

**Exchange Semester at
University of Agder – Campus Kristiansand**



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Campus: Kristiansand

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1. The city

Kristiansand is situated in the southern Norwegian state of Agder and is known in Norway as a summer-holiday destination thanks to its “high” temperature and the sea access. The city has a population of around 100.000, although it more has the vibe of a smaller city comparable to Wels. It is a cozy city with a nice offer of spare time activities. You’ll find all the possibilities that a city offers, although of course on a smaller scale. There are plenty of nice cafes and restaurants all over the city. There’s a cinema that thanks to the lack of Norwegian dubbing shows movies in English. Clubs and bars are also of course also available and are – besides the



high prices – really worth visiting. A shopping mall in the center and one on the outskirts of the city offer a broad variety of products and clothing styles that are not available in Austria. A must-see is definitely the zoo of Kristiansand. The park itself is really beautiful and would be even worth a visit without the animals. Tip: In the beginning of the winter semester (or autumn semester as they call it in Norway) there’s a week where students are able to visit the zoo for free.

Kristiansand itself is a city surrounded by beautiful nature which makes up for the lack of outstanding historical architecture. While the town is quite picturesque in some places, I would not call the city a beautiful one. What I really like about it though are the typical Scandinavian-looking white wooden houses that can be found all over the city and in fact all over Norway. If you prefer a vibrant city with endless possibilities, then Kristiansand is not the city for you – although the town is quite big for Norwegian standards. It’s a peaceful city at the sea with a big strength: the nature.

This is why almost all of the exchange students I asked came to Kristiansand. To be close to the beautiful Norwegian nature. The nature of the southern state of Agder resembles a hillier and rockier version of a typical Swedish landscape. Wide forests and thousands of lakes spread around the area. If you love hiking this is the place for you to go. Of course, the fjords and famous destinations in Norway are quite far away from Kristiansand but Norway is huge enough that you would need to rent a car or fly somewhere anyways. No matter where you are. A big advantage to other Norwegian cities is though that the weather is sunnier in Kristiansand, the temperature warmer and during winter the day is almost as long as in Austria.



