Emily Strand

BI Norwegian School of Management, Bachelor

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Stran312@umn.edu

# Study Abroad Report

Your insight is valuable for Carlson students just considering or preparing for an exchange. Please help these students out by emailing a report to [alexejun@umn.edu](mailto:alexejun@umn.edu) Respond to the following topics and be sure to include: **Your Name, Program attended, Year/Term attended, current email.** Additional insights and recommendations for future students are very valuable too!

**Academic experiences at the partner school**

1. General academic structure:

Classes conducted in English. Each class lasts 2 hours and 45 minutes with two 15 minute breaks every 45 minutes. Classes only happen once a week. Less involvement in classroom, mostly powerpoint lectures.

1. Classes taken/ how they compare to courses here:

Scandinavian Management: Not as interesting as I had hoped. It mostly dealt with culture issues between Scandinavia and the rest of the world. Final exam 100% of final grade.

Logistics: I had a great professor that made class interesting. It was quite similar to Operations 3001 but we did focus further on certain topics. Logistics Case Study (Group) 60% of grade, Final exam (15 questions) 40%

International Communications in English: Best professor – Charles Cooper. He did an exceptional job in making all of us very interested. Each class was conducted in a seminar fashion and we each individually presented material to the class. 5 hour essay exam worth 100% of final grade.

Strategy: I did not enjoy this class because my professor was lacking. It was very hard for me to motivate myself to work at this class. All his lecture slides came straight from the book so it made studying much more easy. 5 hour essay exam worth 100%.

Norwegian Culture and History: I really enjoyed this class. My professor did a great job in engaging us – we would have to compare our country with that day’s history facts of Norway.

1. Advising:

The International Staff were excellent. They were always open to any questions and responded to emails in a timely manner. The office hours are limited but you grow accustomed to that in Norway. They also make many efforts in trying to coordinate activities with the international students, especially in the beginning. Very helpful tip: When I went for my summer travels throughout Europe, Elin stored my luggage within BI for 6 weeks.

1. Surprises/comparison with academic environment in the U.S:

In a sense, I see many similarities between BI and Carlson. Their grading policy is similar so a high percent exam score does not mean the bell curve will give you an A in the class. Many of the Norwegian students spend a lot of time studying all semester in order to get a perfect score on the final exam in order to get the best grade. And of course, there are easy and hard courses. BI is more focused on finance in their undergraduate program, so those are the more challenging courses. But from what I experienced and from my friends’ accounts, most of the final grade is dependent on very few grades, usually 1 to 2 exams/papers max.

**Logistics at the partner school:**

1. Orientation/Arrival:

The student organization INsA have a pick up service that sends a student to the train station to pick you up upon your return. I had a considerable amount of trouble getting into the country but the pick up service accommodated me each time and change their schedule along with my changed schedule.

1. Housing:

There are 4 student housings that I would recommend. I lived at BSN, the accommodations closest to BI – a 4 minute walk. The rent was expensive, 4300 kr or roughly $860. The place is nice, new, and clean. Each apartment holds 2 bedrooms, 1 bath, and a kitchen. You are randomly paired but I believe BI makes an effort at pairing you with exchange students. My roommate was Norwegian and it became a great experience. Another reason I enjoyed living at BI was because majority of that term’s exchange students were living there, creating a very social environment.

The other choices are through SiO: Kringsja, Sogn, and Bjolsen. The 3 are similar because there usually include 6 individual bedrooms, a community kitchen, and different bathroom options. Bjolsen has an ideal social/kitchen area and the rooms have their own bathrooms. They are the most expensive of the 3 but I remember the rate being around $600-650. The location is not the greatest simply because the subway (Tbane) stop is a 12 minute walk/5 minute bus ride – that is also far away the apartment complex is from BI. Sogn has a great location between Nydalen (where BI is) and downtown according to the subway (Tbane). It is the cheapest accommodations (roughly $500) but it is still a great site. During my exchange very few of the international students lived at either Sogn or Bjolsen. Kringsja is a very large apartment site on the outskirts of Oslo. It is a cheap apartment; you share a bathroom with one other bedroom and the kitchen area is quite large (a great social gathering option). The rent is around $550. The location proved to be great because just a short walk away is the lake Sognsvann. It’s a gorgeous area where many Norwegians go for afternoon runs, sunning, and swimming. I loved my time there in the spring and the fall exchange group raved about their early barbeques and days spent at the lake that August.

