REPORT
ERASMUS EXCHANGE

2020/2021
Lapin Yliopisto, Finland
SF ROVANIE01
Giovanni Maria Conti

LAPIN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

Elisa Rossi
941721
Design for the Fashion System
Master - Second year
rossi.elisa10@gmail.com

_introduction

Hello! Let me introduce myself: I am Elisa Rossi and I am a student in my last year of Master in Fashion Design and I have just spent a fantastic semester in Rovaniemi, in Lapland. I want to start this report by saying that it was the best experience ever, full of adventures and personal growth. I convinced myself to put this destination as the first option by reading old reports from past years and I hope to be able, in a few lines, to convey everything that this place can convey. First of all, I want to emphasize not to be frightened by the cold, the dark and the stereotypes that characterize Lapland. It is true, it is an unusual place and sometimes not the most livable in the world, but at the same time, for this very reason, every day is an adventure and a discovery and above all with the right equipment you will not have any problems.

_before leaving/clothing

Rovaniemi is a magical and unique place, but you have to prepare properly for this adventure, especially for the climatic conditions. In fact, you don't have to be frightened by the temperatures and adversities that nature can cause you, but at the same time you need to have what you need, starting with clothes. Me and other guys from the Politecnico left with two pairs of ski pants in the suitcase and above all a nice heavy jacket, that will be your salvation! In addition to this, it is very important to have thermal layers, both leggings and sweaters, to wear under your everyday clothes. For the rest, don't think you have to go out every day like a snowmen, you can continue to wear your favorite jeans, precisely because the thermal layers worn underneath will help you face the cold adequately. Furthermore, a nice pair of shoes / boots is also essential, considering that snow is present for most of the months and that in any case the cold is not irrelevant. Likewise, all accessories such as gloves, scarves, hats, thermal socks and neck warmers will be your best friends to go out and discover the amazing place that is Lapland! In addition to this, I also recommend wool sweaters (merino is the best) or thermal fleece, in short, all the clothing you usually wear in winter. Despite this, remember that there is no cold all year round and that if, for example, you do like me the second semester, around March / April and especially in May the temperatures rise and the snow melts, so even some t- shirts, light sweatshirts and more spring clothing can help you.

_the departure and the journey

The journey to get to Rovaniemi is the real first adventure and experience you will face. The options are different and include either the use of the plane, making two or three changes or, as we did, the combination of plane and train. I and two other guys from Politecnico chose this second option for economic reasons, knowing that we share the many hours of travel together and to have a first chance to get to know each other better. In particular, we took the first flight from Milan Malpensa to Amsterdam and then from Amsterdam to Helsinki; from here we continued with the train booked through the VR website (https://www.vr.fi/en?gclid=CjwKCAjwoNuGBhA8EiwAFxomAwG-B8T-6MViydUHO39Oy9vpdBLASldbsn9ZSKMcJVV3cyvfO_Sz2hoDBEw). The airline used is KLM (https://www.klm.it/en/trip), but there are several and I would certainly check the most advantageous according to the needs, even if we found ourselves very well. We left with a 23kg hold luggage, a hand luggage and a backpack for a total of 12kg and we managed to organize the spaces to be able to carry everything we need. Tip: use vacuum bags to take up less space, especially for winter clothing such as ski pants and you will see that everything will fit! Don't worry, you will realize that the essentials are few and that space will be enough for you. In case there is something you really want to bring and that just doesn't fit or is too heavy, you can always have a package sent to you, it's very simple and I'll talk about it later.

_arrive and accomodation

After a full day of travel, we finally arrive in Rovaniemi around 11 pm. You can easily book a taxi on the “Meneva” app, they are not particularly expensive and being a small city, it does not involve long distances. As for accommodation, you don’t have to worry because once you know that you have been accepted at the University of Lapland (but even earlier if you want to be sure) you can apply for an apartment in a student residence. The company that manages the accommodations is called DAS (https://www.das.fi/en) and on their website you can easily find all the information you need. There are several buildings in Rovaniemi but only two are completely dedicated to Erasmus students, DAS Eero and DAS Lauri. They are very close to each other, but I lived in DAS Lauri. Both have a sauna on the top floor that you can use when you want by booking through the DAS website. The buildings share the laundry room which is only found in DAS Lauri, but even if you live in DAS Eero don’t worry as you can use it, always reserving your washer and dryer on their website. Everything is obviously included in the rental costs of your apartment. As for the latter, there are several options: you can choose a single or double room as a preference. In the first case you will have a very spacious room all to yourself in an apartment for two (you can also enter preferences for the roommates if you already know someone); in the second you will have a shared room in an apartment which is generally for 6 people. Obviously the price of the room changes and depends on your needs and requirements.

