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End of Month One

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Journals from BÃ, Norway SP2011

2011-01-30 End of Month One



Trolls are quite popular in Norway.

As the month of January comes to a close, I look back on my experiences from my first month abroad and think to myself, "There were a LOT of things I wish I had known before getting here..." That said, I've started to create a list of helpful survival tips to anyone planning to come here.

1. Learn your alphabet and numbers. It will help with pronunciation as well as help you not feel lost in an alien world when you want to buy a sandwich at the train station.
2. Norwegians are very nice about speaking English to you if you don't know any Norwegian, but it always feels better to ask them in Norwegian if they can speak English to you. The phrase "Snakker du engelsk?" (snock-er doo eng-gelsk -> with a hard "g" not a soft "g") means "Do you speak English?" Also, "Unnskyld, jeg forstår ikke norsk" (oon-shilled yai for-shtor eek-eh norshk) means "I'm sorry, I don't understand Norwegian." Put those phrases together and you've got it made.
3. Ugg boots (or at least imitation ugg boots), while warm and fuzzy, will not give you adequate traction until you've been here for a couple of weeks and are confident in your ability to walk on packed snow. Even with proper traction on your snow boots, though, you WILL fall down at some point.
4. At grocery stores you have to ask for a bag and they will almost always charge you for it. You'll have to collect a few at first but never leave home without one if you're planning on shopping.

5. Laundry soap is powdered and goes in the middle slot in the washing machine (and only use a little amount). The emblem that looks like a flower signifies fabric softener. Don't put your soap in there.
6. When you do your laundry, after your clothes dry they will feel crunchy. Do not panic. They do not need to be rinsed again.
7. When people tell you the snow sparkles here, it's true. However, you won't have any comprehension of what that really means until you see it for yourself. It is magnificent.
8. If you go in the spring, take the class called "Individuals, Environs, and Society." It is the best class ever. Half of the time you are playing outside in the snow or skiing and the other half is spent learning about the history of Norway and why outdoor life is so important to Norwegians. Our professor has been teaching us how to ski and it is so much fun!
9. If you think you already know how to ski and you sign up for this class, you'll soon find out that everyone of every skill level falls down at some point while learning. We use cross-country skis here and my friends who have years of experience alpine skiing had a lot of trouble.
10. People will talk about Kroa, the student club that has dances and parties and other activities, but I would recommend Nabo (the good neighbor) over Kroa. Kroa costs money and while it's fun, it gets expensive. Nabo, however, hosts "wine night" every Monday which is when they sell wine for half price. You don't need to buy anything to drink, though, and they have dancing and tables to sit at (it's a restaurant) and it's free to get in. It's also an easier place to converse with Norwegians because it's not as loud inside as in Kroa.
11. Carry your hat with you always during the snowy months. Even if it seems like it isn't that cold when you get dressed in the morning, a frozen forehead is a terrible feeling.

I have truly enjoyed my experiences thus far, however, and learning as you go along is one of the biggest components to studying abroad. I've become a lot braver in the experiences that I'm willing to try and even in this first month I've become a stronger person for that. With the amount of times that I have fallen down while learning to ski, at home I would've given up. Here, I just laugh it off along with everyone else and get up and keep going. As Ms. Frizzle would say on The Magic School Bus: "Take chances, make mistakes, and get messy!"

Sharon