

## Personal Reflection

by David Spanner, Malmö University, Sweden 2007

Choosing to study abroad is not an easy decision to make, but a highly rewarding experience! During my time at the Malmö Högskolan I have been fortunate enough to create friendships that I will never lose, experiences that I will never forget and endless opportunities for further travel to take up in later years. During my time away there have been many highs and lows, but as to be expected, these moments pass and as an individual, you learn to adapt to new settings, cultures and people.

Studying with the school of education in the city of Malmö, a short twenty minute train journey across the Öresund from Copenhagen's international airport provided me with the best that Sweden could offer. With the city being roughly the size of Launceston there was ample opportunity to scour the city's shops, history and traditions while remaining focused on the initial reason for being there, study. From that original moment of making the decision to go on exchange there is ample opportunity to prepare yourself. However, that initial step into the unknown is still as daunting as it will always be. The constant questions of 'what to expect?' and 'will it be worth it?' are soon put to rest upon arrival in Sweden. The structured nature of Interact, the Swedish international students' organisation, ensures to facilitate help and support from that first moment of arrival in Sweden. This service becomes a lifeline for those initial few weeks and in turn forms into great friendships that last for years, if not life.

Whilst immersed within my chosen studies at the Högskolan there was ample opportunity for travel, both within Sweden and internationally throughout Europe. These are opportunities that most exchange students take up and I was certainly not one to miss out on such experiences whilst they were lying there at my doorstep. Travelling well, but not extensively through Scandinavia was amazing. The sights and lifestyle contrast so spectacularly against the normalities of the Australian lifestyle that I have grown up with. Highlights such as walking through downtown Reykjavik in

several feet of snow to travelling around Sweden and Denmark by train will remain in my mind forever.

While the thought of a semester on exchange may seem like a long period of time, it vanishes at an alarming rate once there. With social activities almost every weekend as well as the wanting to further your experiences through travel, the thought of study gets placed on the backburner. While this becomes frustrating at times, attempting to juggle full time study and social duties, upon return to Australia there is the realisation that so much more is gained on a personal level through this interaction. You will almost certainly come back as a changed person.