

**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:	Anna Koivunen
Host faculty at SPSU	Faculty of Economics
Exchange Study Period	Spring 2010
Home Institution	University of Helsinki

Do you give permission for prospective exchange students to contact you if they have questions? no

If yes, please give your preferred email address: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Host University

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

I'm studying in Helsinki. I wanted to learn Russian language little better, so St. Petersburg was a natural choice for me.

How would you describe St.Petersburg State University?

Beautiful Russian university. I think one of the best in Russia. Just getting started will teach you most you need to know the rest of the period about Russian bureaucratic culture.

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

My faculty was near the city center. 3 separate building around a huge park. Not so inconvenient, but pretty during the summer, and once you got used to it and found all the places it was just fine. Administrational buildings are near the bank of Neva. The whole area is truly worth exploring.

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

I took some English speaking master's level courses, some Russian speaking basic courses and Russian language courses. English courses contribute to my degree, Russian speaking courses thought me some vocabulary and Russian language courses were absolutely the most useful ones! The faculty courses were not theoretical enough for me now, when I'm starting to right my final thesis.

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

Yes I did. They were good and useful. Would have wanted almost to do more of those. Was a shame that we only could attend twice a week, when the course went on 5 times a week. Many times we were quite lost of the theme at the lessons.

Did you find the academic staff helpful?

My faculty's Irina Kozub was the best!

Did you find the international office staff helpful?

I didn't need much help, because my faculty dealt almost everything for /with me.

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

The library is too old fashioned for me to use. I'm used to computer databases... There are also very few journals and all books are in Russian. Computers at faculty don't allow facebook or skype, which means you need internet connection anyways. My faculty wasn't at the Vasilij island so I never used the WiFi at the uni.

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

Language difficulties happen always if you don't speak absolutely fluent Russian. Cultural difficulties just mean you have come to Russia. You learn to laugh about them. And demand a stamp even on your toilet paper.

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

Maybe not academic, because I'm quite done with my academic development. The courses weren't demanding enough. I still think the contribution lies in the whole of the experience.

## Practical

### **Accommodation**

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

I lived in the hostel. It is not good, but cheap or, like to me, free. Some things I think got stolen. Not too bad though, maybe stuff comes up when packing up. Living with 3 girls in the same room is always nice, right? There is always the possibility of renting from private sector, but would that be the real Russian student life then?

How expensive were the accommodation options?

Hostels are cheap, private apartments priced like in normal big city.

What type of accommodation would you recommend?

I recommend hostel for savers and private housing for spenders.

### **Food**

Was food expensive?

You can make food very cheap (home!, cafeteria, business lunch in restaurants) or expensive as you like.

Where is the best place to shop?

Mega down the yellow line is nice. Then there should be an outlet store at Kirovskij zdanie and then there is the market place at the court yards of street Sadovaya (walking towards Sadovaja metro from Nevski on the left side of the road).

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

Business lunch 200-350r includes soup/salad, main course and drink etc. depending on the place. In the evening eating out costs 500-1200r. depending on the place. Local fast food = blini is always cheap.

### **Transport**

How did you find the local transport network?

Very very well. The bridges are bad though during summer.

Was it expensive to use local transport?

Not at all!

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

Yes, I wish it could be issued a bit earlier.

### ***Personal Safety***

Did you find St.Petersburg safe?

St. Petersburg is safe if you are not an idiot. Keep to yourself, don't walk alone in the dark or drunk, look for you bag/belongings when in a crowded place, don't lift money at the metro etc. Very easy. Nothing ever happened to me or any of my friends.

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

No I didn't. Or yes, I took the lung x-ray. It was quite horrible. Would recommend it to do in your home country. Or have a vaccination certificate in Russian. I wish somebody had told me about this.

Do you have any safety advice for other exchange students?

You're safe here if you aren't stupid. Just move with a crowd and don't make it too obvious you are from somewhere else – if it is possible...

## Social

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

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

Eating good, having fun. I think my time was a bit different because I did horse back riding and took part in competitions. You can do anything in here!

Did you experience 'culture shock'?

The bureaucracy is well something I think no one can imagine before coming here!

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

Just take it easy. After the registration you cannot be fined of anything. Things sort out. Everyone knows it is hard. Chocolate helps – when given to people when you need something.

What is the best way to meet people?

In Ira's group, in the hostel, at parties, hobbies – like anywhere in the world!

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

I ride horses ☺. Had friends over. Ate good, had some Russian champanskoe and go to gym. Normal stuff. Also it is fun to do some tourist things: museum, river/canal cruises etc.

### ***Travel***

Did you travel before, after or during your exchange?

No.

What would you advise to travellers?

By train tickets to travel inside Russia online. To Finland take the buss or plane depending on budget.

## **Highlights**

Briefly describe the highlights of your exchange experience

I have learnt some language, learnt to ride better and got a job. My highlights are quite common stuff.

## **Problems**

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

Language is always THE problem. It is good to have friends who speak well.

## **Other Comments**

Do you have any further comments?

Thank you, and have a nice summer!

The information given in this Report CAN BE PUBLISHED on the Internet \_\_\_yes\_\_\_\_\_

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: 28.5.2010

Name: Anna Koivunen