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: Georgia Institute of Technology

Study Programme at IT University: Computational Media

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad: Exchange agreement

Courses studied abroad:

1st Semester
- LM3406 – Video Production
- CS1331 – Introduction to Object-oriented Programming
- LMC3314 – Technology of Representation
- LMC2720 – Principles of Visual Design
- LMC3843 – Special Topic-Communication: Design for the Internet

2nd Semester
- ID4418 – Design Sketching
- LMC3705 – Principles of Information Design
- LMC3848 Advanced Video Production
- PHIL3127 – Science, Technology and Human Values

Exchange Period: Fall 2014 and Spring 2015

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

Academics
I really did not enjoy studying at Georgia Institute of Technology. The educational system is in my opinion much too omnipresent and time-consuming. I would seldom leave campus because all my courses required constant caring and had completely irrelevant multiple-choice tests ALL THE TIME. Most weeks I would have at least one assignment due every weekday. Neither of the things I have mentioned are bad per se.

What made these things really bad to me was how purposeless they seemed and how little the work you did represented your knowledge and skills. In my philosophy class we would have points removed for each word we didn't remember in a phrase mentioned during lectures – it didn't matter if we had a sentence with similar meaning, we had to get it right word by word. As good as every other course did similar things where they had great emphasis on the trivial details of the syllabus rather than the phenomenon and it’s ideas. A thing which to me seemed like a consequence of their strict need to formalize all grades into numbers.

What I disliked the most was how you were evaluated from how much you know from day one. Since the assignments you turn in count the same throughout the semester, it doesn't matter if you master the course syllable by the end of the term if you didn't do well in the beginning. For instance I took a design sketching course with architecture and industrial design students, who obviously draw extraordinarily well. In the beginning of the course I would get around 60/100 points (barely passed) however my final assignments were 100/100 points, yet my final grade was just above 80 because it took me the first three months to learn. I had a similar experience with the CS1331 course, where I ended up getting almost max points in my last deliverables.

I must however also admit that I did throw myself into deep water by picking slightly more difficult and time-consuming courses than most.

On the positive aspect half of my classes were really good. Particularly LMC3848, LMC3406, LMC3705 and CS1331. In spite of the latter two being unreasonably time-consuming.

On a last note, I did do extremely well at Georgia Tech, with a GPA around 3.5. But regardless of that I did not like it at all.

Social
Socially it was mixed. I did not spend too long getting adapted to Americans and most of them seemed to like me a lot. It was however weird to experience how differently they interacted compared to us Danes and how different a view they had on alcohol. I was also stunned by how common drugs were. I got some very good friends while at Tech. One of my most difficult things to overcome was how the other Tech students rarely spoke or reflected upon more serious matter. If the chat wasn't about school, money or parties the chain would often snap and they would not know what to think or do, because they've never really been forced to think or act as an individual. Even at
university they don’t even have to cook, have a job or any other outside-of-school doings/investments.

Some of my best social experiences I had in the I-house, which I only just discovered on campus a month into second semester. The people in the I-house seemed much more balanced and introspective and I enjoyed the time I spend there unbelievably much. If I were to do it again I would have stayed there throughout at least one semester.

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

I wanted to try something new. When I applied I was in a very adventurous mood and I had everything going for me. So I figured an exchange would be a way for me to reach a new height. Additionally I wanted to get an actual insight in what American culture and people were truly like. And I must surely say I did get an insight and it’s way off from what I expected.

I wouldn’t however say the trip met my expectations. It was by far the most physically and mentally challenging year of my life. And I would have not done it if I knew what it involved, but I don’t regret doing it.

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?

What I liked the most about the academics of Tech is that it is much more practical than ITU. Now I have realized that I am much more interested in doing practical things than I am in doing academic research for instance – that I’m very happy for. In that regard I’ve also learned a lot of practical skills that I’m proud to have developed – among these are video production, java programming, sketching and graphics design.

Arranging your stay

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

A short description can not be provided. It was tedious. As Milos and Johnni probably have already mentioned, we did not know what courses we could ACTUALLY pick before the very day we show up at the introductory orientation. We then had to pick five courses out of seven – and only two of these courses we could pick were remotely relevant to our studies. The reason for this was both that we had not been able to sign-up for courses digitally prior to our arrival and also that we were not enrolled as CM-students (who can apply for CM-relevant classes) but merely as exchange students (Who can literally apply to no classes without an advisor manually overloading their permission) (THIS HAS TO GET FIXED FOR FUTURE EXCHANGE STUDENTS!)

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?
Studyguide was useful. Then I also contacted some GA-tech students and exchange students through GAtech reddit. A skype conversation with a German exchange student helped me figure which housing I should apply for.

**How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?**

Read above.

**Expenses and Financing**

**Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad**

The oncampus-housing is unreasonably expensive (Approximately 5.500 DKK a month during fall semester and 7.000 DKK a month during spring semester) for a tiny room in a 5 man apartment.

Apart from that everything else is pretty much Danish prices:
- Lunch will be 8 USD for a Sandwich
- Pizza for dinner will be 10-14 USD
- ½kg of pasta is 1.89 USD
- ½kg of meat is 8 USD.

Alcohol, chips, candy and sodas however are super cheap, which leads to some fun nights out!

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

I contacted approximately 30 scholarship-providers. Unfortunately most of the scholarships were already granted by the time I received my exchange acceptance.

**Recommendations for other students:**

Make sure you save up a few thousands before leaving – otherwise you wont enjoy your stay!