

**LANDFIN
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By Karoline Riis

WHO AM I



My name is Karoline Alberte Riis and I am 27 years old. I live in Frederiksberg, Denmark and goes to KEA where I study a bachelor in Jewellery, Technology and Business. I have a big interest in technology, and therefore I choose to go to Finland because LAB university is a very technical school, and they have a lot of opportunities.

In general, I'm a very outgoing person and I don't really have that many problems talking with people and "making" friends, but exchange is a new level. You have to learn to live in another country and be away from everything you know. And then there is the part where you must talk English all the time. I know I speak English quite well, but I have this thing where I black out every time I have to talk, I think it may be some presentation anxiety or something. But I learned to be confident in myself and it really doesn't matter that you don't have every sentence correct, or you don't know some words, people will understand you either way.

At the beginning of my classes when I had to present I got this rash on my neck and I stemmed a lot, but now I can just talk and I don't even need notes or anything which is really cool.

WHERE & WHEN

Where and when did you study abroad?

I studied at Lab university of applied science in Finland, where I studied from start of January till the end of May.

What KEA program did you attend at the time?

I study Jewellery, Technology and Business and I just finished my 6th semester.

What classes did you take during your semester abroad?

I took Art History, Workshop License, Professional Portfolio and Exhibition design.

Art history were about the history of the art through times. It was almost like having a class in high school.

Workshop License were a jewellery course, so it was basically just a workshop where we sat in the workshop during jewellery. And because me and Signe already knew all the basics, we did our own stuff where the others had to take the actual course.

Professional Portfolio almost says itself, but we learned how to make a professional portfolio and how the layout and the text should fit together.

Exhibition design is about making an exhibition. We had to make an exhibition in the end of our semester for all the students who wanted to show off their work, so the class was about brainstorming ideas, making all the structures, marketing materials and having the exhibition in the end.

WHAT, WHY



SCHOOL

How helpful was the receiving school in the process of choosing classes and settling you in?

It was easy enough to find the classes, but it was still kind of confusing because it didn't really say much about the courses. I could have used maybe some examples or something. And Finland is a bit weird with their courses when you are an exchange student because when you pick your courses it's fine but when you arrive and see your courses, you can see that most of the courses is overlapping. And I think we spent most of January to figure out how we could do it, so we could take all our courses and get the ECTS points. But in the end, we ended up taking more ECTS in one of the courses, taking another course and then deleting some.

What classes / study experiences did you find the most rewarding? Why?

I probably found Professional portfolio most rewarding because it's something I'm going to use when I go home.

What classes would your advice other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose?

I think it's hard to tell people what they should take, because LAB have so many courses. It depends on which direction you are taking, is it business, Design and so on. Some of the other exchange students had some fun courses like making a boardgame. So, I would highly recommend reading it all through because LAB have so many opportunities and it's an amazing technical and creative school!

I would NOT recommend art history. It's simply not worth the time, and if you are a creative person, then you're just wasting your time when you could take more fun courses.

How was the application process? & What did KEA help you with?

I was quite easy because of Mobility online. They told you everything you had to do in which order, so everything went smooth. And Hanne was good at helping with any questions you had, so that was nice.

What help did you receive from your school abroad?

I had everything I needed, so I didn't really get any help from them. But they were quick at the stuff they had to receive from me to return it.

What advice would you give other kea students going to study abroad at the receiving school?

My choice of going to exchange was something I decided 3 weeks before deadline, so it was very spontaneous and therefore I didn't have any money for it. I would highly recommend saving up or being good at getting grants. I applied for so many grants but didn't get any. So really save up.

And then I will recommend doing all kind of fun winter activities while you are here. For examples go hunt auroras, drive snowmobiles, go out skiing, ride a husky sleigh, go visit a husky farm, ice bath, do saunas. And just enjoy the beautiful snow that covers the city.

Last but not least I will recommend to just have an open mind. The friends I got here meant everything for me and for my experience. It wouldn't have been the same at all without them. And there will probably be some age difference on all of you, for example, I am 27 while some of them is 19, and we had so much fun, so age doesn't matter. Just do stuff, make friends, enjoy it while it last, because it's over before you know it.





GENERAL

Did you have any practical difficulties settling down in at your destination?

It's always hard settling down in a new city, where you suddenly must be away from everything you are used to and being away from friends and family. It was exhausting the first month because we had to figure everything out. And we arrived at evening to an apartment that had nothing but a bed, a desk, and a chair. There were no lights in the apartment, only at the bathroom and kitchen. There were no wi-fi or nothing, so everything was just a bit too much first. But we had an amazing tutor which picked us up at the station with our keys and showed us the way to our apartment. So, it made it a bit easier.

