

The fall 2016 midstay visit to the University of Helsinki was definitely one of the highlights of the EuroScholars program so far. We were able to see the beautiful city of Helsinki, learn about the prestigious University of Helsinki, and meet the other EuroScholars from all around Europe.

Through the program planned for us, we got to explore two of the University of Helsinki's campuses, hear lectures from two of their brilliant science faculty, and even take a (warm) bus tour around Helsinki. The temperatures were quite low and there was substantial snow during our visit, but we quickly learned to deal with the weather like (almost-) natives. The University of Helsinki even gave us each a small reflective keychain like those worn by many people in Finland so that we could be sure we were visible after dark.

We also were exposed to some parts of Finnish culture. We got to try eating reindeer and we learned about saunas, although sadly I was not able to find time to visit one. Presentations from tour guides and from employees of the University of Helsinki allowed us to explore many of Helsinki's offerings and several of us found ourselves interested in studying there or at least further visits.

The highlight of our midstay visit was definitely the research presentations. From physics to psychology to biochemistry, each EuroScholar had clearly been working hard on interesting original research questions. Getting to talk to some of the other student experts in small group discussions meant that we learned about a variety of topics and could ask any lingering questions. After a few months with my head buried in my own research, it was really nice to take a step back and see what I'd learned and what other people had been doing.

Getting to know the other EuroScholars also meant learning about their home institutions, their experiences in Europe, and other aspects of their lives. We had time to discuss everything from graduate/medical school to different European currencies to other research we'd done. Needless to say, we had a very good time - even hitting a karaoke bar with some of the professors and staff that were on the site visit trip. It was really a perfect way to take a break from doing research and it allowed us to build connections across European and American institutions.

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