City Center of Kristiansand

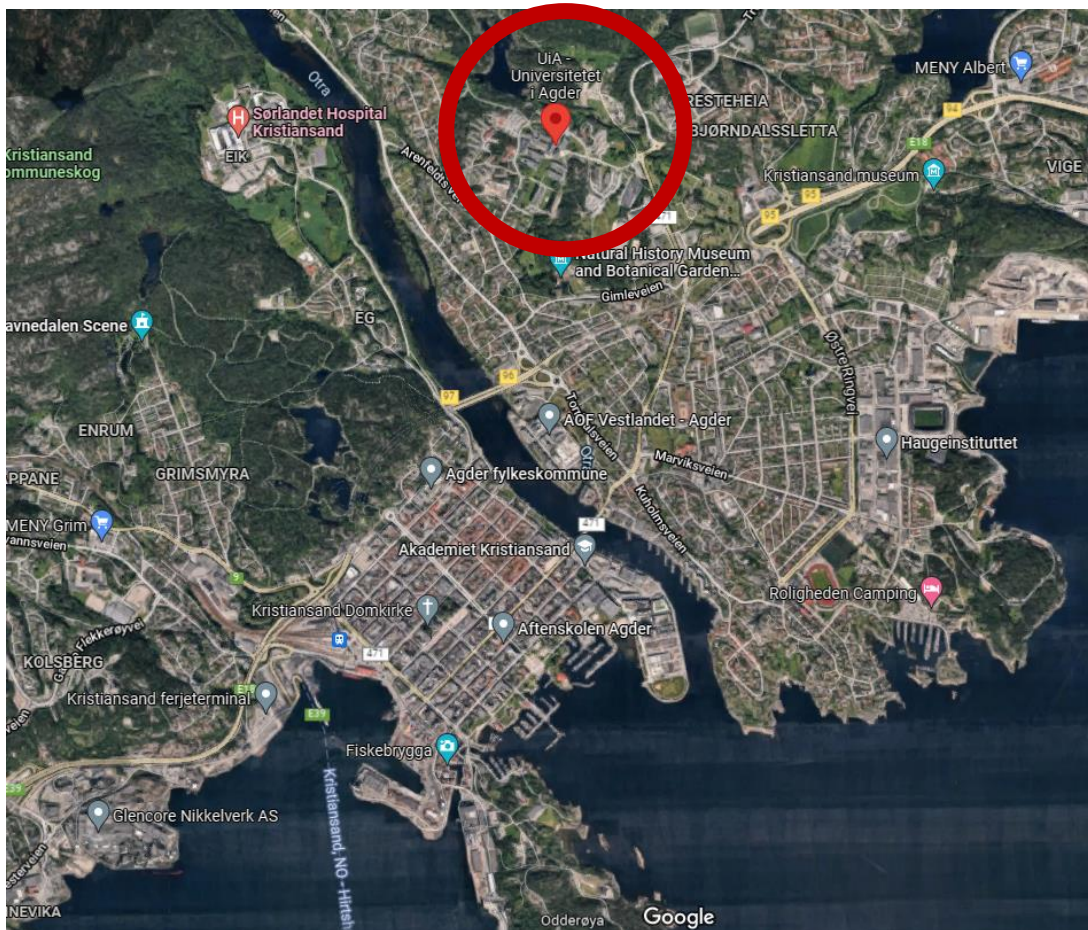


Fish market



Main road

2. The university (location, surroundings)



The university is located on the outskirts of the city. On foot you need around half an hour to walk to the center, by bike or by e-scooter (which are really popular in Kristiansand) it's about 10-15 minutes. The bus will need around 20 minutes. Because the rental e-scooter cost the same as the bus-ticket I almost all the time took the scooter to the center. Mobility is – as basically everything in Norway – pretty expensive. A bus-ticket to the center costs 3,3 €. So you can calculate more than 6 € per city-trip. I would suggest buying a used bike. If it's around 100 € it's still cheaper than paying for the bus or the scooter every time. Wintertime is not as snowy as you would expect so you can use it all semester long.

On campus there's a pub, a gym and two supermarkets. If you need more then you need to go to the center or to the shopping mall "Sørlandssenteret" which is also reachable by bus. Imagine the campus Kristiansand as a big version of the campus in Hagenberg.

If you like hiking, swimming, going for a walk or running the campus and its surroundings are perfect for you. On the northern side the campus is surrounded by a forest and two minutes from the dormitories are two lakes and endlessly seeming roads and paths. Don't get lost in there ;D

Besides sports we also held many parties at the lake and in the forest. You can rent speakers for free from SIA, the student organization. But more on that later.

Impressions of the campus and its surroundings



3. Courses

Norway uses Credits which are transferable 1:1 to ECTS. In my experience courses give way more credits in Norway than in Austria/Hagenberg. A 10 ECTS course in Norway could also be a 5 ECTS course in Hagenberg. So don't worry about that. Classes are also easier than in Hagenberg. In terms of quality of teaching I also have to admit that it's far better in Hagenberg. It's harsh to say but if you want to advance your academic skills then going to UiA is not the best option for you. Of course you learn something but going to a different university would help you more in this case.

3.1 Information Systems Security (IS-214-1) – 10 ECTS

The course provides an understanding of information systems security, including essential technical terminologies, the history of the discipline, information system security policies and organizational security culture. The course is suitable for those who are interested in helping organizations to protect critical information systems and secure their networks, both by understanding current threats and vulnerabilities, and assessing the needs of secure information systems of the future.

Besides (theoretical) technical aspects of the area we also learned about information policy and awareness in Norway through examples presented by our professor who works in IT management.

3.1 Internet of Things (IS-311-1) – 5 ECTS

Both DiY (Do it Yourself) and hyped concepts, such as Smart-City, Smart-Health, Smart-Energy and Industry 4.0, will be briefly introduced. In addition, the course covers an introduction to principles for data collection based on protocols such as Rest and MQTT and possibly the use of cloud platforms for IoT (Internet of Things) applications.

The main emphasis in this course is on programming IoT applications, and it will provide a brief introduction to selected programming languages and development tools for the development of a specific IoT system based on selected electronic components (System on Chip).

