IT University Travel Report

Host University: Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Study Programme at IT University: Software development and technology, software engineering track

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad: study abroad

Courses studied abroad:
1) Data mining, neural networks, and genetic programming
2) Concurrent programming
3) Cloud computing
4) Security Engineering

Exchange Period: semester (autumn/spring) autumn year 2014

Your stay abroad

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

Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) is very scientific research oriented University. For example, we did not have any books, but rather were introduced to studying from scientific articles. This approach is extremely beneficial for obtaining a bleeding edge knowledge, as books in IT area become outdated as soon as they are published. That's because the industry is moving forward very rapidly. The academic style was simply different, we were introduced to a lot of bleeding edge concepts, including the research topics of our processors. For example, in the data mining course we were studying genetic programming and swarm intelligence - particle swarm optimisation.

The variety of courses was very big, and was one of the main reasons to go abroad to Victoria University of Wellington. I managed to find 3 of 4 courses that were a good match for the ones I needed to take in ITU.

The campus life was quit rich, for example we had different trips organised by an international group, as well as dinners and parties.

Unfortunately, there were several problems I experienced in VUW. For example, not all professors were prepared for exchanged students. So it was a bit problematic to figure out what was required from me, especially for essays and other writings. When I got used to their requirements and style, things became much more smooth and pleasantful.

Nevertheless, the communication with professors was generally easy and they were willing
to help and discuss concepts outside of their working hours. For example, we talked about a future of artificial intelligence, what are the ‘hottest’ machine learning algorithms, what are potential applications of genetic programming, etc. This was very important for me as it built a good vibe and a feeling of being involved into something more than just a course.

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

I always wanted to go abroad somewhere far away and gain some different knowledge and experience non-european culture. One could argue that New Zealand has inherited the european culture due to historical reasons, but it has no doubt a very special cultural shades brought by native tribes (Maori). The knowledge I got was very important for me, as I realised what I want to do for my Master thesis and in a future carrier.

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?

Now I see that getting bleeding edge knowledge is very important in my area, and reading books might not the best idea. Plus, I got some knowledge that I could not get in ITU otherwise. As I noticed previously, now I have a more concrete understanding of my future carrier’s area. In addition, during my stay I launch a startup web service for backpackers, which is available at [www.trip2gether.co.nz](http://www.trip2gether.co.nz) and was a good learning experience.

Arranging your stay

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

Rikke Udstrup helped me to prepare documents and afterwards I got a response from VUW with some a conditional acceptance, which took a while to get around. Eventually, after several weeks of communication with VUW I got an ordinary acceptance letter and finally applied for a visa. The reason why I got a conditional acceptance with comments, such as that I need to pass IELTS or similar, was because at that time VUW was not a partner of ITU. Hence, they did not know what to expect. I also believe that the next time this problem will not arise.

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?

I used the main website of VUW. It was helpful to consult with exchange programs coordinators in ITU and VUW. Despite I think everything went smooth, next time I would try to get access to a programs coordinator in the University I’m going to. Otherwise, it’s a bit hard to choose right courses.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?
I filled in a form on the website provided by VUW and they have found me a place to stay. I did not have to worry about it.

**Expenses and Financing**

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

It’s more expensive to live in Wellington than in Copenhagen, I would say something like 20%-25%. For example, for my accommodation I payed around 225$/week, that is something like 4500 DKK/m. The food is also quit expensive, especially fruits, vegetables, meet, milk products. So on average, for the basic needs I was spending around 10 000 DKK/m. In addition, travelling around New Zealand is also not very cheap. For example, I bought a 10 days tour to South Island and It cost me around 15 000 excluding food.

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

no

**Recommendations for other students:**

Take a water-proof jacket, it’s a bit windy in Wellington. Sunglasses are mandatory to have during the summer time, as sun is very aggressive. Go to South Island, it’s one of a kind.