

## **Experience Report – Year Abroad at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences**

From August 2024 until May 2025, I studied abroad at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, located in the small but beautiful town of Lillehammer, Norway. The university has a strong reputation for combining theoretical learning with practical experiences, which I really appreciated during my year abroad. I successfully completed 30 ECTS credits per semester, in addition to taking a beginner-level Norwegian language course during the first semester. I also earned a certificate in intercultural competence, awarded after participating in various cultural workshops and group activities involving both international and local students.

All the courses offered to exchange students were taught in English, which made the academic transition smoother. Among the courses I took, Event Management stood out as my favourite. It was engaging and practical. We were responsible for planning and running an actual event, which helped me better understand teamwork, budgeting, and time management. What made the course even more interesting was the number of guest lectures from professionals working in the field, which gave us real-world insight. Another course I enjoyed was Snow Business. It focused on tourism and winter sports and involved field visits to ski resorts and volunteering opportunities for local sporting events. Like Event Management, this course featured many guest speakers from ski resorts and winter tourism companies, helping us better understand how the industry operates in practice. For students interested in tourism, sports, or hospitality, both courses offer a great combination of theory and professional input.

Before arriving in Norway, I had to go through several administrative steps. Since I was already an international student in Germany, I was familiar with the process, but the Norwegian system was very organized and clear. The university's international office was helpful, sending emails with deadlines, instructions, and checklists. The application process itself was simple and fast, with excellent communication and support from both my home university and the host institution.

In terms of accommodation, I applied early through the student housing system and secured a room in a student apartment. The process was simple. I recommend future students apply early and keep an open mind when choosing between different housing options. My apartment was modest but comfortable and met all my basic needs, making it suitable for the duration of my stay.

It's important to be aware that living in Norway is expensive. While tuition fees for exchange students are usually waived, the overall cost of living—including rent, groceries, public transport, and leisure activities—is quite high. Additionally, as a non-European citizen, I had to apply for a student visa before arriving, which involved some administrative fees and paperwork. Although I

prefer not to specify exact amounts, it is essential to come financially prepared for both living expenses and visa-related costs. Despite the expenses, the quality of life is excellent, and I always felt safe and supported.

My daily routine included attending lectures, working on group projects, and studying in the university library. The professors were approachable, and the classroom atmosphere was relaxed but professional. Many courses encouraged open discussion and collaboration, which helped me improve academically and personally. Outside of classes, there weren't many social activities in Lillehammer, especially during the off-season. However, during winter, the town truly comes to life. Lillehammer is known for its winter sports culture, and many students spend their free time skiing or snowboarding. There are ski slopes just minutes from town, and students get discounts on ski passes, which was a nice bonus.

One of the most enriching aspects of my time in Norway was getting to know people from different backgrounds. I met students from all over Europe, as well as locals. While Norwegians can seem reserved at first, I found them very friendly and helpful once you get to know them. They are also incredibly fluent in English, which made communication easy. I never felt excluded due to language barriers and always felt part of the community.

Studying abroad in Norway gave me the chance to better understand a different way of life. Norwegians have a strong connection to nature, value work-life balance, and are very independent. I noticed many similarities between Norwegian and German culture—such as punctuality and order—but also some differences, like more relaxed social norms and a deep appreciation for outdoor activities.

If I had to give advice to future students considering a year in Lillehammer, I would say: if you enjoy nature, winter sports, and a calm study environment, this is the perfect place for you. The pace of life is slower than in big cities, but it gives you a chance to focus on your studies and enjoy personal growth. It's also a great destination for students looking to improve their intercultural communication skills and adapt to new environments.

Overall, my year abroad in Norway was an unforgettable experience. I gained academic knowledge and intercultural competence but also made lasting memories and meaningful friendships. It was a year full of challenges, learning, and personal development. I would highly recommend Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences to anyone looking for a unique and enriching study abroad experience. If anyone is interested in more details about the program or has questions about life in Lillehammer, feel free to contact me at [sjuarezcandia@gmail.com](mailto:sjuarezcandia@gmail.com).