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:
AUT – Auckland University of Technology

Study Programme at IT University:
DMD - Digital Media and Design

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad:
Study Abroad

Exchange Courses studied abroad:
Visual Communication in Business
Entrepreneurship and Innovation
Academic Communication: Conventions and Expectations
Integrative Practice

Exchange Period: semester autumn

2016
Your stay abroad

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

Best choice I have ever made! Studying at Auckland University of Technology was definitely different from ITU. I had four papers throughout the semester, and all of them were classes of maximum 25 students. This gave me a great opportunity to actively participate during lectures, especially when considering you sitting in class with New Zealanders who speak fluent English, it is much easier to gain confidence in a small class where you quickly get to know your classmates. I found the courses to be easier than at ITU. We did not have much reading or writing to do during the semester. Though, I really liked how they arrange the exams. Throughout the semester, we worked in groups or individual on approximately 2-3 projects, which each were accountable for a percentage of the final grade. For example, one of the papers were divided into 15%, 15%, 30% and 40% while another paper divided the paper into a project of 40% and another of 60%. I did not have any oral exams and no big final assessment, which made the exam period a lot easier and not as stressful as at ITU. Another aspect is the importance of New Zealanders speaking fluent English which helped my English skills a lot, so I would definitely recommend a country which native language is English.

I had a great time studying at AUT, and the student apartments (WSA) has a huge role in making that happen. These apartments are located at a 2min walking distance from the university, which makes it really easy getting to and from classes. I ended up living with three internationals; two guys, one from Malaysia and the other from the U.S and a girl from Thailand. We spent a lot of time together in the apartment and at WSA in general. I would not say that the student apartments are nicely equipped or the kitchen is working fantastic, but in the end, it really did not matter when you surround yourself with the best people. My friends and I often used the facilities in the common area, either for cooking, watching a movie or playing pool - I found it difficult to have any alone time during my semester, because there always will be something to do, someone to talk to or somewhere to go! There was a limited amount of scheduled classes at AUT which gave me the opportunity to plan my days in favor of weekend roadtrips. It is easy and cheap to rent cars in New Zealand, and when Auckland is located in the center of the North Island, makes it easy to reach a lot of amazing and beautiful destinations within a weekend. The nature in New Zealand makes it all worth it! No matter where you go, you will uncover the most spectacular surroundings and will be amazed - Every time! I arranged my stay in New Zealand, so I would spent most weekends on roadtrips in the North Island. When that is being said, remember to enjoy and participate at WSA when you have the possibility. As I did not have any oral exams, my semester was finished the 18th of October and gave my plenty of time to travel a month on the South Island, which is an absolute must - If the North Island is going to impress you, just wait and see when you reach the south.
What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

Before I started at ITU, I knew already knew I wanted to study abroad. I had heard from friends what a great experience they have had, so I wanted to go as well. After two years at ITU with the same routines of classes four days a week, same environment and workplace, I was more than ready to try something else. At the same time, I love to travel and challenge myself - Therefore, I wanted to study in New Zealand, far away from everyone and everything I knew. When you have the opportunity to meet new people, explore the most amazing countries and still get your ECTS points, I cannot see why you would miss out on a chance like this?

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?

During my stay in New Zealand I have definitely improved my academic skill set. In my elective papers, we learned new approaches towards graphic design, which were valuable to me, since ITU does not offer this. In the mandatory papers, we did not learn a lot of new skills, but instead focused on the ones we have knowledge about. This has improved my basic writing skills in English, and a paper like this would have been even more valuable on my first semester at ITU. In addition, the examination in New Zealand is a great way to show your academic skills throughout the semester. You are able to work on different projects and be evaluated multiple times. If you get a low grade on one of the first projects, you are able to take that into consideration and take action to chance your grade on the future projects.

On a personal level, I became very confident during my stay. I have learned to trust myself and my skills. As an international student, it is important that you want to be social and spent time with the other students in order to get the best out of your exchange. The country itself taught me how different people can be. I have never met friendlier people than New Zealanders. They are really outgoing and always interested in knowing your story. They have a completely different mentality than the danes, which I fell in love with!
Arranging your stay

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

All I can remember is just a lot of paper work. When arranging my stay, I was in contact with both ITU and AUT. This was information about the very first application to the university, about the student apartments, about money transferring and visa. I found the process a bit difficult and confusing. In May I still did not know whether I was flying to New Zealand in July or not. You will face a lot of obstacles and waiting around for documents before proceeding to the next step. For example, we wanted to book our flight tickets months in advance to get the best and cheapest flight, but we had to wait for the final confirmation from AUT before we could book anything.

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

I did most of the work on my own and asked around if I had any problems. It is a good idea to see if you know anyone who has gone to the same country or university since they will have a lot of experience to share with you. I also kept in regular contact with SAP at ITU and EDU.

I had a friend who studied there the semester before, and I used her to gain a lot of information about the process. She succeeded in calming me down when I was stressing about documents, because she already had been through it all and knew that everything was going to be okay. I have been writing a ton of emails to Kenneth from AUT, who knew everything and at the same time answered very quickly.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

When I only were going to study one semester abroad, I wanted to get the most of it. Therefore, I wanted to stay in the center of it all - at the Wellesley Student Apartments in Auckland Central. I applied for the accommodation on the first day possible, because these apartments are very popular and are filled up quickly.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

New Zealand is a very expensive country. I thought that the prices in the supermarket would be similar to DKK, but especially on vegetables and meat (and a billion other things) it would be double or triple the price.

Because I got a spot from the ITU-programme, ITU paid the 10% of the tuition fee, which gave me 6000 DKK to pay myself. A return flight ticket cost me 10.500 DKK. Accommodation cost me 25.000 DKK. Other than that, we spent money on road trips and adventures. A good thing is, I did not spend any money on books this semester.

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

Yes, I applied for a lot of scholarships, but did not get any. It takes a lot of time to write all the necessary document and writing a budget, but I know a few who have gotten more than one scholarship, so it is definitely worth trying! It was easy for me to gather recommendation from lectures.

Recommendations for other students:
1) Make sure to apply for the WSA apartments the day they open for applications
2) Save up a lot of money - Because you do want to go travel when you study in New Zealand