

New Zealand; an unbelievable journey

General information

For my exchange I went to New Zealand. This is the country with the most wonderful nature imaginable, lots of sheep, Lord of the Rings and the All Blacks. I studied in Auckland at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) during the fall semester of my third bachelor year. The semester already begins in July but ends in November. This means that you will have to arrive early, but you do have plenty of time for traveling after the semester ends and the sun is shining. Above all, my exchange in New Zealand was an extremely valuable experience and I had the best time of my life!

Preparation

After being nominated for exchange at AUT there are a couple of things you need to do. Firstly you need to apply at the university in New Zealand. This can be done by filling in an application form and providing them with rather basic documents. The application can be submitted online, please note however that the deadline for doing so is already around the beginning of April.

When your application is accepted by AUT you will start receiving 'preparation notes' from the exchange coordinators. In these notes they inform you about your visa application, accommodation, insurance requirements, course selection and orientation events. The information outlined in these notes is very clear, and in case of any questions the exchange coordinators are eager to help you.

To get a student visa for New Zealand you need to apply online and then send your passport to the New Zealand visa centre in London. After processing your request, which can take a couple of weeks, they will send your passport back with the visa in it back to you.

Furthermore, you will need to arrange your housing. The option I would recommend is applying for a room in the Wellesley Student Apartments (WSA). These apartments are conveniently located in the centre of Auckland and only a 5 minute walk from the university. Besides, nearly all other exchange students choose to live there.

Arrival

After a flight of 28.5 hours I arrived at Auckland airport. From the airport I took the bus to the city. In one of the preparation notes there is detailed outline of which bus you should take and it brings you right next to the student apartments.

If you decide to stay at the student apartments you can opt to receive a linen package. Even though it is convenient to do so after a long flight, this package costs 120 NZD, whereas you can buy one for 30 NZD at the Warehouse, which is a 15 minute walk down Queen Street, the main street in Auckland.

Furthermore, the age restriction for buying alcohol is strictly enforced in New Zealand. You are only able to identify yourself with an international passport, New Zealand driver's license or an 18+ card. Hence, if

you do not want to have your passport with you every time you go out or buy alcohol. I would recommend requesting an 18+ card in one of your first weeks in Auckland.

A good way to meet other exchange students is through the orientation events organized by the university before the semester starts. During orientation you will get some general information about studying at AUT and get the chance to socialize.

Courses

In one of the preparation notes you will also be asked to choose the courses, or 'papers' as they call them in New Zealand, you want to take. You are required to do 4 courses, which are 7.5 ECTS each. Although you have to choose your courses in advance, you are able to switch in your first week of studying. In general, the pace of life in New Zealand is slower than in the Netherlands. You will also notice this while studying. The classes are relatively relaxed and the level of the courses is somewhat lower than what you are used to at the ESE. Moreover, the classes are much smaller than at the ESE, usually a maximum of 30 students in one classroom. This makes the classes more personal and more interactive. I choose the following courses:

Financial Risk Management

This course deals with financial derivatives such as options and futures. You learn to value these derivatives, in addition to hedging. The content builds upon the knowledge you gained with Finance 1 at the ESE. For this course there were interim online tests, a paper and a group presentation, and a final exam.

Managerial Finance

This course deals with capital budgeting, to assist capital investment decisions, and strategies for financing investment projects. The lectures were generally very slow and the content was not too different from prior courses at ESE. For this course there were two assignments and a final exam.

Business and Culture

This course relates to the theory and practice of cross-cultural interaction in business. That is, the importance of culture in international business, culture and corporate strategies, and advertising and culture across cultures. For this course there was one written assignment, one presentation, and a final exam.

International Business Environment

This course addresses the economic, socio-cultural, political, legal, financial, technological and ecological environments of international business. The lectures for this course were among the most interactive and interesting, also because the content was related to the current international business environment and what kind of challenges lie ahead in the near future. For this course there was one written paper on the international business environment of a specific country, one presentation, and a final exam.

Finances

A semester abroad in New Zealand is definitely not cheap, especially the flight and accommodation will be costly. For the cost of living much depends on the going exchange rate. During the time I was in New Zealand the exchange rate was more or less: 1 NZD = €0.60

Expenditures	(€)
Flight	1500
Accommodation	3400
Visa	220
Insurance	150
Costs of living	1500
Mobile phone	70
Travelling	2600
Total	9440

Your expenditures will mainly depend on the amount of travelling you are planning to do. Websites that give discounts on all sorts of activities are <http://bookme.co.nz/> and <http://grabone.co.nz/>. These websites are definitely worth checking out before booking an activity.

Daily Life

Auckland will not be the most beautiful city you will ever come across, to see truly beautiful landscapes you will have to get out of the city. Finding your way around the city centre is not that hard, as the centre itself is not that big. The kiwi's are all super friendly and always willing to help you if need be. Because New Zealand is in the southern hemisphere, it is winter when you arrive in July. In Auckland the winters are relatively soft, the average temperature is above 10°C, and it will get warmer over time.

During the semester there are lots of opportunities to discover the North Island of New Zealand during weekend trips. It is quite easy to rent a car and book a hostel, and some great places are only a few hours driving away. Some places to check out are, the pinnacles in Coromandel and Hot Water Beach, Hobbiton and skiing on the volcano Ruapehu. Next to that, there is a two-week mid-semester break at the beginning of November. With three other friends I travelled around the rest of the North Island, which was great fun! And because the semester already ends mid-November there is plenty of time to travel afterwards. I travelled around the South Island with three others in a camper van for four weeks. I saw some of the most beautiful sceneries and had the best time of my life. It was an experience never to forget!

Best regards,

Peter Vree