3.2 Hands-on e-Business for Entrepreneurs (IS-108-1) – 7,5 ECTS

The course introduces basic concepts in e-commerce. Emphasis is placed on students becoming aware of the importance of e-commerce in society in relation to technology, organization and society. Through group work, the students will prepare a business plan and marketing material related to a specific business idea that the students themselves have developed.

4. Accommodation

I really suggest getting a room in the dormitory on campus. For people that got a room or a flat in the city it was really annoying to get to the campus, then back to the city and in the evening for partying again on campus and then back again, etc. etc.

In the dormitory and at the parties of the dormitory you will meet most of the people and most of your friends.

There are several options for the dormitory. The room you will most likely get is a double-room in an eight-people-flat/WG. At first, I was unsure if a double-room will be ok for me but in the end it was quite ok. Of course you have to have a nice roommate but of all the people I know nobody had any problems with their roommate. It's also cool to live in a flat with 8 people as you'll never get bored and always have people to talk to. Privacy on the other hand is suffering under that but for a semester it's endurable. If you prefer a single room you'll have to get lucky as there are not that many flats of this kind available for exchange students. The eight-people-flat has four rooms (and four bathrooms) and a big kitchen. The flat with the single room is in a different and newer building and has four rooms (and four bathrooms) and a kitchen.

SIA is organizing the accommodation so check out their website: <https://bolig.sia.no/>
The prizes are lower than in Hagenberg with a price of 280 €/month for the double room.

If you really prefer and need privacy and don't want to attend parties then maybe a flat in the city is better for you as it can get loud sometimes during the night. People are partying almost every day – especially in the first few weeks – and this can be disturbing for some people. If you hear the parties or not depends highly on the dormitory-building you'll stay in and if your window is facing the forest or the road/parking space.



Double room

5. Transportation

I drove to Kristiansand with my car because I thought it would come in handy for trips. If you have the possibility, then I would suggest doing that. If you don't have a car or don't want to drive that far it's also not a problem. You don't need it necessarily.

Bike/E-Scooter:

The perfect way of getting around in Kristiansand. It's the fastest and cheapest option and the city is really bike-friendly.

Bus:

Costs 33 NOK (3,3€) for a single ticket. It's also slower than taking the bike. Therefore, I didn't take the bus too often. The connections are quite good and you can get everywhere in and around the city by bus.

Car:

The best option is to drive to Hirtshals in Denmark to take the ferry directly to Kristiansand.

Parking in the city center is quite expensive so I would suggest to use the car only for longer trips or to go to the shopping mall. Parking on campus was 200 NOK (20 €) a month. You don't have your own parking spot but it's easy to find one close to your appartement.

Train:

From Kristiansand you can go either to Stavanger or to Oslo. The train rides are beautiful and are highly suggested. If you would like to go somewhere else besides those two cities I suggest to take the plane as train rides take long in this big country.

Plane:

There's an airport in Kristiansand. The flights go either via Amsterdam or Oslo. I suggest Oslo because the changing time (at least in 2021) in Amsterdam was too short. Almost everybody I know that arrived via Amsterdam didn't have their luggage for a few days as the airport-staff wasn't able to load it in the plane to Kristiansand on time.

5. Shopping

This is the perfect opportunity to talk about prices in Norway. While it's widely known that Norway is an expensive country it was hard for me to get an impression on how expensive it is.

In general, I would say in the supermarket you'll pay on average around 25 % more than in Austria. If you would like to eat in a restaurant it's more expensive than that. A pizza margherita in a cheap restaurant costs between 15 and 20 €. A 0,33 liter coke costs around 5 €. Alcohol is much more expensive. More on that in the chapter night-life.

5.1 Food

The big supermarket chains in Norway are:

Coop: affordable for Norwegian standards

Rema 1000: better selection than Coop and similar prices

Joker: Open also on Sundays but much more expensive. Only for emergencies.

Spar: far too expensive

Close to the campus there's a Joker and a Coop. The Coop is pretty small but offers enough for an average meal. This is where most students go to. It's 5 minutes away from the dormitory on foot.

What's important to know is that you can only buy beer and cider at the supermarket. And even this is only possible until 20:00 during the week and 18:00 on the weekend. If you feel like you have too much money and would like to buy stronger alcohol or wine you'll have to go to the Vinmonopolet which is a shop specialized on alcohol. There is one in the center and in the shopping mall.

