

## Acadia's exchange program: Haley Geizer and Riley Scanlan discuss studying abroad in Norway

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Photo by Haley Geizer taken in Norway

Acadia fourth-year environmental science students Riley Scanlan and Haley Geizer traveled to Norway for six and nine months respectively as part of Acadia's exchange program. They were enrolled in the Norwegian University of Life Sciences where they took courses such as ecology, worldwide climate change, and hydrogeology.

Acadia's exchange program offers opportunities in countries around the world, and Riley and Haley point out that when it comes to environmental science, Norway turned out to be an ideal destination.

"It was interesting to experience such a different system," says Riley. "In Norway, classes are discussion-based and are almost entirely about critical thinking. We would talk about a specific system and analyze whether it actually works or not, and then discuss ways to improve it, which was more applicable to a real-life situation."

Haley says she had a similar experience, adding that the university placed emphasis on the philosophical aspect of teaching and learning.

“I took an ecology course and we didn’t have a lab, it was more philosophical than scientific where we talked about what is natural and what is ethical when working in conservation,” she says.

Both Haley and Riley were involved in extracurricular activities and clubs. Riley volunteered in Acadia’s seed bank and while studying in Norway, she had the opportunity to travel to Svalbard, a northern Norwegian town, with researchers to explore a seed vault.

“They have this amazing seed vault which is supposed to be able to withstand through thousands of years and throughout any climate change disaster,” she says.



Photo: Riley Scanlan in Svalbard, Norway

Haley says outside the classroom, she learned about the different ways in which Norwegian citizens view and discuss environmental and sustainability topics.

“I learned it’s all about the tone of communication. If you want to make environmental change, it’s important to avoid guilting or shaming others,” she says. “I had many open conversations about this in Norway and there’s no pressure, there’s no judgment, and there aren’t as many rules to sustainability as people might think. It’s all about understanding people’s choices and having discussions.”

After their exchange experience, Riley and Haley say that studying abroad can be challenging, but also a life-changing opportunity. They encourage other students to consider these opportunities as part of their

university learning experience because they entail more than what is usually taught in the classroom.

“I believe studying abroad builds your confidence,” says Riley. “You’ll be exposed to uncomfortable situations much more often than you would in your home country. It helps you get a sense of independence and confidence.”

Haley agrees, adding the most important aspect of traveling is embracing change, even if it’s a challenge.

“You have to be adaptable and try to live their lifestyle and understand why they do things,” she says. “You wouldn’t truly enjoy an experience abroad if you were searching for the same kind of feeling that you have at home. The point is to experience something new!”

Learn about Acadia’s exchange program [here](#).

Read Riley Scanlan’s full article about Svalbard [here](#).

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