

The Faroe Islands



I took a look at the list for vacant internships on www.iaeste.se, because I wanted to do an international traineeship. I saw that a company under the Danish flag was searching for a civil engineer. The job seemed interesting but as I am from Sweden, it was not exotic for me to take the job, because I wanted to travel further away - to a location that I would not likely travel to without any reason. Before I ignored the job, I took a look at the company's name and I saw that the name did not sound familiar. On closer look, and I saw that the location was Tórshavn, Faroe Islands. I did not know a lot about the Faroe Islands, but I knew that it was not "the real Denmark" and I knew that the Faroe Islands were located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean between Iceland and Scotland. So I thought why not, I won't get the opportunity to travel to the Faroe Islands every day.



62°; 7° W

I thought that I would get bored in the Faroe Islands. With only 47,000 inhabitants and 17,000 people in the capital, Tórshavn, where I lived, it did not sound like an energetic place to be. But I had it wrong, so wrong. The hospitality they showed made me forget the number of inhabitants.

On the flight I meet a nice couple, the man was from the Faroes and the wife was from Greenland. They had been living in Sweden for 7 years. They offered me a ride to Tórshavn, which I gladly accepted. The ride became sightseeing tour, as they wanted to show me everything, I was a bit surprised; they did this deed from their heart.



The Harbour area in Tórshavn

I lived with a host family the first four weeks in the Faroe Islands - an American couple that had an office where they handled international affairs. They were really very nice and they helped me settle down and helped with lots of other things. I felt like a son in their home. After four weeks I moved to a big house, which was owned by the University of Tórshavn. I lived with many different people in that house, many of them were in the Nordjob project (a cooperation between the Nordic countries; exchange of employers from different Nordic countries) and we had such a good time together.



The red houses are government offices, Tinganes

I worked in a Civil Engineering Company called LBF, Landsbyggifelagið. The Managing Director, Hanus Hansen, presented me to the employees. The people in LBF were very nice, and they did not mind at all my questions. They were more than happy to help me. I got involved in many projects such as harbour planning, and beam dimensions; I even went out in the field where I participated in a tunnel project. The tunnel project was a really big project; they were building a tunnel between two Islands (6 km undersea tunnel for car traffic).

I felt that the Faroese really wanted to help me and to show me their country. I remember once I asked my boss about taking the company car for the weekend, but it was not possible because of insurance reasons. Instead he gave me money to rent a car during the weekend and encouraged me to drive through the country and to visit many islands. He paid everything, even the gasoline and the ferry cost. That is what I call great hospitality.

Here is another story: My roommate, Anders, and I wanted to buy shrimp from the harbour, because it is possible to get fresh shrimp from the fishermen. We met the Greenlandic lady from the airplane and asked her when the fishermen arrive at the harbour. When she heard that we wanted to buy shrimp, she insisted on giving us shrimp, because she buys it sometimes from her cousin, who is a fisherman. So we followed her home thinking that we would get 400-500g, because that is what we had planned to buy. She gave us 6 kg of fresh shrimp for free! It was almost impossible to fit them into the freezer.

They have many traditions in the Faroe Islands that do not exist in Scandinavia or any other country that I have been in. If you want to visit someone, you just go over and open the person's door and go in - no phone call and no doorbells. They told me that if the door is unlocked - then you just 'step in'. And they meant it. I remember once I was in the kitchen, and nobody else was in the house, suddenly I heard a voice in the house and somebody opened my kitchen door. It was a friend who wanted to spend some time with me. I think it was really cool, because nobody needed to feel alone. If you get bored, then just open the door of somebody you know.

The food culture was different from the Swedish. The Faroese national dishes were: whale blubber, dried whale meat, dried sheep meat, dried fish, cod cheeks, sheep head etc. I tried almost every thing except the sheep head, because I did not want to go back to Sweden knowing that I had missed something.



Traditional Faroese food

The natural beauty of the Faroe Islands is amazing - it is not like any other place I have been in. Some places could be from the Lord of the Rings. I could see mountains everywhere; an ocean view is so common that it is not easy to find a place without it. I saw cliffs rising from the ocean that were several hundred metres high. Driving in the Faroe Islands gives a great enjoyment of the countryside.

The weather is the only negative thing I can think of, as the temperature is between 2-11 °C all the year, and the weather is so unpredictable. The Faroese say that you can have the all four season in one day.

The most common question I got from the Faroese was: Why the Faroe Islands? I guess they were not used to international students or trainees coming to the Faroe Islands.

Finally I would like to encourage everyone who will get the opportunity to visit the Faroe Islands to not hesitate.

Paul Bandak



This natural harbour is located in Gjógv, Eysturoy



This is what you might see if you drive through the countryside.



Vestmanna harbour, talking about living close to the nature



This is me after a day on the field after being in the tunnel



Sunrise from Sornfelli on midsummer