

**IT University Travel Report**

**Host University:** Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

**Study Programme at IT University:** DMD

**Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad:** Exchange

**Exchange Period:** 5th semester (autumn) July-December 2015 - (South African spring)

**Courses studied abroad:** 3rd year of National Diploma in Graphic Design:

- COMMUNICATION DESIGN 3
- DESIGN TECHNIQUES 3
- GRAPHIC DESIGN DRAWING 3
- PROFESSIONAL GRAPHIC DESIGN PRACTICE 3
- HISTORY AND THEORY OF GRAPHIC DESIGN 3

**Your stay abroad:**

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

Studying at CPUT was overall a great experience. I took on a full semester with all the above-mentioned courses, which meant that I went trough a wide range of teachers and required skills. My personal experience with some of the courses, was like my fellow exchange students, that the academic level wasn’t up to speed with the level in Denmark (Europa), but other courses, especially the more practical once like Design Techniques and Graphic Design Drawing were challenging and educational. My classmates were extremely open, helpful and interested in getting to know me and my country, so I developed a great social life both at campus and outside.

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

I specifically only applied for exchange to CPUT, as the biggest motivation for me was to stay, live and be a part of a very different culture, especially the South African (SA) culture. I wanted to live and study in a country that were totally different to DK and as I didn’t think Korea was for me – CPUT it was. Luckily my stay fully lived up to my expectation, if not surpassed them. How you interact, get taught and live your daily life was very different and I need to adapt, which was what I wanted. Getting so far from home also gives you the possibility to completely stand on you own two feet and learn to trust yourself much more.
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 got so much out of my stay that it’s hard to boil down. When it comes to the academic and how it can contribute, I must say that the main take away for me was that practical techniques which we don’t learn at ITU. I e.g. learned to create a digital interactive magazine, take photos in a studio etc. Also the challenges and adaptability I underwent, has strengthen me for further studies. My exchange was based on a wish to improve my Graphical skills and here CPUT excels. I meet extremely talented and skilled students with a broad knowledge in e.g. drawing, typography, grid design/layout and publication. The analytical and higher academic level was lower compared to ITU, but it made up for it in the skills acquired through practical work. You do though need a little basic knowledge of Photoshop/Illustrator/InDesign in advance to attend the 3rd year.

As ITU have cancelled the Graphic Design elective subject, exchange to CPUT is a great alternate solution if that is your interest field.

Personally, I learned a lot about my self, how I handle tough situations and how I react in new environments and cultures. My stay made me more independent and confident in who I am and how I interact with people.

**Arranging your stay:**

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

Giving a short description of my process is difficult, as it was hard, long and required a couple of long phone calls to SA (Tip: buy a Lyca sim card to call from, it will save you a lot). So my advise is, if you need answers quickly CALL, if they haven’t applied to you mail in a week CALL, if you want to get clearance CALL. Our contact person even told us that he didn’t answer an email if he didn’t know the answer... So CALL! - it makes life much easier and are much more efficient. I don’t think my exchange had been realized if I only had tried with emails!

As the agreement between ITU and CPUT wasn’t fully finalized, I initially sought help from Jörn Messeter. He is head of the DMD program at ITU and has been a lecturer at CPUT, so he knows a lot about what is possible down their. He put me in contact with the head of the Graphic design program Bart Verveckken, who was very helpful, sadly to my knowledge he is currently on leave, so if you are interested in doing as me, I would get in contact with Janet van Graan who now is head of the Graphic department at CPUT. I also was in long dialogs with their student coordinator Merle (or rather her assistant Mr. Matome) and our exchange coordinator Rikke Ilona Ustrup, whom helped to finalize the more practical things like accommodation, pick up at the airport etc. *(Big thanks Rikke!)*
How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

I found that CPUT was very helpful with practical aspects like being picked up at the airport and accommodation. For a period of 4 months, I pay about R20000 = 10000kr per person for a shared room. I shared my room with a Swedish girl (a choice I’m so thankful for) and we then shared kitchen and bathroom with two local girls. You can choose to live in single rooms in the girl/boy dorms or if lucky (or ask for it), you can end up in the exchange apartments, which is defiantly preferable. The girls/boys dorms are huge, you have to have everything like pots and pans with you yourself and you have to have your own locks, as stealing is an issue here. My experience had defiantly been different if I had ended up at the Elizabeth Women’s Residence, which was where I was supposed to stay if I hadn’t called and asked for a roommate. I did go by and check it out and I must admit that it actually looked quite nice and safe, so it’s a matter of temperament and how you feel like living.

