

## **Report of Stay: Erasmus+ in Tromsø, Norway Spring 2021**

In the spring semester 2021, from 08.01. until 08.06., I completed a stay abroad at the UiT Norges arktiske universitet in Tromsø. Since I am studying psychology at Bielefeld University, the semester abroad took place through the Faculty of Psychology and Sports Science.

Right from the start of my studies it was clear to me that I wanted to have at least one stay abroad as part of my studies. Since I also got an international degree, taught in English, at my high school in addition to my Abitur, I wanted to apply and develop the skills I acquired as well as my English skills in another country. I also always knew that a time abroad was both a good opportunity for me personally and that employers nowadays like to see it. Furthermore, I would like to stay international in my work later on, which is why a first stay abroad early in my (academic) career seemed a good idea.

I organized my stay by contacting the Erasmus coordinator for my subject. Since the semester was run via Erasmus +, I just had to tell them where I wanted to go (selection from the Erasmus partner universities in my department) and write a letter of motivation for the application process.

Since I only went to Norway and as a student, I did not have to apply for a separate visa and many things are already set up by Erasmus +, but you still had to take care of the application at the partner university, i.e. upload documents, select courses and work out the Learning Agreement with all parties.

My partner lived in my apartment in Germany during my time in Norway and looking for an apartment in Tromsø is very easy thanks to the Samskipnaden (a university organization that regulates everything to do with non-academic student life). All you have to do is register on their housing portal and use it to submit an application for all student housing at once. The selection is very large and there is something for everyone. I lived in Storskogåsen Student Housing for the 5 months of my stay. This is a dormitory on the hill of the island, and it took about 20 minutes by bus to get to the university during the week or a little less if you walked down or up the hill (up was never as fun as the hill was pretty steep). Hardly any or no other international students live here. Many of the internationals live in Ørndalen, a student village on the other side of the university.

Special vaccinations and insurance are usually not needed and traveling to Tromsø is very easy by plane (outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a non-stop flight from Frankfurt). When visiting Norway, one should be aware that the cost of living is quite high. With the Erasmus + scholarship, most of the housing opportunities can be paid for easily and the tuition

fees are not applicable as an Erasmus student. So, I've made the experience that you can get by financially if you keep an eye on your expenses.

Since I was abroad during the pandemic, some things must have been different from how they usually are. However, since Northern Norway had a very mild course of the pandemic, life there was still mostly normal, and one of my three courses even took place in person.

I had to earn a total of 30 ECTS, which can usually be covered with three courses, since most of them have a scope of 10 ECTS. For my psychological subject, I decided to take the course "Cognitive Development in Infancy and Early Childhood", which expanded on developmental psychology using a specific model. I also decided on two non-psychological courses, each of which should have something to do with my host country or one of my former favorite subjects. My choices were a History ("Norway and the World c.800-1550") and an English Literature ("Utopia and Dystopia: Writers and Writing on the Future ") course, which I both loved a lot. The course catalogue offer in Tromsø is particularly large in the biological / physical areas, but there is also something for almost every other subject. Those responsible for the course all respond very quickly and are happy to answer questions about the course, although the online catalogue is already very good and detailed. I also attended an A1 Norwegian course, which the university offers specially for foreign students every semester (as well as at least A2-B2 courses).

Although I don't like to study in the library in Germany, I spent almost every day in Tromsø at the university and in the university library. It has a very pleasant working atmosphere and offers everything you could wish for, from many silent work boxes to sofas for group work. The days at the University of Tromsø are mostly relaxed and the Norwegian students actually all go home or to the gym, which is right on the university campus and very nice, by 4 p.m. at the latest.

During this stay I wanted to see something new and get to know other countries, cities and another university, as well as people. This has worked out just as I imagined. It was very interesting to see how learning and teaching at the host university differ from my home university and what was the same. An important experience was that your stay will be more eventful and interesting, the more you open up to new people and experiences. You should be aware that Norwegians tend to be more private people and that you therefore have more contact with other exchange students, which does not harm the experience.

Overall, I can wholeheartedly recommend Tromsø as a destination! Tromsø is a paradise, especially if you really like nature and sports. Ski and hiking enthusiasts in particular will find a place here that really has everything to offer.