The apartment and the rooms contain the bare minimum: you will not find sheets, pillows, table lamps or baskets; but simply a bed, a desk, a chair and a wardrobe. However, as soon as you arrive, there will certainly be days when the recycling room will be open, a place where you can go and take everything you want for free, being objects that students of past years have decided to leave to future students. Here you will find mainly kitchen utensils, plates, glasses, but also table lamps and some accessories to decorate your home. In addition, Rovaniemi is full of second-hand shops and therefore you will easily find everything you need at a low price (See section dedicated to shops, supermarkets and vintage). In addition to this, life in residence is beautiful and allows you to experience Erasmus to the full, always being in contact with international students of your age and who, like you, are having a unique experience.

_DAS LAURI

_STANZA E VISTA APPARTAMENTO

_APPARTAMENTO E LAVATRICI

_shops and supermarkets

Rovaniemi is a small city, but it has everything you need. Our first day was marked by expenses, expenses and expenses; for both home and food. As for the house, we found everything you need to sleep (sheets, duvet, pillow, ..) at affordable prices from JYSK (Vierustie 12, 96320 Rovaniemi) a few kilometers away from the residence. In addition to this, as already mentioned, there are many second-hand shops and the most famous of all is undoubtedly KONTTI (Teollisuustie 13, 96320 Rovaniemi), where you can find everything you need, from home accessories, to sofas, beds, mattresses to clothes and sporting goods, all at very cheap prices. Both shops are located in the same area of the city, but even towards the center you can find second-hand shops or vintage items. Between JYSK and KONTII there are two supermarkets, LIDL (Oijustie 2, 96320 Rovaniemi), certainly the most advantageous in terms of prices and PRISMA (Teollisuustie 2, 96320 Rovaniemi), a large shopping center where you will find any type of food you need, but also other items such as clothes, household items or sports accessories. Near the residence and in front of the University there is another supermarket, SALE (Jokiväylä 40, 96300 Rovaniemi), but I recommend that you go there only when you need a few things, as the prices are higher. In the city center there are other supermarkets, including other branches of SALE or K-Market, where you will find everything you need and the prices are good. In addition to that, in the city center there are also two shopping centers, one smaller and one larger, where there are various shops and restaurants, including H&M and a sushi all you can eat. There are many places to discover and surely you will have many opportunities to do it, you just need to know that yes you are in Lapland and yes, you are in the middle of nature but Rovaniemi is a city and you will always find everything you need and every service without any problem.

_university life

The university is different from Politecnico and offers various services. First of all, it is smaller and there are fewer students, but perhaps it is also due to the fact that we have always lived our Erasmus in the COVID period and even if the lessons were mostly in the presence, university life was not the same anyway. That said, the university has different departments based on the field of study and in my case I always attended the “Art & Design” area. This very beautiful wing that is very reminiscent of the B2 entrance to the Politecnico has a canteen (it does not use due to covid), sofas and tables for studying and a piano that can be used freely. Beyond this first area there are several classrooms and laboratories: wood, photography, fashion, weaving, painting and computerized classrooms with numerous MacBooks, as well as an accessible library equipped with a printer that you can use whenever you want. To access the laboratories and libraries, as well as the printers, you must obtain a key that you just need to ask the information office during the first few days and that you will have to return once the Erasmus is finished. The university has three canteens but only one was open during our stay. The canteen has a self-service and presents numerous proposals every day, sometimes very good, others less satisfactory; but in general it is a good solution as it costs only 2.70 by presenting the acceptance letter to the university or through the FRANK app, an application that shows your ID card, enabled by paying a fee to the LYY student association. I know, it seems like a lot of things to know, but don’t worry because at the beginning of your path the university will support you with a tutor who will help you a lot: they will show you the university and answer all your questions, as well as can also take the keys of your apartment and bring it to you in case you arrive late in the evening in Rovaniemi (as we did).

In general, the University will really help you a lot if you have questions and don’t have to worry about writing to the exchange office, which also organizes a welcome week before the start of the courses.