Expenses and Financing:

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

With all exchange there is the general expenses for Visa application and Vaccinations, and you should calculate with at least a couple of thousand kr. For South Africa you only need the hepatitis vaccine, but also a tuberculosis test and some doctors statements. To apply for you study visa CPUT require that you have an SA health insurance (I had Discovery and I paid around 1000kr). Flight to South Africa varieties a lot depending on the season (December is expensive) but you should be able to find a return ticket for around 6000-7000 kr. As mentioned above, I paid 10000kr for accommodation and a smaller registration fee to CPUT on arrival. Living in SA is really cheap, everything from food, drinks and activities are at least ½ price to DK, so I would estimate that this is one of the cheapest exchange destinations you can find.

Recommendations for other students:

At the time of writing, only two postgrad students and myself have been on exchange from ITU to CPUT and our experiences have been completely different. The postgrad students, whom went before me, ended up in some unfortunate situations and are not recommending going to SA. I, on the other hand, had an amazing experience and plan to go back to visit soon. I read their travel rapport, as it was the only one existing at the time where I planned my exchange and surely you should read it if you haven’t already, as it provide an alternate experience, but I must say that every classmate/teacher/friend/capetonians I spoke to about their experience were shocked and all said that they must have been very very unlucky.
Crime is a big factor in SA yes, and yes, you have to be careful and have an eye out, but it also depends a lot on how you carry yourself and how you act. I will not go into much detail about crime and danger as I think there is enough about that on Google and in the other travel rapport, but I will extend on the recommendations given by the postgrad student:

*Live in the Atlantic Seaboard (more European and safer. We decided not to live there, as we wanted to experience “the real” Cape Town and get to know locals. For safety, though, it is the best place to be): Not necessarily…*

It is also very expensive, very touristy and it was actually the area where I experienced attempted assault (and heard about other), so you can never say anything for sure. ITU made it very clear to me that after the postgrads experience, I should stay where CPUT said it was safe to stay. They offer dorms and student accommodations, which aren’t that expensive so I choose to let CPUT arrange where I should stay. The “funny” thing is, that by doing so, I ended up living in a student apartment, located in that same “real” Cape Town area (old district 6) as the postgrads decided to live in. What I’m saying with this is, that the most important thing with living in Cape Town is that there is some kind of security. The student apartment I lived at is a part of a hotel, so it is gated in and has security guards/ladies 24/7 (they are extremely sweet and you can quick get to know). The other student accommodations do as fare as I know also have gates and guards as it is a commend thing in SA. I would therefore strongly recommend staying in the student accommodations.

*There are a lot of great trips out of the city. Go to Simon’s Town to experience penguins, drink wine in the winelands, hike up Lion’s Head and much more. The place is packed with great stuff to do. I got a billion places you should try if you decide to go: Me too!!!*

And if you have the possibility, then go travel around the country. I did a lot of road trips with some other exchange students both inland and along the coast (the garden routs is famous for a reason). Here you can dive with great white sharks, paraglide, sandboard and much much much more. After school had finished I stayed two months extra to travel further to Namibia, Botswana and Zambia, which I can highly recommend. SA has so much to offer, so rent a car and go on trips outside Cape Town – at least to Muizenberg for a surf.

*Do not carry a lot of cash (take around 300R and your VISA on each trip): Agreed!*

*Do not show your phone (generally do not show your wealth): Obviously, don’t be an idiot and flaunt what you got, especially on Long Streets and when you go out at night (yes it is possible to go out at night – capetonians go out a lot actually). In the daytime though, you can walk around with your phone in you pocket and listen to music (I did) – just have an eye out and a hand in the pocket when
standing in crowds or at a robot (traffic light). Capetonians also have phones and they walk and talk in them on the street – it’s all about not looking like a scared wealthy tourist, because then you will be robbed.

