



IT University Travel Report

Host University:

University of California, Berkeley

Study Programme at IT University:

MSc Computer Science

Study Abroad:

Freemover

Courses studied abroad:

Introduction to

Artificial Intelligence,

Principles and Techniques of

Data Science,

Introduction to Statistics

Exchange Period: semester autumn/fall_year 2018

If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here:

tvano@berkeley.edu

tvao@itu.dk

thorolesen14@gmail.com

Your stay abroad

What was it like to study at University of California, Berkeley (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

UC Berkeley is known to be the best public university in the world and offers the 3rd best Computer Science programme in the world. As such, the courses are top-notch with extremely bright students and some of the best professors in the world doing state-of-the-art research. Nonetheless, Berkeley courses are notoriously difficult (especially in Computer Science) so you must be proactive, independent and hard-working to succeed at Berkeley. Further, there are so many things to get involved in at Berkeley so you must understand your priorities and manage your time judiciously. Beware that you will be challenged like never before and receive grades that you are not always happy with once in a while but the environment. Nonetheless, if you are willing to accept these challenges and be proactive, you will grow and learn a lot both personally and academically from your highly competent peers and professors.

The only thing I did not like about Berkeley is the hostility experienced in the campus environment, which I think might be derived by the fact that the best and brightest students of the nation study at Berkeley, which means they are used to being at the top or their class. As a result, there is an air of competitiveness that makes for a less than friendly environment, which can be toxic and affect your mental health. This is not to discourage you but simply an observation I made during my time there. However, as long as you are an independent individual Berkeley will offer you a level of academic rigour, opportunity and student body of top private universities at a fraction of the cost.

Finally, there is a vibrant life in Berkeley with many active communities in sports, arts, dance, politics, tech etc. and you get access to great gym facilities, swimming pools, and sports grounds. Overall, Berkeley really offers an authentic American college experience on campus and you will notice an immense diversity and open-mindedness across race, religion and culture everywhere.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

I wanted to challenge myself academically and experience how it is to study Computer Science at one of the best schools in the world. Further, I wanted to do courses that are not generally offered at ITU such as Statistics, and I wanted to do a course in Artificial Intelligence with some of the best professors in the field, namely Pieter Abbeel and Dan Klein. I was surprised by how strong the students were both theoretically and mathematically, which has motivated me to do more courses back home within linear algebra, probability, statistics, calculus and optimization. I realised that we are very pragmatic and practically oriented at ITU but sometimes lack the deep theoretical foundation required in Computer Science in order to refrain making false assumptions in our work.

Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies?

I became analytically stronger and my stay at Berkeley sparked an increased interest in exploring more Math-related courses within the domain of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Statistics. In addition, I learned to appreciate the group work and general sense of community we have at ITU where people generally strive to help each other instead of competing with each other at any cost. Finally, I think being surrounded by the brightest students in the world makes you more humble and serves as a reminder that there are always someone out there working harder to surpass you academically and professionally, which helps keep you on your toes and work harder.

Arranging your stay

Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay:

I applied for pre-approval at ITU early to get an idea of the courses I would be able to take at Berkeley and whether it was realistic that I could get the minimum 30 ECTS courses I had to enrol in and still get everything pre-approved by Berkeley. This is important, since you do not have first priority on courses at Berkeley where they give favour Berkeley students the open seats available.

Secondly, one should start early to apply for the American visa, since it is a long process and it requires you to attend an interview at the American embassy in Copenhagen before departure.

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use?

I applied for a F1 student visa on this link: <http://www.ustraveldocs.com/dk/>

I used a lot of practical information found on the Danish EDU agency used for studying abroad:
<https://edu-danmark.dk/universiteter/usa/uc-berkeley>

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

I wanted to live on campus so I lived on International House, which is the only campus residence for International students from outside the US. The I-House promotes intercultural experiences and is filled up with students from all around the world and the dining experience is great but the rooms are small and the housing price is absolutely ludicrous. I paid 8100 USD (53000 DKK) for 4 months.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

The tuition is around 100,000 DKK.

The housing is around 50,000 DKK.

Flight tickets are around 5-10,000 DKK.

In total, I think one should expect to use between 150,000-200,000 DKK.

Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?

I received approximately 100,000 DKK in financial support split across the following scholarships:

Scan Design
Marie og M.B. Richters Fond
Oticon Fond
Knud Højgaards Fond
ITU Travel Pool
SU Udlændsstipendium

Recommendations for other students:

Plan Early!

- 1) Pre-Approval of Berkeley courses by ITU
- 2) Two recommendation letters by ITU professors
- 3) F1 Student Visa Application with interview at the US embassy in Copenhagen
 - 1) NB: you cannot use your passport during the 2-4 week application process
- 4) Savings (strive to save up 50,000DKK on your own and apply for scholarships to get the rest)
- 5) Apply for Berkeley either directly or through the Danish EDU agency via UC Extension