1. Meals:

All meals were considered our own responsibility. The first week the international office provided us with food during our orientation days. They expressed that it was important we “ate up” because the food in Norway is very expensive. A carton of juice costs $5-6, a loaf of bread $4-7, meat, cheese, and produce are very expensive. I found ways around that: at the Tbane stop Gronland there is a market that sells the “2nd group” of produce. This means that the apples have a few more bruises than the normal grocery store and the prices are cut in half. Stocking up at this market is dangerous simply because the foods turn bad sooner than usual. But I found myself cooking with my friends very often so a grocery run happened quite often. Also at Gronland was a Lidl, the German discounted grocery store. But I believe that is closing over summer 2008. The next best would be Rema 1000 but most grocery stores are comparable.

One great thing we did for a short time was attend company presentations at BI. After their speech they would offer free food and an opportunity to talk to the company’s representatives. We did this for awhile because it was free food and it was really interesting to learn more about Norwegian companies. I had a very good experience with PWC – they served us 3 courses in their new office’s top floor and we even managed free evening with the young associates afterwards.

1. Transportation:

Oslo’s transportation system is exceptional. Their subway/Tbane runs to a great amount of places and the bus system is great for everything else. The taxi’s are extremely expensive, a ride from downtown to Nydalen costs $40-50. But the city is small and you can walk a considerable amount, from downtown to Nydalen takes about 1 hour, at a fast pace. Another great option is the City Bike. I didn’t take advantage of it but for 70 kr/$12 you get a year long pass to any bike. One of the cheapest things available in Oslo and biking is very fast.

1. Student activity groups**:**

I was involved in INsA the international student association. They arranged trips to Tromso (Arctic Circle – Northern Lights) and Hemsedal (ski trip) and a few parties in the beginning and end of semester. It was a nice deal because they were able to provide students with heavy discounts. I would highly recommend joining their trips.

I had 2 friends joined AISEC – a student group that provides internships all over the world. I liked it a lot and one is currently taking advantage of the internship opportunities in India. The University of Minnesota is not affiliated with this program but SCSU is.

#### Host Country Culture

1. What were some surprises or insights you had into the culture of your host country/school?

I found the people to be very diverse. The typical stereotype of Norwegians is that they are shy and hesitant to meet new people; they stick with the social network they are already apart of. I found this to be very true in many cases. However there are always those that break the mold and I became friends with some great people. One exception to this stereotype would take place in the event of drinking, they become very open and “chatty” in that situation.

When I arrived in the winter I spent the next few months observing that many Norwegians didn’t do much more than was required. But I came to realize that they were simply waiting for good weather. Once spring and sun came they were out in packs, enjoying the parks, lakes, restaurant patios, etc.

Another important thing to know about Norway is that the city closes down on Sundays and major holidays. All stores, from grocery to clothing, close every Sunday. Additionally, all of these things close early the rest of the week. The grocery stores usually shut down between 8-11. Banks, post offices, and other offices close at 5 or before.

1. What are your recommendations for ways that other exchange students can learn about and become immersed in the culture?

I found that working in Oslo was the best way I became immersed in the culture. However, not many want nor need to take that route. Other things to try are spending time with the student buddies from INsA. They make a tremendous effort with the exchange students and are very open to introducing you to their own friends.

One great example of networking was from a German friend. Through a friend he met a girl that wanted help in learning German. The two worked it out so they could help each other learn the other language. She ended up introducing him to many friends and many places throughout Oslo.

