

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.

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:	<u>Kaisu Venäläinen</u>
Host faculty at SPSU	<u>Faculty of History</u>
Exchange Study Period	<u>Spring semester 2010</u>
Home Institution	<u>University of Jyväskylä, Finland</u>
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Do you give permission for prospective exchange students to contact you if they have questions? Yes

If yes, please give your preferred email address: kaisu.p.venalainen@jyu.fi

The Host University

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

I wanted to study in St. Petersburg and the SPSU was the best option for me and because I knew it is a very good university. Besides my friends also applied to in exchange to Russia at the same time.

How would you describe St.Petersburg State University?

Huge, beautiful, interesting and the head campus is very good located.

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

As I already stated at least the faculties were I studied are well located. My faculty (the faculty of History) is in a great spot and Administration building also.

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

I came to Russia to learn more about history of Russian and that's why I had three different courses of history about Russia/Soviet Union and one course about the history of The New Age and The Newest Age.

They were all very interesting but the History Apartment don't have any powerpoints or computers so the teaching and the lessons were only listening what the professor said and try to write some notes.

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

I did and I think they were the best thing in my exchange. I learned a lot and the lessons were fun and useful although four lessons in the row is almost a bit too much. But only almost.

Did you find the academic staff helpful?

Yes, I think the academic staff was and is very helpful and know what they are doing.

Did you find the international office staff helpful?

Yes, I did. I visited many times at the International Office and sent some e-mails every time I had questions and they always answered and were helpful.

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

For my they was hardly any resources available because I didn't get the library card and because in the history apartment there isn't any computers for students. That was a big minus for the faculty.

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

Yes at the Visa and Registration Department there was many difficulties but they sorted out at the end. At the beginning there were also some language difficulties with the students' international department's dean but that was because we just didn't understand each other.

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

Absolutely I do think that going on exchange has been very helpful and a developing experience because I have learned tremendously about Russia and its culture and has give me valuable viewpoints on academic research and to learning. The exchange has also been a great opportunity to networking and to make new acquaintances.

Practical

Accommodation

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

In my home university the only options for exchange in St. Petersburg were the university dormitory or rented flat from the private sector. For the dormitory there was no proper information available and the renting an apartment on my own was too expensive.

How expensive were the accommodation options?

The dormitory wasn't expensive at all but the rented flat would have cost too much for me.

What type of accommodation would you recommend?

Dormitory because there you get to know other people and the Russian system of taking care of things.

Food

Was food expensive?

No.

Where is the best place to shop?

At Sennaja, Mega and the big market place behind Gostiny Dvor.

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

Depends on the restaurant but less than in Finland. I would say for 200-300 rubles is the average.

Transport

How did you find the local transport network?

I think the local transports are great and easy to use.

Was it expensive to use local transport?

No.

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

Yes, but I hope I would have had it earlier.

Personal Safety

Did you find St.Petersburg safe?

Yes.

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

No, I didn't but I use the pharmacy.

Do you have any safety advice for other exchange students?

Don't be stupid, smile to the militia, use the official taxi if possible and don't use them alone at the night, don't carry you passport or too much money with you and don't drink the cheapest vodka.

Social

Life on Exchange

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

I liked it. I can't really describe it more specifically.

Did you experience 'culture shock'?

No, I you don't count the Visa and registration Department a cultural shock.

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

Smile and if that doesn't help cry and buy some chocolate. It helps. And get some local friends that can help you.

What is the best way to meet people?

Through friends and lessons.

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

Go to museum, theater, shopping, the movies, exercise, do sports, travel.

Travel

Did you travel before, after or during your exchange?

Yes. I went to Jaroslav and Viborg and Gatsina, Kronstad and Puskin.

What would you advise to travellers?

Take the train. Russian train is a experience and plan beforehand what you want to do or see.

Highlights

Briefly describe the highlights of your exchange experience

Getting the Student Card was huge and seeing the Peterhof and Jaroslav and getting to know the Petersburg.

Problems

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

Many people don't speak English and I didn't speak Russia so there were some normal everyday difficulties but nothing very big.

Other Comments

Do you have any further comments?

No.

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

Date: 18.05.2010

Name: Kaisu Venäläinen