo is one of the most expensive cities in the world--cost of living, monetary value, etc.--so unless planning to splash the cash, bring essential items need to spend the duration of time there. This will allow for more tourist shopping and leisure spending as wished.

b. ISS gives a week long orientation that explains everything from what the program is about and how it started to academics. It also gives you a basic bus tour around couple of big tourist sites around the city.

2. Academics:

- a. There were no great differences in taking classes at UW or taking classes at UiO. Different classes may vary in structure and instruction but that could be any class, anywhere. The only difference is that I do not believe there was any big lecture class and the students were from all over the world.
- b. The administration is very helpful and friendly. They respond to emails very well.
- c. UiO takes exams very seriously. Student IDs must be present during the exams and they will not give back the original copy of the test until years later.
- d. Oslo is a really nice place to be in during summer. There will be lots of things going on all the time, time management is very important.
- e. Recommendation on classes:
 - i. Classes like international politics—there will be people from all over the world so it will be very interesting and valuable experience.
 - ii. For those who did not know much about Norway to start with—Norwegian History and classes like it make this more appreciative experience.

3. Housing:

- a. Housing option is on campus or off.
- b. Unless there is a housing planned in Oslo, dorm is suggested because the cost-of-living and housing is very expensive in Oslo. On Campus living will provide meals. (A normal meal in Oslo will cost about \$25 US, \$12 cheap.)



Figure 2. West wing of the student housing

4. Program/Exchange Site:
 - a. The central part of the city is very close to campus and there is a lake called Sognsvann nearby.
5. Health and Safety:
 - a. It is very safe.
6. Cultural Aspects:
 - a. Basic etiquette, easy going and friendly and you will be fine. People are generally very accepting there.
7. Financial:
 - a. Communicate with the bank about traveling abroad, this way they do not block your account when trying to withdraw out of the country. Always have some Norwegian Krone on person and withdraw from the ATM when needed. (This is also because Americans studying in this program like to travel around the Europe and the currency may vary.)
 - b. Student Housing provides food (read above) but transportation is a bit pricy. T-bane will probably be the main transportation around Oslo. A single ticket (one way) is around \$4. A monthly ticket is about \$100.
 - c. ISS provides weekend excursions around different parts of Oslo providing different activities. This is highly recommended. (It is on the brochure of the program) This can be paid with the tuition or later when signing up for a specific excursion. You can choose to go to more excursions if you pay for it.
 - d. Especially popular with students of United States, there are weekend travels to different parts of Europe and depending on where you want to go, each weekend could cost couple hundreds of dollars.
 - e. I did not use financial aid for my program. The program itself is not very expensive.
8. Program/Exchange Administration:
 - a. As mentioned above, the administration is very helpful and friendly. They are very responsive to emails.
9. Program/Student Type:
 - a. It is an international school so one that is open to cultural difference? I really recommend it for everyone. Norway is really such a nice place and this program is such a nice one and not too expensive.
10. Overall Experience:
 - a. I went from not knowing much about Norway or Scandinavia to loving it. It is a beautiful place with really lovely people. (Beautiful too) I highly recommend at least visiting there once in your life.