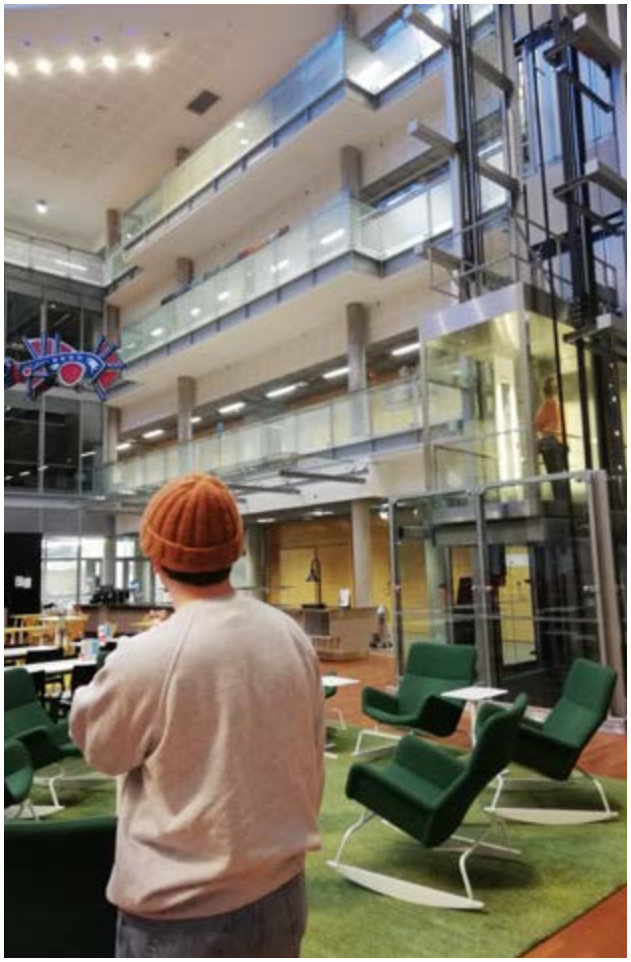
. As for the courses, the offer is really wide and it may happen that you will modify your Learning Agreement while you are in Lapland as some courses may not be activated or have been modified, even in this case it is not a problem, both the professors from Rovaniemi and from Politecnico are always very available to understand every situation and will help you find the best solution. You can see all the available courses and sign up for them through the Weebodi platform, which you can access via email and username that will be given to you by the University once you are accepted. It's very simple and you have so many courses to choose from! In particular, I have taken several courses and not all of them are completely related to my course of study, but it was not a problem at all, indeed becoming an opportunity to expand my knowledge and stimulate my creativity. In fact, the University has a more artistic approach than Politecnico and you will have more opportunities to train your less technical side. Below I list the courses I have done and some details about it.

ART AND VISUAL CULTURE IN THE NORTH: purely theoretical course, based on general knowledge about Nordic culture. Useful for identifying as best you can in the place where you will be carrying out the Erasmus, certainly stimulating and interesting, dealing with unusual topics. The final exam is a text about three exhibitions that we had to visit in museums of our choice, increasing them and comparing them with the lessons held.

WINTER ART AND DESIGN: stimulating and creative course, lasting about a week during which we had to make our own snow sculpture. Very interesting, I recommend it as it is definitely an experience that you cannot live anywhere and that allows you to learn and discover a totally new world.

INNOVATION IN CLOTHING: interesting but totally independent course. I had to carry out a project based on my preliminary knowledge and communicating with the teachers via e-mail, without ever having a lesson in person.

LIFE DRAWING: certainly the most interesting, stimulating and useful of the entire Erasmus. I left home without having great drawing skills, I came back much more confident and with highly developed skills. The teacher is helpful, open and motivating, without a doubt one of the best I have ever had!
FINNISH DESIGN: course that all design students do, interesting. Each lesson must be made of group presentations and at the end a project must be presented; it is useful to learn more about Finnish design.
TEXTILE ART AND PRODUCTS: studying fashion design, it was very stimulating for me as I was able to use the weaving workshop and learn a technique never used before. Very independent, it is necessary to carry out an individual project starting from a concept given by the teachers. Although no lessons are given on particular techniques, all the professors are very helpful and do personal tutoring once the project to be realized has been chosen.
PRINTING WORKSHOP: intense workshop lasting a few weeks about the blue screen technique for printing on fabric. Complete course, from the production of colors in the laboratory to the creation of the pattern to be reproduced. Interesting and creative, I recommend it as it is stimulating and well organized.
Having many courses and credits to validate I have not had the opportunity to do others, but if you have more time you can add courses even if you have already reached the credits you need. Some of my friends took the Artic Inspiration course and they all found it very nice, as in a week you have several Finnish experiences and the teacher is very friendly.
In general, the relationship with professors is totally different from what we are used to at the Politecnico. Everyone is more relaxed, available and friendly; they always try to help you and make you feel comfortable.



_UNIVERSITÀ

_LABORATORI

_activities: day and night

Rovaniemi is the capital of Finnish Lapland and stereotypes say there is nothing, just nature. Surely you will not have the Milanese life, but I can guarantee you will never be bored and you will have many activities to do, experiences that you cannot experience anywhere else! For example, if you want to go for a walk or ski (both downhill and cross-country) or have fun with the sled you can go to the Ounasvaara hill, very close to the center and which you can easily reach by bicycle. This place offers spectacular landscapes and whether you go there in Winter or Spring it will not disappoint you. In addition to this, both in this area and in others, even closer to the residence, there are areas in which to light the fire and cook sausages, sandwiches or simply where to be for a drink and keep warm. Of all the exciting and exciting activities that you will certainly do, one of the most important is the aurora hunt. A real hunt because initially you will want to see it at all costs and whenever there is even a few chances you will go out in search of it. Don't worry, you will see many, some beautiful, others courtyards, sometimes you just need to look out the window, other times you will go to the Artikum museum or in the woods to see them better; but in any case it is another opportunity to be together, to discover the place and get excited. The relationship with nature is unique and fantastic, I advise you to stay very little at home, even when it is very cold: go out and look around, take many walks, it is beautiful to see how every day everything is different and constantly changing, even in a short time and in a few months.

