

Sketching Sweden: insight from inside. A 2006 year scholarship report.

A look back at my experience in Sweden upon receiving a scholarship from the Sverker Astrom *Foundation for the Furtherance of Swedish-Russian Relations* brings up really amazing memories. To start with, I was very anxious and excited to come to Sweden in March 2006, stay a few days in Stockholm and meet Mr.Sverker Astrom and members of the Foundation in person, then heading to Jonkoping.



Stockholm in March



During the spring semester, I was going to do an internship at the International Relations Office at School of Engineering, Jonkoping University, since I wanted to learn more about a Swedish approach to the internationalization of education and to be involved into the daily routines of a University's International Office. I absolutely loved my placement, because I found myself in a beautiful, warm, kind and professional environment. I was involved into several projects, for example, worked with updating a data base of the partner universities and exchange students, collecting information about partner universities and creating fact sheets, exchange students' applications processing, and also preparing information materials and organizing social activities for incoming international students from Mexico.



Amazing view at the “twin-cities” Jonkoping and Huskvarna and lake Vattern

I had indeed some fun (and sometimes challenging!) time getting used to the Swedish life and Swedish language. I went to a few Swedish classes for international students at the University and also took a couple of salsa dancing lessons. I was very happy to meet my new very special Swedish friends, Emma and Elin, and also to hang out with a few international students from France, Morocco, Bulgaria, and other countries. I have also traveled a little bit, which gave me the opportunity to see life of some Swedish families and grasp the spirit of the country: Halmstad for Easter, Karlstad for a birthday party, Vaxjo to visit my friend, Granna and Goteborg – just to do sightseeing. Furthermore, I just can't not to mention that I went to a real University Spring Ball and had a Russian dance 3-minute performance filmed for the Student Dance Association commercial!!



Swedish flag and Swedish “alg”

In the spring I applied to the Institute of International Education, Stockholm University, and was accepted for studies. So, after the summer in Russia I came to Sweden again and spent the fall semester in Stockholm. I am very glad to have taken and completed three courses at Stockholm University: *Educational Management and Leadership*, *Lifelong Learning: Theories and Applications*, and *Educational Reform*. Thus, at the Institute of International Education I learned at the same time theory and practice of international education – the field which I am planning to work with. In Stockholm I have also got a very interesting perspective of Sweden through the chess world and spending some time with children, since my friend was a chess teacher.



I would say that Jonkoping and Stockholm are two different “Swedens”. While Jonkoping is more “Swedish” and lives in a comfortable slow pace, Stockholm runs a very international life. Though, both cities are very beautiful and poetic!



Stockholm



Jonkoping

I absolutely loved evening walks in Stockholm downtown, ice skating and music at *Kunstragarden* and enjoyed so much the spirit of the city with its lights and water. It was also really interesting, when a few times people on the subway recognized that my friend and me spoke Russian, they started up a conversation and wanted to talk about Russia.



Traditional Swedish holiday – Lucia (mid-December)

No doubt, it has been really great that I've got to see these faces of Sweden. To see them not as a tourist, but from inside! Only staying in Sweden for a while gives you the key to understand jokes about Skone or Norway, to hear about snow adventures in Kiruna and to feel the all-Sweden rush before the parliament elections. I can't stop saying that I learned so much about Sweden, life in general, people and myself. For me, the most valuable way of getting to know the country is through its people. So, I have gotten the personal dimension of Sweden through my friends and colleagues. I also hope that I brought something positive and a picture of Russia to the Swedish world I lived in.

I am endlessly grateful to Mr. Sverker Astrom and the Foundation for this opportunity to come and explore Sweden and built up a stronger baggage - professional and personal. And finally, I would like to address words of my deep respect to all the Foundation members, whom I was honored to meet, and a special SPASIBO to Disa Hastad.



You can also find my article about my internship in Jonkoping in the StudyAbroad magazine, May 2006, page 15 [http://ksi.pro.dir.dk/pdf/SA_no. 37 May 2006.pdf](http://ksi.pro.dir.dk/pdf/SA_no.37_May_2006.pdf)