Do not walk around after 4.30. (Long street is generally okay, but a lot of pickpockets): The general rule in SA is not to walk around when it’s dark! This means that you can walk around until 6-7, varying from winter- to summertime. Just make sure you’re not far from home or a taxi come sundown!! (My least favorite place to walk was actually Long Street (like a lot of capetonians) as it is crawling with beggars and pickpockets, so you will constantly be asked to buy bread or give money). Long Street is the general street to go out. Here you’ll find a lot of bars, clubs, stores and restaurants, which makes it a kind of main street and a fun place to go out – just be in a group and keep an eye on you valuables! The thief’s are good and often stand outside the club, but don’t be afraid; Long Street is also packet with police – especial at night. I don’t think you’ll find a spot with more cops then here.

Do not walk in suburbs (watch out by Bo Kaap, Lower Woodstock and all the townships): Okay, just to clarify this walking thing – walking around in dodgy areas are never a good idea – but it is okay to walk around in Cape Town during the day, also Bo Kaap (they have beautiful houses) and Woodstock (they have a lovely market in the weekends). So if there are a lot of people walking around, then you should be fine. (Except from the townships – there you should only walk if you walk with a local!!!)

Do take cabs (we took a lot of cabs, at least twice a day, but we decided we wanted to walk around as well in order to experience the city for real. In hindsight, though, I would advice to take a cab - everywhere-. Going to the supermarket? Take a cab. It’s after 4.30? Take a cab: I think my answer above states my opinion. Yes, cabs are good, cheap and mostly safe (use the bigger companies or cabs with proper signing) and yes you should definitely use them when it’s dark. But it is lovely walking around down town when the weather is nice. So keep your head down, your hands in your pocket, relax and enjoy the walk. After I had been there for some time and got a feel of the area, I walked around alone – to the supermarket in district 6 – and down town. It is always preferable to be two or more, but after some time, and especially if you are a girl, you’ll feel restricted. So walking gives you freedom and you’ll experience so much more (both bad and good).

Or rent a car (the city center is quite small, but there are a lot of great trips out of the city): Renting a car is a great idea as it gives you a lot of freedom, both in town as well as for tours.
Do get to know locals (it’s a great comfort knowing someone who knows the place better): YES YES

YES! Get to know as many as you can. This is the only way you’ll actually get to know Cape Town and experience the real SA. Getting to know locals and my classmates gave me so many wonderful experiences. Because of them, I went to a festival and also got to visit one of the townships twice (this is nr 1 place not to go in Cape town). So I have to stress, that this is not a place you should go without a local who can vouch for you and protect you. My two visits was to date amongst the most memorable and amazing experiences and it wouldn’t have been possible if I hadn’t been invited by a local – so yes get to know them – you are there to get to know south Africans, not German or Dutch people (they are everywhere).

Take a really good chat with friends and family about the potential risks of going to Cape Town to study. It’s a paradise with a very real other side of the coin. In hindsight, I wouldn’t risk it: I would!

And I’m going back. Obviously you should talk to friends and family about potential risks, but you should do that for any exchange. Me, I feel like I was over warned and I actually almost didn’t go because of the fear and all the warnings I got over and over again (thank god I did).

You can never know how your stay is going to be, but I can guarantee you that it’s going to be different from the others and mine. So take a good look in the mirror and have a good long chat with yourself about whom you are, what you can handle and how you might take tough situations. Cape Town and SA are not a paradise – it is very real – with a lot of poverty and crime – and you will guarantee see and experience bad shit (sorry)!! The question is, if YOU can handle it and I am sure, that if you decide that you can, than you will have an amazing experience.

You’re very welcome to contact me for more information: And me too!

I choose to follow up on the previous recommendations, as I thought it would be very confusing with one travel rapport stating one thing and the other stating something completely different. I therefor tried to bring the two together so it would make more sense. I hope it did and that it was helpful. I certainly am glad that I went and I think it would be great to get more Danes on exchange to SA, as it is an amazing destination and as they still think Denmark is a city in Germany!