

RETURNEE OF THE MONTH

DECEMBER 2018 / JANUARY 2019



ABOUT KATHERINE MCCOOL

Program: UVA Exchange: Lund University, Sweden

Duration: Spring 2018

Major: Civil & Environmental Engineering

MOST INTERESTING CLASS & WHY?

The most interesting class I took was Water, Society, and Climate change, which both satisfied a course for my civil engineering elective and was a fun class! We had around 10 total lecturers who all taught their subject area. We learned about hurricanes, coastal resilience, and climate change within the context of Sweden, which was a very different perspective than that of the United States. My favorite part about the course was a project where we used software to design improvements for a Swedish coastal town based on future sea level predictions. I took two civil engineering major courses (this class and Hydromechanics) and two elective courses (Swedish politics and Swedish) which led to a really great balance between my major and cultural experiences.



KATHERINE MCCOOL

UVA EXCHANGE: LUND UNIVERSITY
SPRING 2018

HOW WAS EDUCATION ABROAD DIFFERENT THAN ANTICIPATED?

Education in Sweden is much more self-paced, which makes it much less stressful than American school. Most courses had only one or two assignments for the whole year; this also means that the final exam is worth 70-90% of the total grade, so studying for exams is much more heavily prioritized than it is here. Overall, adjusting to classes and taking classes abroad was a much less stressful experience than taking classes here.

NUMBER ONE WAY THE EXPERIENCE CONTRIBUTED TO YOUR GROWTH

Independence is one of the most important things in the Swedish culture and I think it really made me the independent person I am now. I am comfortable travelling, hiking, working, and doing basically anything alone, as well as planning similar activities for a group of people. I feel more confident in my choices now because I have experienced trying new things alone and I know that I am capable.

FAVORITE LOCAL HANGOUT & WHY?

I used to bike five minutes northeast to watch the sunset at a place called Klosterängshöjden, which was basically the only hill in all of southern Sweden. From the top of the hill I could see Denmark, Copenhagen, and very far to the north and east. When it became spring the surrounding fields were bright yellow from the rapeseed crops. Whenever I went up there were always families having picnics or runners taking a break to watch the sunset. It was amazing to be able to see two countries, my house, and an amazing landscape at the same time.



LUND IN 3 WORDS

Older

Colder

Charlottesville

KATHERINE MCCOOL

UVA EXCHANGE: LUND UNIVERSITY SPRING 2018

MOST INTERESTING/DELICIOUS CUISINE TRIED

Swedes love dessert at all times of the day! I ate more kanelbullar (cinammon buns) than I can count. Pressbyrån, Sweden's version of a 7-11/Sheetz, had a 4 kanelbullar for 40 kronor (\$5) deal that I would abuse a few times every week. Kanelbullar were a great snack to take on the train while exploring or to eat in a cafe while catching up on some work. Universal and tasty!



MOST MEANINGFUL INTERACTION WITH A LOCAL

During my time in Lund the university was preparing for Karnevalen, a carnival run completely by students that takes place once every four years. Over 5,000 students volunteer to construct stands, put on shows, and make events for the nearly 500,000 people who flood to Lund for the carnival. My role was helping cook food for other students building the parade floats and one night we were working a pub night and I flipped hundreds of burgers with some local students. It was so cool hearing them talk about their childhoods visiting Karnevalen and how happy they were to now be able to help out. It reminded me of some Charlottesville residents who talk about handing out candy during Trick or Treating on the Lawn after coming for years as a kid. I was glad to hear that the people of Lund were excited to give back to their community and in that sense how similar both of our communities are.

ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD?

Everybody says it, but going abroad was by far the best experience I have had in my entire life. I was able to visit ten countries during my six months in Sweden and I now have lifelong friends in Sweden, Germany, Brazil, Chile, Italy, and so many other places. If you're someone who is interested in studying abroad in a new place with a wide range of new cultures and people, but are not keen on solely speaking another language, Lund University is the perfect place for you. It is in a Charlottesville-sized student city with easy access to the rest of Europe and contains some of the best people and places in the world. Studera på Lunds Universitetet!