

# Two Months in Norway

Report of an IAESTE internship – June and July 2023  
Ricarda Tomasi, biology, ETHZ

## Work

I was part of the Between The Fjords Lab lead by Vigdis Vandvik at the University of Bergen (UIB) for two months as an intern in field ecology. I helped wherever they needed me and mostly did fieldwork for their new DURIN project. It is a project about the underappreciated role of dwarf-shrubs in responding to and influencing global climate change. Therefore, I spend most of my summer outdoors looking at heather and different kind of berries helping with phenology work, plant functional trait studies and carbon flux measurements. It was quite a different type of work compared to studying cellular and molecular biology at ETHZ (which involves a lot of pipetting) and I was able to gain many new experiences.

I also had the opportunity to join a three-week long work-trip to northern Norway during my stay, which was very interesting, and quite the unusual work experience. I worked, travelled and lived together with my colleagues for almost a month changing location each week. We travelled by boat, car, plane and bus. We slept in big houses, small camping cabins, student dorms, hotels and sometimes shared rooms. We worked in sun, heat, rain, wind and surrounded by millions of mosquitos. We played games, cooked, discussed life, academics, and cultural differences together. We celebrated accomplishments of each other, we argued with each other and got over it, we formed friendships. Overall, it was quite an intense time but I would not miss it. Highlights of my trip were definitely taking a swim in the sea above the Arctic Circle, watching the midnight sun and hiking some amazing places.

## Culture

The group at UIB did a good job at creating a very welcoming work environment. Even though work conditions were demanding on many levels, I was always met by positive and appreciative people. It was great to gain insight in such an interesting and international research group and research and being a small part of it! I also found the Norwegians to be very welcoming and kind in general. They have a very relaxed and pragmatic view on life and a refreshing “it is what it is” mentality. During my free time I was able to go for amazing hikes, the nature in Norway is insanely beautiful almost everywhere you go. Flexible working hours in Norway helped a lot with this. My favourite snack discovery that I will definitely miss is called smash, salty corn kernels covered in milk chocolate.



*Fieldwork during “hot” summer in Norway, temperature 18 °C*



*Hiking a mountain called with my co-workers on Senja Island*



*Bergen from above, picture taken on an evening hike after work*

## IAESTE

Doing this internship with IAESTE was very convenient. Not only did they facilitate the job offer for me (else I would have stayed at home) but they also were great at answering my questions, e.g. concerning taxes. Beyond the professional support, I thoroughly enjoyed participating in activities they offered, such as visiting museums. It was good to know that I could come to them with any problems that might arise. I am very happy to have spent my summer in Norway with IAESTE; it was truly an enriching experience. I gained so many new insights, had the opportunity to explore captivating places and met some wonderful humans. This entire adventure led me to reflect on my future career path and personal life choices. And who knows, maybe I will be back?



*Doing fieldwork being well equipped against mosquitos and cold*



*More of Norway's beautiful landscape, "devil's jar" on Senja Island*



*Always on the hunt for unique birds, insects and plants like cloudberry*