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: Syracuse University, New York, United States of America

Study Programme at IT University: IT & Computer Science

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad: Exchange Agreement

Courses studied abroad:

- Android Programming
- Web Design & Management
- Managing Info Systems Projects
- Software Implementation
- Introduction to Information Based Organization
- Latin & Salsa Dance (did not transfer credits)
- Wine Appreciation (did not transfer credits)

Exchange Period: semester (autumn/spring) Spring year 2015.

Your stay abroad

What was it like to study at [the university] (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

Going from a smaller university, like ITU, to a campus with 25,000 students is an incredible experience. Syracuse University is a great example of how an American community comes together in a town build around students. The scale is massive, and realizing that each line of study has a school the size of ITU for themselves is quite different. In that way, you will still find yourself in the same location as others with the same interests, which makes for some interesting walks from one class to the other.
The academic level definitely depends on the course. In America, an undergraduate student goes through 4 years of school. Therefore, the ability to learn and understand is not as fast as in Denmark. Courses are always related to a number from 100 – 700 or 800, and the higher the number, the more difficult the class. For courses related to your line of study, I would definitely recommend 400+, to match the same level as in Denmark. If you are doing an elective course without having any experience, 200+ will be okay.

If you feel like developing even more, ask about the amount of credits you are allowed to take. I needed 15 units to cover my 30 ECTS-points, but was able to do 19 units if I wanted, so I chose to have dance-classes and wine tasting as well (just for fun). With a university this diverse, I would suggest at least looking into possible extra-course, if you feel like you have the time.

With 25,000 students, it is impossible to know everyone, but there is a good chance to know most people. Just like at ITU, projects are a big deal in studying IT, and you will quickly make connections with people from all of your courses. Campus life is great, with lots of activities, and if you like American Sports you will quickly get used to go watch games at “The Dome”, the university stadium, every once in a while.

However, no students will be as great friends as the once you are living with. When you are not only sleeping in the same building, but also eating, studying, working-out with, and partying with these people, you are sure to make friends for a lifetime. Staying at a dorm is an absolute amazing experience, and is, unfortunately, only available to undergraduate students (not masters). If you go during the spring, you might even be able to join your new friends on Spring Break to get away from the cold (Puerto Rico is a great recommendation).

I will note, though, that being a student in America under 21 is a lot different from being of the legal drinking age. With the drinking culture in Denmark, it can be tough to get accustomed to this, and not being able to enjoy a beer after a long week of studying might be tough for some. I went after turning 21, and I would have had a completely different experience has I not been of that age.

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

I wanted to go abroad to try something different, to experience student life in a different country, and to make global connections that you can keep for life. I have always felt that the academic level at ITU was appropriate for me, so learning at a more advanced level was not a requirement for me. Instead, going to a bigger school meant more courses and more flexibility, so I was hoping that this would help me take courses in some of the areas that ITU cannot offer. Luckily, this all turned out as I wanted it, and the freedom of two elective courses gave me a semester filled with knowledge that felt most valuable to me.
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?

The first things that comes to mind is “perspective”. You can read about it, & hear about, but nothing will ever be able to describe how students function in a different country. The only way to figure it out is to go there yourself. I thought I had a good understanding of the American system. How paying for school is a normal thing, and health care is not just “included” in you taxes. I knew all this before going, but once you get to experience this from the front-row, it really hits you how lucky we are to live in a country with free education and free healthcare. Because I went through the ITU exchange program, I did not have to pay for tuition, and realizing that all the students around me were being charged huge amounts of money every semester, I was happy that my family did not have to pay for me. The amount of stress and pressure on a young student must be tough, walking around knowing that people are depending on you to do well, that they have been saving all their life to give you this opportunity. Those are some of the things we take for granted back in Denmark, and all of a sudden I feel much more responsible for doing better in class, but in a good way.

I got to know a lot of people from all over the world, and create friendships that will last a lifetime. I was inspired by talented professors, sharing their stories, embracing the art of teaching as more than a job. I got to work with some of the areas of my major that I find to be the most interesting. And I did it all in just half a year.

Arranging your stay

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

From the beginning, I was certain that going through the exchange program at ITU was the best way for me. I wanted the process to go as smooth as possible, and it definitely did. Although you will be the one in contact with the host university once accepted, ITU is doing a great job getting you the first step. Applying is easy and quick, and I could not be happier about how things have turned out.

As soon as you know whether you have been accepted by ITU to apply for a university, start looking at courses. Time is always limited, and the sooner you get pre-approval of courses, the better. Remember, you are not enlisting in any courses at this point. You are just making sure that those course credits are eligible for transferring back to ITU.

Remember, YOU are the one going abroad, so it is also you, who must be in contact with the host university. ITU can do a lot for you, but when it comes to scheduling courses, finding accommodation, and getting a visa, you are responsible yourself. This might not come as a surprise to most people, but I thought it was worth noting.
What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?

When it comes to the “official” information and document, I would usually get a hold of SAP. Otherwise, my best advice would be to get in touch with someone who has already been abroad. Once you have gone through the process, you know much more than someone who has not. So if you have any questions, even if it is related to pre-approval of courses, try to ask other students! They might know more than you think.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

You are able to apply for housing through the school, which was very easy, but also quite expensive (see “Expenses and Financing”-section). The quality of the dorms did not reflect the price, but you are put in the same building as about 100 other people, so the chance of meeting new friends is sky-high, and definitely a plus.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

Being able to bring your Danish SU with you is great! It is able to cover most of the expenses related to accommodation and meals, so you need to have saved some money to pay for books, trips, etc. Compared to the price of dorms in Denmark, USA is very expensive. Even though you would not expect it to be, finding an apartment off-campus is most likely cheaper than sharing a room made available by the school. It does require a bit more work in terms of planning, and you will have to do grocery shopping (which is not closely located, unless you have a car), so remember to consider those.

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

I did not apply for any scholarships.

Recommendations for other students:

If you have ever had just the slightest amount of interest in studying abroad, go for it! You will have an experience for lifetime, and I will guarantee you that it will have a positive influence on your future. Globalization is here to stay, go out and explore!