

Two Weeks in Arvika, Sweden

In case you are reading this article right now, you might be interested in the once in a lifetime opportunity to participate in the 'erasmus plus' exchange program.

Our journey started in Kassel, Germany, where a group of sixteen pupils and one teacher took the train to Frankfurt Airport. During the two-hours long train ride, we already had the chance to get to know each other.

Everyone I met was really sympathetic, but all had different professional backgrounds, e.g. trainees to be electricians, car mechanics, truck mechanics, and of course me and my colleague, medical assistants to be!

When we arrived at Frankfurt International Airport, we had enough time to grab a snack and refresh a little before boarding onto the plane to Oslo, Norway.

Wait, Norway? Yes, right! Even though our final destination Arvika is located in Sweden, this small picturesque town is also just 160 kilometers away from Norway's capital city.

A two hours long flight and a bus ride later, we arrived at our accommodation: The Ingestrand Camping Place in Arvika, Sweden.

Our group was lucky to stay in highly comfortable wooden cabins, made for up to six persons. Positioned next to a lake, the camping place offered everything you could possibly wish for during a stay for two weeks. Even the use of a washing machine and a sauna were included and made our stay extremely comfortable!

The transfer from Ingestrand Camping to the city center or our working places was organized by the Arvika community. The Swedish community provided us with two big vans, fitting for nine persons each, and one electric car for commuting into the city.

Technology really matters for people in Arvika. Not only at the School (Taserudgymnasium), but also everywhere else in town, you would find high-tech equipment.

My working placement was an elderly home, called 'Nybacken'. This home, which specialized on persons with dementia, employs five to six under-nurses full-time and one nurse rotating between several similar homes. On top of that, there is one person in charge of preparing food and cleaning the rooms. Subsequently, under-nurses and nurses have enough time, to care dearly about their patients, who slowly became like family over the time.

Some of the patients have been living there for decades and the health and care personnel is all the "family" they have left. Therefore, it is even more important the patients feel at home at Nybacken - because, well, it is their home!

When you walk through the corridors, it does not feel like you work in a hospital. The interior is composed of tasteful coffee tables, big TVs, relaxing chairs which play music and a styling section, where the elderly but still fashionable ladies can do their hair or renew their manicure!

All in all, I really enjoyed working at Nybacken. It was an interesting experience to work with elderly people and also quite a challenge due to the language barrier. Nevertheless, the staff was always helpful, translated a lot, taught you everything they knew and gave advice on what could be helpful in this new situation.

In general, I feel the Swedes were all very nice and also interested in and open-minded towards the German visitors invading Arvika. For example, the local newspaper published an article about our exchange program and the Community of Arvika even posted a photo of me and my colleague at work in Nybacken on their official Facebook page.

In our free time we visited a national park and explored the next bigger city, called Karlstadt. Nature in Sweden is just beautiful: many lakes, big forests and a never ending horizon. Seeing the small Swedish houses standing in the middle of nowhere just made me feel free.

Two weeks passed. We had done our work, enjoyed the Swedish culture and already missed home. So we started our journey home with mixed feelings: happy memories and excitement to return to our families back in Germany. We left Arvika at 9 am and arrived home 10 hours later, where we had many new stories to tell.