1. Did you have the chance to learn a second language? Why or why not?

As far as learning Norwegian, I have mixed opinions. Norwegians are taught English from a very early age so they are all very fluent and willing to change to English in a conversation. As well, BI classes are all taught in English. There is a Norwegian language course offered to exchange students for two evenings a week, lasting about three months. Some of my friends were in this course, some learned a lot, others much less. As always, it all depends on your efforts. I found that knowing Norwegian was not required however having a bit of knowledge helps in day to day activities such as grocery shopping, finding your way throughout the city, etc.

I did not learn a substantial amount of Norwegian nor did I take the course. However, now that I am working I wish I would have taken the time to learn more. In the period of two months I have picked up a lot of the language. I think had I been learning the full term I would have learned a lot of Norwegian.

**Social life:**

1. How would you rate your integration with other students from the host university?

The exchange courses are offered in the international program. So I became friends with many of the students. Another way I met many BI students was through their student house which throws parties every Thursday night. It is a big dance house located very near BI, with a bar and DJ. Many students go because its free and the drinks are cheaper. However, I would say my friend group mostly consisted of exchange students rather than other BI students.

1. How would you rate your integration with other international students?

I created amazing relationships with many of the international students. As a junior I was one of the youngest amongst the entire group. Many on exchange were Masters students and many Europeans do not start their bachelors as young as Americans do.

1. What were some of the best ways you found to make friends and meet people at the host university?

Through student groups, the student house, and class mostly. Many times I met new people by going to different house parties thrown by buddies from InSA and through the exchange students that had stayed for longer than 1 term.

1. What kinds of after-hours and weekend activities would you recommend for other students?

We went to the student house every Thursday. A few places to go would be Stravinsky, Neon, Café Sor, Tiger Tiger, Unkel Donald, University of Oslo’s Law School House, Mono. There are a lot of places to go that will suit many different tastes. But I often did not go out every night of the weekend. My budget didn’t allow it so often my friends and I would hang out at someone’s apartment.

1. If you traveled with your family, how was their integration into the host community? Did you find any particularly helpful resources for them?

N/A

**Other:**

1. Budgeting: how much would you recommend students take with them? How much would you say would be the monthly living expenses in the city you lived in including rent/food/misc. expenses?

Rent will cost from $500-800 a month. I was able to keep grocery costs at $200-240 a month but that was with frugal spending.

1. Do you have suggestions on the types of students who would be well suited to this program?
2. Did you need a visa to enter the country? If so, how did you apply for one and how long did it take to receive?

You are required to have a residence permit. They recommend you applying and receiving it before you leave but say that it is not required. This is true however I would highly recommend getting your permit before leaving. The process of getting it in Oslo is time consuming and more expensive. Also, I ran into a lot of trouble and stress trying to leave the country. The airline assumed that I did not have the right to stay in Norway over three months, which is the usual maximum. I had to change my flight twice and speak to the Norwegian embassy in Minneapolis many times before I was allowed to fly out.

1. What recommendations would you give to other CSOM students going on this program (to bring, to wear, etc.)?

The winter is cold and wet. A warm parka and boots will make you very comfortable. Lots of sweaters and thick socks were my winter clothing choices. The summers are gorgeous but the temperature doesn’t extend 75 degrees often.

1. General recommendations for study abroad:
2. What resources did you use to plan your trip or semester travels that you think other students should know about?

I went into Norway with very little knowledge. However the city isn’t overwhelming and you learn things quickly. The same goes for travelling, you learn as you go. I would recommend having all your paperwork and necessities all organized and ready to go.

1. Did you receive a scholarship for your study abroad program? If so, can you tell us about the award, how you found it, and the details of the application process?

I received a scholarship through the Carlson Family foundation. I applied through the study abroad office. I wrote a letter of why I should receive the scholarship and then wrote a thank you letter to the family after winning the scholarship.

If you would be willing to be contacted by prospective students to this program, please let us know how we can reach you! Your preferred e-mail (for student contacts), and address/phone (for our office) would be much appreciated!

Email to:

Kirsten Alexejun, International Programs

[alexejun@umn.edu](mailto:alexejun@umn.edu)