If you prefer going to a canteen there is one in the university. The selection is huge and the food really good. You can calculate around 9 € per meal. This highly depends on the meal though as the price is calculated by the weight of what you chose to eat. The prices are really cheap for Norwegian standards and cooking for your own is sometimes more expensive than going to the canteen.

5.2 Shops

There is a shopping mall in the center and a bigger shopping mall in the outskirts of the city. If you need to buy something very specific I suggest the second mall called Sørlandscenteret. Be aware of the fact that Amazon doesn't exist in Norway and alternatives are by far not as good. If you need to order something from Amazon Deutschland expect the delivery time to be a few weeks.

7. Sports

The possibilities for sports are almost endless. This is one of the many advantages of going to Kristiansand on your exchange semester.

If you like hiking or running there are many paths and roads in the city and in the forests and nature around the city. I ran many times a week and after the semester I still don't know every path and road next to the university. Of course those paths are also hikable and the hills/small mountains offer an amazing few all over Kristiansand and the sea. On a clear day you could swear that you can see to Denmark. If you are willing to travel longer distances, then Norway offers the most amazing landscapes Europe or even the world has to offer. Hiking fans will love it here.

On campus there's also the gym "Spicheren" which exchange students can use for 400 NOK (40 €) a month. It's not only a modern gym, it also offers free fitness-courses with coaches that you can attend, sport halls for football, volleyball, etc., climbing walls (with courses too) and an indoor swimming pool (+ Jacuzzi). If you prefer training outside there's also a big kinesthetic park on campus which you can of course use for free. Additionally, there are volleyball and basketball fields on campus.

If you prefer team sports, you can also join local football or handball clubs. Some of my friends did that and made a lot of Norwegian friends.

8. Erasmus Student Network, Buddysystem

The support you get at UiA is amazing. No question remains unanswered before you arrive and many student-network groups (I lost the overview over them to be honest) help you starting your life in Kristiansand. The buddysystem is nice to meet new people but the quality of information highly depends on who your buddy is. Two Norwegian buddies have a group of around 20 exchange students. What you'll do and what they'll show you depends on your buddies. My experience was not the best but because of the many parties and meetings we organized ourselves before the first buddy-meeting I already knew a lot of people and the city quite well.

9. Nightlife

No matter where you'll do your exchange semester the parties and the nightlife will always be an amazing experience. Kristiansand is no exception. The parties on campus highly depend on the organization skills of your fellow exchange students and the buddies. You can borrow two (really big) speakers for your party for free from SIA and you can use the party rooms of the dormitories. During summer and autumn, we mainly partied outside either at the lake close to the campus or at the barbeque place where you can use the benches and tables.

The city offers a good amount of bars and clubs. Kombinat and Skagen have the cheapest beer with a price of 50 NOK (5 €) for 0,5 liter. Heidis beer bar and Harbeys sport bar are a mixture between a bar and a club and are the most popular options for clubbing. Be aware of the fact that Norwegians go crazy when they drink.

Alcohol is expensive in Norway. In the supermarket beer (in cans) cost 25 NOK (2,5 €) per can + pand. A bottle of vodka costs around 50 €.

At a bar or in the club a beer normally costs 10 € although I've also already paid 14 € for a 0,33 l Corona.

10. Useful notes or tips

- Don't bring or get cash. I never even saw cash while I was there. Many supermarkets also don't accept it anymore. Even at remote parking spaces in the middle of nowhere you can pay with credit card.
- You'll need a credit card for lots of things (like the bus ticket)
- Although many people say that Norwegians are closed up or shy I don't think that's completely true. Either they are really friendly and almost as open as Americans, or they are even more extreme as their stereotype and don't talk to you at all. Once they consumed some alcohol all of them are really open.
- In order to get to all the beautiful places and fjords you'll need to rent a car. Without a driving license it's hard to get there.
- Don't bother trying to find a cheaper Kebap than around 10 €. Believe me, I've tried.
- Download the app "Maze map". It has a detailed map of the campus including rooms of the university. It's essential to find your classes.