IT University Travel Report

Host University:
Parsons The New School for Design, New York, New York
Website: http://www.newschool.edu/parsons/

Study Program at IT University:
Digital Design and Communication

Activity Abroad:
A four-week summer Intensive studies Program at Parsons The New School for Design in the course Design Management

My stay abroad

I arrived at JFK airport in New York June 20th 2013. I was lucky enough to find a room to rent for the entire period, which I had set up several months upon my arrival. A Danish ex co-worker and friend lives there and she had a spare room for me to rent. The room was $1000 per month, which is fairly normal for a decent room close to center Manhattan. The apartment was on 27th and 3rd street, which was only about a fifteen-minute walk to Union Square where Parsons is located.

I was fortunate to do some site seeing in the week up until school start where I really got the feel of the city and was able to practice my way around the Big Apple. My activities included a lot of walking, biking, roof top partying and a nice sail trip around Manhattan. I knew a few people in New York already and a bunch of my fellow students at ITU were attending a different summer course at Parsons so I already had people to hang out with. And I of course made a lot of new friends during my stay.

School started July 1st and was Monday through Friday from 9 o’clock until 4 o’clock and lasted until July 26th. It was very intense. There was a lot of reading involved and home assignments, including group work.

The course, Design Management, was revolved around the strategic actions concerning a design process and included subjects such as visual- and design thinking, sketching, prototyping, ethnographical studies and presentations. Most readings were given to us as Pdf’s and the primary book was Business Model Generation, also used in the Innovation course at ITU.
We had two field trips during the four-week study; a trip to Dia:Beacon – a contemporary museum of art located upstate New York – kind of similar to Louisiana in Humlebæk. The other field trip went to The Metropolitan Museum of Art where there was a punk exhibition. Also, the city of New York was used a lot in our field studies so we didn’t feel trapped in a class room all the time.

Throughout the studies we were obligated to write a journal, where we made notes on our readings, did sketches and drawings and collected artifacts that symbolized our work and experiences in the city.

There were two lecturers for the course, John Bruce and Nina Cooke with backgrounds as innovators and architects. Also, there were very fascinating guest lecturers during the course. They were highly qualified and enthusiastic about their work and common for them all they had real life, hands on business experience.

The class was about 30 students from all over the world with a majority of girls, actually Danish. There were only two boys. The students were from USA, Sweden, Brazil, Columbia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Lebanon, France, Australia and Mexico. This diversity gave the group a great flow and it was very interesting to learn about the cultures of these other countries.

There was no final exam for the course, but there was a final presentation. Our attendance counted in the grade giving and our involvement in the class played a big deal as well. Lastly the notebooks were collected and evaluated.

After the final presentation there was an exhibition of our projects where we were also able to see the works of the other courses.

I stayed in New York until August 5th so it was nice to have some vacation on the other side of the studies as well.

My initial motivation for going abroad - did my stay meet my expectations?

I had always dreamed of studying outside Denmark, but it has never really been possible. And I didn’t feel like being away from my family for an entire semester. When I heard about the option of taking a relevant and interesting summer course, which even gave credit for an entire course at ITU I figured it met two needs I had. Also, it was nice to be able to hold back on one course for my third semester at ITU. I was inspired by a fellow classmate who had been enrolled at Parsons before, and it didn’t sound as complicated as I first anticipated.

The outcome of my stay

Without sounding too cliché, I came back a changed person from New York. I am more eager than ever to live, learn and explore in all aspects of life. Being (almost) on my own in a somewhat foreign city taught me how it’s not so difficult to be torn out of your comfort zone to gain new experiences.
One major goal of my stay was to become clearer as to what I wanted to revolve my thesis around. I actually managed to do so, and I am certain now, that I want to revolve my thesis around design thinking. And also looking into the possibility to combine my thesis with another visit abroad because it really broadens my perspective and gives me energy, guts and inspiration for creating.

**Arranging my stay**

The process involved in arranging my stay

Applying to Parsons was not too difficult. I read about the different courses and found Design Management most relevant for my studies. Also, it was the course I was most curious about. I applied for a Pre-approval of credit transfer at the student office at ITU beforehand. In end November the sign-up for the summer school courses opened up and was on a first come first serve term. And I had to be able to pay the money for the course in advance, which was about $3500. Since the course was approved before hand I knew I’d be re-endorsed by the Danish student government. Only three quarters of the cost though. Once the money was withdrawn from my bank account I knew I had been accepted to the course. Next stop was to find housing, to buy the plane ticket and to reach the funds. This was done by hard work and saving money, and applying for scholarships. I got one scholarship from the IT University’s Travel Pool. I also tried Crowd Funding, which led to a small amount.

Helpful resources in planning my stay

I used the international office at the ITU in the beginning together with the SU department and student office. Also, it helped a lot to speak to students who had taken the course previously. The group of ITU students going to New York, including myself, created a Facebook group where we could exchange information and ask each other questions.

Practicalities such as accommodation

I wrote to my family in the USA and to my network on Facebook stating that I was looking for a place to live in New York. This method paid off. Also, there is an international Facebook group called “Det Danske Netværk i New York” where you can search for rooms as well. Air B’n’B was also used by my fellow students.

**Expenses and Financing**

Expenses connected to my stay abroad

Bring more money than you expect to spend and don’t use it all on shopping. Eating out in New York can be very expensive and you want to be able to go out a lot in the city that never sleeps. Keep in mind that you will have to use over $100 a month for a subway card, money to rent a bike or take a taxi when you get lost. Also, it costs money to be a tourist. Books and school supplies were about $200 at the max. And of course rent, and transport to and from the airport.
Scholarships

Oticon Fonden declined my application for a scholarship. I found it hard to find any that focused on shorter terms abroad. Definitely apply for the travel pool as it is also directed towards a short term exchange program.

Recommendations for other students

Use your network, be open to everything and don’t be afraid to ask questions and accept help. Don’t be overwhelmed of all the bureaucracy even though it seems to be a big hassle. Everything is definitely worth it. My biggest regret is that I didn’t look into these summer courses sooner.