Where did you live?

We lived in Lahti where the school is. But we did live in the other part of the city. So, it took two buses to get to school and around 40 minutes. It was fine because going to the city only took around 15 minutes with the bus. But most people lived closer to the school, so everything was a bit easier for them. And the bus to our home stopped going around 23.00, and the other guys could go home but we had to take cabs.

Was it difficult to find accommodation? & how expensive was it?

No not really. There were link at the school's website and we just went in and did a request. But I would recommend you to look the city up before applying for a apartment. We live in Suitsikatu and that's a bit far out, so look it up and search how long there is from school to the apartment and from the city to the apartment. And our rent was around 416€ every month which is 3100 DK.

Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted with?

I used way more than I expected, and way more than I had budget to. We first got our Erasmus money in February so the first month was expensive and my bank account went way down.

I had a plan for the 5 months so I wouldn't need anything, but the plan got ruined buy just living in Finland. And we went to Lapland in the end of February, start march and my wallet was not happy about that. Skiing vacations is in general just expensive, and Lapland was just insane. 100% worth it, but expensive.

What kind of expenses did you have in general?

We didn't have any furniture in the apartment we rented, so we had to buy stuff for two rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, and the Livingroom. Even though we did second hand and had a very simple living, it still costs us some money. **Food and alcohol** are very expensive. So, you are using between 50-80 euros per week just by food. And then alcohol is maybe around 30€ for 24 beers. Which is around 20€ more than in Denmark. **Cabs.** Busses here in Lahti have their own life. They stop going around 23.00 and start going around 6.00, so when you are going out, (which you are doing a lot when you are an exchange student), you have to take a taxi home, and that's getting expensive at the end. Then we have all the **experiences** that we do, which is a big part of the whole trip. We went to Lapland in Finland (very expensive), we went to Estonia, went snow skiing, and all kind of stuff. Winter sports is very expensive. And last but not least the **visits from home.** When people come and visit you, they are on a vacation, which means they feel like spending money. But when you live here doing school, you don't have a lot of money, but you do want to do stuff with them because they took time out of their calendar to visit you, so you don't want to disappoint.

PERSONAL

What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad? And how helpful was the receiving school in this process?

Finland is very close to Denmark, both in km and in “personality”. So other than the language, there weren’t really any culturally challenges.

What was the best cultural / Personal experience during your studies abroad?

My best cultural or personal experience was for sure the trip to Lapland. We are this big group of design exchange students and we have been a bit out together, but we were all still very shy and new to each other. So, we decided to do a trip to Lapland in Finland. 22 people rented a cabin close to a ski resort. It was the most amazing trip ever. I got a new love for skiing; I got some close friends and just some unforgettable memories. We went on an evening activity where we went out on snowmobiles and hunted auroras. We drove for 1 hour, stopped at a little cabin where we got warm juice and grilled sausages and marshmallows. After that we got outside and saw the northern lights, and then we drove back. It was so amazing.

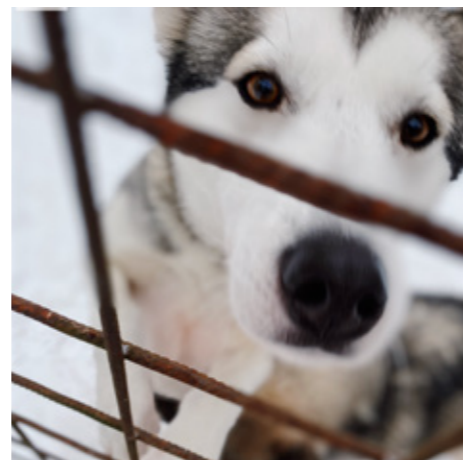
Then we just had a lot of parties at the cabin and at the clubs, we did movie nights and then we got this thing where we did dinners from each country. We had people from The Netherlands, Germany, Slovenia, France, Spain, Finland of course and Italy and then us from Denmark. So, in Lapland we did The Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Italy and we did the Finnish and Danish dinner in the months afterwards. It was so much fun to eat food from other countries, and no doubt that the Spanish and Italian dinner won ;)

But after we got home, half of the group got sick and yes, we got covid. So that was a bit annoying, but honestly it was kind of nice to have an excuse to take a week just to lay in bed. Because one week with 22 people in one house is exhausting.





JUST DO IT



At the end I would just like to say that this have been the most amazing trip of my life. I have grown in every possible way, and I think this was the best decision of my life so far. I got friends for life now, and it's only a bonus that you now have an excuse to travel. So if you have the change to go do exchange, then please do it. **You will not regret it.**

