Travel Report

Hawaii Pacific University 2012

This travel report consists of an introduction describing the first few days of travel and then a more thorough guide of tips to living in Honolulu, ending with my final thoughts upon an exchange experience at Hawaii Pacific University.

Introduction

August 18th
Reached the airport, found out our flight plane had mysteriously changed it's name. Reached Honolulu after 23 backbreaking hours in the smallest seats ever made. Checked in at the Hostel and all was well, except for the fact that my baggage had been left in SF. This however remedied itself after a 24 hours. People in Honolulu airport are very American, but very kind.

August 22nd
Went to the check-in day at HPU and to my dismay HPU hadn't included any introductory days to shake the students together. This is a shame, but living at the hostel "Waikiki Beachside Hostel" really created a base for a network as many other students were also staying there.

August 23rd - 25th
Looked for an apartment, a piece of valuable advice: come BEFORE the rest of the exchange students otherwise finding a place will be a headache. There are many large studios for rent and many require two people. Waikiki area is expensive, just outside Waikiki you'll find better deals.

August 27th
Found a place! 1600 $ all i inclusive. I suggest taking your time to find an apartment, patience is a virtue. Now it's all about exploring the island and catching some waves until school starts. We bought mopeds due to the extremely bad traffic in Honolulu which has to the be worst I've ever experienced.

General impressions & good advice

You will find that Honolulu is an expensive place to live and therefore many students end up sharing rooms if they want to live in the most popular area "Waikiki". Waikiki is a tourist cauldron, full of life and also the prime place for going to the beach & going out at night. You will not find much authenticity in this area as it is focused on making money of primarily the many Japanese tourists who visit the islands to bask in splendor. If you want to experience the authentic Hawaii take an island hopper to the other islands in the island group. Whilst living in Honolulu I experienced Kauai & Hawaii, besides Oahu. Others experienced Maui and all are recommendable if you enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking, surfing, canoeing, etc.

HPU downtown campus & the amount of studying

The teaching quality and classrooms of HPU downtown campus vary much in regards to what type of courses have chosen. Generally speaking the quality is mediocre but it would be naive
to generalize as I've only tried three courses at HPU. One trend was very apparent, the amount of literature to read and the amount of assignments is very high. However it seems that the quality and the depth of these is not very high - with some effort you should be able to get straight A's.

The grading was however quite rigid and all my professors put a lot of weight on participation or at least presence, and the grades are determined by a point system that the professor of the course dictates. Not handing in assignments on time or even staying away from class can actually affect your grade to a high extent. Usually you'll need around 91% to achieve an A, however I had a course that had a 93,5% criteria.

Sports & outdoor activities

The notion of surfing and the actual sport of surfing are two entirely different aspects. Rent a board the first three or four times you temp the waves and be sure that you would like to learn to surf before buying a surfboard. I can recommend the surf shop "Moku" close the "Statue of the Duke" - ask the locals they'll know. Renting a board fresh off the beach from the "Star Beachboys" is more expensive and the boards are usually of a lesser quality.

Free tennis courts are to be found in many different areas around Waikiki. I can recommend the courts at "Queen Kapiolani Park" as well as the ones close to the "Ala Moana Shopping Center". If you need a racket and aren't especially fussy about the quality, check out Wall Mart they have rackets from $15 and up as well as cheap balls.

Whilst living in Honolulu I decided to try something that was far from what I would usually spend time on. I started doing Bigram yoga, which essentially is the art of yoga but simply practiced in a room heated up to 50 degrees Celsius. This speeds up the process and has other positive effects; I can recommend "Waikiki Hot Yoga" at the Miramar Hotel in Waikiki. Besides this there are many yoga studios and HPU even offers such activities.

Places to eat

Eating out was a large part of the abroad experience in Hawaii, USA. Many prejudices about the Americans eating habits are unfortunately true. There are very many junk food restaurants to be found and buying healthy foods (fruit & vegetables especially) are expensive. Therefore my roommate and I ended up eating out a lot and we found some great restaurants that provided healthy, large meals at around the 12-18$ dollar mark including tips. Many of these were located on Kapahulu Avenue and these were some of our favorites:

On Kapahulu Avenue: Uncle Bo's, Sam's Kitchen, Irifune, Kozo Sushi
In Waikiki: California Pizza Kitchen, Cha Cha Cha

Places to go out

Important!! You have to be 21 to legally go clubbing in Hawaii. The few who were under the age of 21 missed out on a lot of social arrangements simply because they could not enter the same places as the rest of us. If you are under the age of 21, I would not recommend going on exchange to the USA as the social part is of utmost importance. Of the nightclubs we frequented I can recommend the following; The Big Kahuna, Mooses, Rumfire, Hotel 39, Next Door, M and Maddogs.
Experiencing Oahu

Waikiki and Honolulu are not the only places you will like to be whilst on exchange. The island of Oahu has many worthy experiences and hiking is one of the islands most attractive pastime activities. The following homepage www.unrealhawaii.com will provide you with a list of detailed hikes and was a great resource during my stay. Besides this I would suggest checking out www.orbitz.com as they have a very good search engine in regards to renting cars, which you will want when visiting the North shore (big surf competitions, sights, beaches, etc.).

Final Words

Experiencing Hawaii was a fantastic experience. I learned much and met many wonderful people. School-wise the amount of newly acquired knowledge was not impressive. I went to Hawaii expecting to be met with an island culture of easy-going locals, not an island that was so clearly a part of the capitalist nature of the USA. Many unfortunate prejudices about USA were confirmed but this has only enriched my worldview in regards to what values & beliefs I recognize.

If anyone asked me to recommend an exchange experience, I would not recommend the states. I would recommend experiencing a country that has a culture so far from your own that your experience is completely different and therefore genuine. Hawaii had some of this, but due to the influence of the states it was a lot like our own culture, but watered down and not as rich. However, once this has been said- you will grow wiser wherever you end up traveling to.

You live you learn
Thank you for reading

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