If you want to experience unique experiences and activities, I recommend that you book an excursion with a snowmobile or with huskies with some agency: very fun and exciting, they were certainly among the best days of my Erasmus!

As for the nightlife, this too will not disappoint you: from the parties in residence to the pub in the center (KANSAN) where all the Erasmus students meet, you will never be bored.

_OUNASVAARA

_travel and tourism

There are two main museums in Rovaniemi: Arktikum and Korundi. The first mainly concerns Nordic life and culture, with artistic and historical references and features a unique and poetic architecture, with a large window to always stay in contact with nature. The second is a museum of modern art and has more conceptual exhibits, but it is still interesting to visit. In addition, there is also the library designed by Alvar Aalto, where you can also find posters to hang in your room or to take home as a souvenir.

Undoubtedly worth visiting and famous is the Santa Claus Village, just outside Rovaniemi and accessible by bus. I can guarantee you not to have high expectations, very touristy and not very magical, it is still a place to see being right in the house of Santa Claus. Taking a picture with him is an experience that you can only live there and you can also send postcards to receive at Christmas or in a few days. In addition, it is possible to cross the line of the Arctic circle here.

Outside of Rovaniemi there are many places to see and the opportunities for excursions many. Using a rental car (I'll talk about it in the next paragraph) or trains you can easily move around without spending anything. A first day trip we did was to Korouma National Park, where we saw frozen waterfalls. In February, we spent a weekend in Levi, further north than Rovaniemi and here you have the opportunity to ski both downhill and cross-country or you can spend a day at the spa or hiking. During the spring holidays, at the beginning of March we spent a few days in Kilpisjarvi, on the border with Norway and Sweden and here too the landscapes are beautiful and there is the possibility of doing many activities, including snowmobile or husky ride. At Easter we visited some seaside towns, Kemi and Tornio, interesting and fun if you want to see a frozen sea. At the end of Erasmus we spent the last week in Helsinki, reached by train and from which we then took the plane to go home. There are many places to see and it depends on the opportunities you find, we could not cross the Finnish border due to the covid, but you will soon understand that it is not important where you are because every place is magical and every place a new and unusual opportunity!

_VILLAGGIO DI BABBO NATALE E KILPISJARVI

Credits: Enzo Rotilio

_other useful services

To get around Rovaniemi I recommend that you get a bicycle, the distances are not very long and it is safe, also because public transport is not very reliable and frequent. You can easily buy it from students who are already in Rovaniemi and who have just finished their Erasmus, you will find offers easily on the dedicated FB pages and to which you will be added. In addition to cycling, if you need to travel longer distances or for shopping, I recommend that you sign up on the PlanBil website (https://app.planbil.com/users/sign_in) thanks to which you can rent cars in Rovaniemi and in other cities and two cars are located exactly near the residence. If you want to take longer trips or spend a few days out, you can rent a car from the locals via the Bloxcar website (https://bloxcar.fi/en), paying very little. In case you do not want to drive you can always take the train that reaches the main cities, including Oulu and Helsinki, by booking the ticket on the website already presented above (https://www.vr.fi/en?gclid=CjwKCAjwoNuGBhA8EiwAFxomAwG -B8T-6MViydUHO39Oy9vpdBLASldbsn9ZSKMcJVV3cyvfO_Sz2hoCrboQAvD_BwE). You can also book a taxi for short journeys with the “Meneva” app.

_ship/receive parcels

In case you need to receive or send parcels it is very simple: just go to Posti (https://www.poste.fi/en/service-points-on-map/poste-r-kioski-rovaniemi-keskusta- pohjolankatu) in any of their locations, which are generally found in K-Market supermarkets. To receive packages, they will send you a notification to the address of the residence and you must go to the supermarket to collect it. To send them you can also use GLS, which always collaborates with Posti and you can use student discounts.

In conclusion, if you are looking for a unique, different experience and if you want an adventure every day, this is the right place for you. I assure you that you will never get bored, you will grow a lot on a personal and also professional level because it will allow you to open up to new perspectives and fuel your creativity. Do not be frightened by all the problems that may exist and that come to your mind, you will find a solution to everything and everyone will be available to help you, including us. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any other questions, I will be more than happy to tell you about this experience.

HAVE A GOOD JOURNEY! :)