

STAP Experience Report

Hanken school of economics, FINLAND

2024 fall Supply chain management

Complete course:

Economics of new venture

Multivariate data analysis

Behavioral economics

Marketing across culture

My exchange at Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki was an incredible journey of academic growth, cultural immersion, and thrilling experiences. From the breathtaking Northern Lights to the excitement of a wooden roller coaster at Linnanmäki, this experience challenged and inspired me in every way possible.

University, Courses, and Life in Helsinki

Hanken School of Economics, located just two tram stops from Helsinki's central train station, combines an urban location with a warm and inclusive academic environment. Known for its strong focus on international business and economics, the university offers courses that emphasize both theoretical knowledge and practical application.

As an exchange student, I felt fully supported by the university's dedicated Exchange Committee. Their assistance—from airport pickup to organizing social events—helped me integrate quickly into my new environment. The courses I attended were engaging and relevant, providing me with valuable insights into global economic trends and practical tools for my future career. Moreover, the interactive class formats encouraged collaboration and cross-cultural communication, making the academic experience even more enriching.

Helsinki, where Hanken is located, is a dynamic city that seamlessly blends modern urban life with access to pristine nature. Living in the city, I had the unique opportunity to experience Finnish culture, cuisine, and traditions while also enjoying the tranquility of nearby forests and parks.

Preparation and Life Abroad

Preparation for the Semester Abroad

My exchange began with a smooth flight on Finnair from Germany to Helsinki. The journey was comfortable, and upon arrival, I was warmly welcomed by members of the Exchange Committee, who assisted me in settling into my accommodation. Their guidance was invaluable and set a positive tone for the entire exchange.

Life in Helsinki and Beyond

Helsinki offered countless opportunities to explore and experience Finnish culture. One of my favorite pastimes was wandering through the nearby forests, where I enjoyed foraging for mushrooms—a relaxing and rewarding activity deeply rooted in Finnish tradition. Although I missed the blueberry season, which had ended by the time I arrived, walking among the

empty bushes still provided a peaceful connection to nature.

For thrills and excitement, I visited **Linnanmäki Amusement Park**, a popular destination in Helsinki. The highlight of my visit was the wooden roller coaster, an exhilarating ride that blended old-world charm with heart-pounding adventure. The park itself, with its vibrant atmosphere and stunning views of the city, offered a delightful contrast to Helsinki's serene landscapes.

Travel and Cultural Exploration

My time in Finland was enriched by exploring the country's many unique destinations, each offering its own charm and character:

- **Porvoo:** This idyllic town, with its colorful wooden houses and cobblestone streets, felt like stepping back in time. I spent a wonderful day strolling along the riverbank, visiting local shops, and savoring Finnish pastries in cozy cafés.
 - **Tampere and the Moomin Museum:** Visiting the Moomin Museum was a magical experience, bringing to life the whimsical world of Finland's beloved characters. The city of Tampere itself offered a mix of industrial history and modern charm, making it a memorable stop.
 - **Turku and the Christmas Market:** The former capital of Finland, Turku, was particularly enchanting during the holiday season. The Christmas Market in the historic city center was filled with festive lights, traditional crafts, and delicious Finnish treats like glögi (mulled wine), creating a warm and inviting atmosphere despite the winter chill.
 - **Lapland:** My trip to Lapland was a dream come true. Seeing the Northern Lights dance across the sky was an unforgettable moment of awe and wonder. Activities such as husky safaris, reindeer rides, snowshoe walking, and skiing added to the magic of this winter wonderland.
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Reflections on Winter Challenges

While Finland's winter landscapes are undeniably beautiful, they also presented some challenges. Frequent snowfalls made the streets slippery despite efforts to spread gravel for traction. Walking outdoors required constant vigilance, as even a brief moment of inattention could lead to a fall. Additionally, the harsh weather and limited daylight hours during the winter months restricted outdoor activities. However, this also encouraged me to explore Finland's vibrant indoor culture, including museums, cozy cafés, and student-organized events.

Reflection

My exchange at Hanken School of Economics was a transformative experience that went far beyond academics. It was a journey of personal growth, cultural discovery, and thrilling adventures. From enjoying quiet walks in the forest to the excitement of Linnanmäki's roller coasters, and from marveling at the Northern Lights to making lifelong friendships, every moment enriched my understanding of the world and myself.

This experience has left me with unforgettable memories, new perspectives, and a deep appreciation for Finland's unique culture and natural beauty. For future exchange students, I

recommend embracing every opportunity to explore, learn, and connect. Finland is a country of contrasts—serene yet vibrant, modern yet steeped in tradition—and it offers something truly special to anyone willing to dive in.