IT University Travel Report

Dear Student, this is a template – the aim is to inspire other students who may wish to follow in your footsteps. You are free to give your report the shape you want and to go beyond the questions, as long as you cover the information asked for below. You are also very welcome to include pictures and contact information – but you need not. Remember that the report will be made available on the intranet.

Host University:

Study Programme at IT University:

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad:

Courses studied abroad:

Exchange Period: semester (autumn/spring): Autumn  year: 2018

If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here: Email: idakilias@gmail.com

Your stay abroad

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

We were a small class of 20 people with a lot of different backgrounds. The other students were mainly from New Zealand which gave a good insight into the kiwi culture. Some had come straight from their undergraduates whilst the majority had worked in various industries. This gave the opportunity to not only learn from the classes but also the other students. We did not have many lectures as we might be used to but instead a lot of class discussions, group work and field work. The courses we did were all part of a master degree specifically in User Experience Design. Academic level was not as high as we’re used to at the IT-University and in general everything is very relaxed.

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

My initial motivation was to gain new perspectives on education as well as improving my language skills. This I definitely feel like I've gained. It has also been interesting to learn about different rules when doing field work...
and learn how much culture plays a role when investigating communities (even when the culture gap is tiny compared to other countries).

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?

User Experience Design Practice, Graphic Design and Professional Practice are three subjects that I took during my stay in Wellington. These are part of a 1-year Master of User Experience Design at VUW. This Master is intended as an industry-based degree that prepares the individual student to work within the design industry. We have had a lot of exciting projects where companies around New Zealand have been involved. In addition, many lectures have been held by various interesting companies (Trade Me, Blind Foundation, snapper, Xero, Spark, IBM, PwC, Flick & Paperkite).

During all subjects, the user has been the centre of attention and, in particular, methods within human-centred design and service design have been central learning goals. In addition, I have learned to use important digital design tools within the industry and have acquired a broader understanding of how we can research people in various ways to gain knowledge. It has been exciting to explore investigative research methods in another country and although New Zealand and Denmark are very similar in many areas, we also have two very different cultures and especially stories.

I found that people are really active in New Zealand and a great way to meet people is to find a hoppy! I joined the yoga and acro-yoga community, the climbing community and even the tramping club at the university. This made it easy to meet people and socialize.

I have grown as a more independent person after this experience and this has clearly prepared me for the design industry. I have been challenged to meet new people and to build a new network. A network that I am very grateful for and which I will certainly use in the future. Studying abroad can only be recommended and the human and cultural competencies that I have built up are essential within a subject that is so human-based.
Arranging your stay

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

As the stay was through an exchange agreement, the process wasn’t too much work. I was mainly waiting to hear back from the University.

Victoria University of Wellington doesn’t seem to be the most organized so I only got my courses approved after I arrived in Wellington. The staff there are very helpful though.

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)? Facebook, Eva (the international coordinator) and the university webpage.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

I was lucky to have a great network of people from previous travels and through a fb post I found a place to stay through a friend’s friend. I avoided the student halls and wanted to live with people from New Zealand in my own age group. In Wellington there are lots of fb groups that are helpful to find accommodation and one of my favorites is called Vic deals (on here you can find people to help you is your car battery dies or just be very entertained on a windy, rainy day)

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad
Always have more money than you expect.

Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular? 
I would recommend Lemvigh-Müller, Augustinus and Marie & M. B. Richters. Really just apply for as many as possible.

Recommendations for other students:

Find facebook pages, join communities and be open minded to different ways of organizing things – it will most likely be different than what you’re used to.