

**Saint-Petersburg State University**  
**International Relations Office**

## EXCHANGE STUDENTS' REPORT

Please complete this form and send it to Scientific and Academic Cooperation/Students Exchange Dept.  
nechaeva@ir.pu.ru, fax +7 /812/ 3240788. Thank you.

**TO BE FILLED OUT ELECTRONICALLY**

The international experience you have gained while the exchange period at St.Petersburg University is the unique practice you will remember all your life. It can also help other students when they are planning for their exchange. To make sure that prospective students have a chance to learn from your experience you are required to submit the Exchange Students' Report.

Please complete the form and return by email to [nechaeva@ir.pu.ru](mailto:nechaeva@ir.pu.ru).

When filling in the returned student report try to remember the sort of things that you wanted to know before you went on exchange, be honest in your responses and try to avoid simply giving yes/no answers.

Please do not hesitate to contact Scientific and Academic Cooperation/Students Exchange Dept. staff if there are any issues you would like to discuss regarding your exchange experience.

Name:

Host faculty at SPSU

\_\_\_\_\_

School of International Relations

Exchange Study Period

\_\_\_\_\_

1.9.2009-31.1.2010

Home Institution

\_\_\_\_\_

University of Turku, Faculty of Social Sciences

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you give permission for prospective exchange students to contact you if they have questions?

Yes

If yes, please give your preferred email address: oeturt@utu.fi

## The Host University

What factors influenced your decision to select St.Petersburg State University?

I wanted to study in St. Petersburg and SPSU had the faculty (international relations) that suits to my studies in Finland. I was also interested in the long history of the university.

How would you describe St.Petersburg State University?

It is definitely a big university. It's size has both sides: it is respected and has a wide selection of subjects. On the other hand, some things (mostly the bureaucracy) takes a lot of time, perhaps partly due to the huge amount of students.

Please describe the location of St.Petersburg State University (both Faculty and Administration building)

The location of the main building (with administration) on the Vasily island is both beautiful and easy to travel to. My host faculty was also very beautiful and for me easy to travel (since I could walk there from my home), but for some fellow students the travel took quite a long time. If I had courses in the two locations within the same day, it was difficult to be on time in the latter destination because of the traffic jams.

Please describe the courses that you took while on exchange? What were their pros and cons?

Pros were

- a) The good atmosphere within the exchange students
- b) In most cases, the English skills of the lecturers were good
- c) Many courses were interesting

Cons are

- a) There could be some more courses in English
- b) Some courses were not at all about the things said in the title.

Did you take Russian language course? If so please describe its pros and cons?

I did. The best thing was that the group was small (only three people) so teaching was really intensive and individual. A con is that it took several weeks after my arrival before I could start the language course (partly due to the fact that the people in charge of different courses were difficult to find in the beginning).

Did you find the academic staff helpful?

Some teachers and administrators were hard to contact in order to get signatures and stamps for the documents. Many of these things (like the study plan of my host faculty) could have been done via email without trying to find the teachers for their signatures for two weeks. However, the academic staff that I worked with was positive about exchange students and tried to be helpful.

Did you find the international office staff helpful?

I did. Especially the coordinator of my exchange program was really helpful and I could get help with the bureaucracy and everything else I needed. I was also delighted that the International office (Administrative building) was open regularly.

Please describe the resources available to exchange students (ie computers, the library)?

I did not use computers or the library that much, since I didn't need to. However, it would be great if there would be a wi-fi connection in the main building and the faculties that also the exchange students could get the passwords to.

Did you experience any language or cultural difficulties at St.Petersburg State University?

My Russian skills are, unfortunately, not so great but I could manage always somehow. It would be reasonable though that the staff in the passport and visa department could speak even some English in order to avoid misunderstandings in such important issues.

Partly a cultural problem could be the large scale (and in many cases totally useless) bureaucracy, which took a lot of time and somewhat effort. Especially strange was that we could get the multi-visa only after almost three months after arrival.

Do you think that going on exchange contributed to your academic development? If so, how?

I think that I know now more about Russia and its everyday life, which will be useful to me in the future if I'll study more about Russian-related subjects.

## Practical

### **Accommodation**

Please describe the accommodation options available to exchange students. What were their pros and cons?

I lived in my own apartment and did not even consider the student accommodation, so this one is hard to answer. However, I have heard that some other St Petersburg universities (like the Herten Pedagogical) have cheaper apartments nearer the city centre.

How expensive were the accommodation options?

I don't know exactly but they are not (anymore) so cheap. That's why many students got their accommodation from private markets.

What type of accommodation would you recommend?

Less-regulated accommodation. That means that there would be not so tight curfews and other rules.

### **Food**

Was food expensive?

Compared to my home country Finland (except meals in the university) food was not expensive if you were eating out. However, some groceries such as fresh vegetables were sometimes expensive.

Where is the best place to shop?

I had two grocery stores near my apartment – Дикси and 7яСемья - which were quite good.

How much does it cost to eat out at a local restaurant/café?

I ate mostly in Georgian, Japanese and Chinese restaurants. Average price (including drinks) were around 400-500 rubles.

### **Transport**

How did you find the local transport network?

Metro is excellent. Buses are great too, but are suffering from the traffic jams and poor or absent timetables.

Was it expensive to use local transport?

No. One ride was around 20 rubles without the card.

Did you have the Students Travel Card (discounts for public transport)?

No. I thought that I would use the local transport only couple of times a week, since I could walk to my host faculty. However, in the end I traveled more and the Travel Card would have been so much cheaper and easier. So, I recommend everyone to get the Travel Card, even though it is possible to get only after you've got the student card, which could take several weeks.

### ***Personal Safety***

Did you find St.Petersburg safe?

Yes I did. Since I don't look so different from the "ethnic Russians", I didn't encounter any racism or other dangers. I was living and spending my time in the central area, so I don't know how the things are in the outer city or in the suburbs. But for me, St Petersburg was a safe place to live in.

Did you use medical services at St.Petersburg? If yes please describe their pros and cons.

I didn't. In minor health issues, pharmacies could be found in almost every corner.

Do you have any safety advice for other exchange students?

Keep your documents with you and try to look not like a tourist.

## Social

### ***Life on Exchange***

How would you describe the way of life in Russia and in St.Petersburg in particular?

It's hectic and interesting, like in every big city. In St. Petersburg the everyday life is also surrounded by history and cultural artifacts, which is really pleasing.

Did you experience 'culture shock'?

No, because I had been working here already the summer before my exchange.

Do you have any suggestions on how to cope with 'culture shock'?

Read Russian books or books about Russia, so you can get some grasp of the Russian mentality. Be open-minded but still keep in mind your own will – sometimes it helps to be tuff in front of the bureaucracy. Remember – sometimes it feels that nothing works, but in the end everything will manage somehow.

What is the best way to meet people?

In order to meet local people: going to courses held in Russian and visiting Couch surfing – website's meetings.

Do you have any suggestions on what to do on the weekend?

You should enjoy your advantage of having a student card and thus getting a free or low-cost entrance to hundreds of cultural activities that the city can offer you. You could also take small excursions to other cities in Russia.

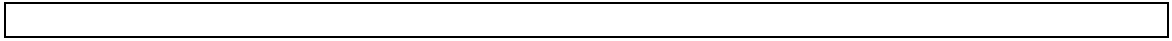
### ***Travel***

Did you travel before, after or during your exchange?

Unfortunately not. It would have been great to see also other cities in Russia.

What would you advise to travellers?

Traveling by train is comfortable, safe and you can get friends among the locals there.



## **Highlights**

Briefly describe the highlights of your exchange experience

Having new friends, living in such an exiting city.

## **Problems**

Briefly describe any problems you experienced on exchange and any suggestions you may have to help others avoid them.

I didn't have any major problems. Fighting the bureaucracy is a continuing problem, but it won't ever change unless you even try to fight it back.

## **Other Comments**

Do you have any further comments?

The information given in this Report CAN BE PUBLISHED on the Internet \_WITHOUT A NAME\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to share your exchange experiences in this report.

Please save your report as a Word document and email a copy to [nechaeva@ir.pu.ru](mailto:nechaeva@ir.pu.ru)

Date: 18.1.2010

Name: \_\_\_\_\_