

## Study like a Kiwi,

By Martijn Cazemier

AUT Auckland CBD, that is where I have been studying the past half year, July 18<sup>th</sup> till November 12<sup>th</sup> 2016 to be exact. Auckland is with its 1.5 million inhabitants the biggest city of New Zealand a lot bigger than the capital Wellington. The islands of New Zealand are about as far away from home you can go for an exchange. You pay a significant price for moving to and living in the land of the Kiwi but the country has its way of paying you back in a meaningful way. The diversity and beauty of the country is the main reason to come to this place, there is some truly magnificent natural beauty to be found here. But if stunning nature doesn't move you, there are probably much better places to go to for you. New Zealand's second best feature is the kindness of its people, most people are not only polite but sincerely interested and caring. But New Zealand is not all sunshine, in the figurative as well as in the literal meaning of the world. The beer for example is really expensive, prices range from 5 to 12 NZD (3.5 to 8 euros) and you shouldn't expect much from New Zealand nightlife. And during my stay in NZ there wasn't too much sunshine to be honest. On arrival it was close to the peak of winter time on the southern hemisphere and I left the 12<sup>th</sup> of December which is twelve days into summer. So although there are many picture perfect beaches to be found close to Auckland we didn't get to enjoy them all too much. Also New Zealand is famous for having all four seasons in one day. One morning I went for a run along a beach near New Plymouth and finished off with a swim in the Tasman Sea. The afternoon of the same day I found myself walking through knee-deep snow on top of mount Taranaki whilst battling fierce snowfall and winds. You went from enjoying the shade provided by the palm trees on the sun filled beach to enjoying the shelter provided by the palm trees on top of the snowy mountains in less than 8 hours.

### *Preparation*

But before you can enjoy a carefree exchange there are the necessary preparations to be dealt with:

- Visa application
- Accommodation
- Insurance
- Choosing your courses

I remember it as an endless period of printing and filling in paperwork. Just make sure to take out enough time in your schedule for the preparation. What exactly you have to do is very straightforward, AUT will send you all the instructions via e-mail. Make sure you have a passport that is valid till at least six months after you intend to return to the Netherlands.

### *Accommodation*

There are three options for accommodation. You can choose one of the two University housing options WSA and Akoranga Village, or you can arrange something yourself. I stayed in the Wellesly Student Apartments (WSA) situated in the centre of the city, a two-minute walk from the city campus where all your courses will be. The two towers of WSA run 14 stories high into the Auckland sky. A lot of New Zealand students (also known as kiwis) live here as well as the majority of exchange students. It is a great place to make friends and hang out. Almost every night there was a pre-party in one of the apartments you could go to, especially Wine Wednesdays and weekends were popular nights. These pre-parties were usually more fun than the actual clubs and bars in town. By the way make sure to always bring your passport when going out as it is the only accepted proof that you are above the required entry and drinking age of 18. You can also get an 18 plus card when you are there in case you don't want to risk losing your passport.

The other accommodation option that is offered by the university is Akoranga Village on the North Shore Which is a lot further from the city centre and close to the north campus. On the North shore are some sports and nutrition classes but you cannot choose them when you are on exchange from the ESE unless you pay a lot of extra tuition fee at AUT. The North Campus accommodation is more isolated, there are less people and there is less going on there. Besides that, you would have to take the shuttlebus every morning to get to the city campus which is not very convenient.

In both Akoranga Village as well as WSA you all have your own room but you share an apartment (2 bathrooms, a kitchen, and spacy living room) with 4 others. As an exchange student you are given the chance to get a room in one of the two above mentioned accommodations with certainty. They reserve one for you, the only thing that you have to do is confirming the reservation in time if you are interested.

Arranging your own accommodation is a little more challenging and risky but it can be rewarding as well. There were for example three people who found a significantly cheaper apartment together in the city centre which was really small. But they were always hanging out in WSA so they got the best of the social life there too. Then there was also a big building close to WSA called UniLodge where a lot of exchange students together got a pretty sweet deal saving 100 dollars a week in rent, still the apartments there were a little more pricy then the ones in WSA. There were also people who stayed at host-families or sub-rented a room. But in general it is hard to find accommodation at all in Auckland let alone cheap accommodation.

### *Arrival*

Going into New Zealand you cannot bring any fruits or veggies or bio stuff including dirty sports equipment or shoes that can contaminate their bio environment. These requirements are not hard to meet but they should be taken seriously. The border security people are as opposed to for example their American colleagues very welcoming and kind, you can ask them anything you feel uncertain about.

I arrived early in the morning and got a mobile phone plan on the airport. You can choose one of the three providers 2degrees, spark, or Vodafone. From the airport I took the SkyBus to the city centre where I was welcomed and brought to my room by one of the RA's (resident assistants), the students who work at the student apartments.

### *Courses*

Although you study at the Auckland University of Technology you can only choose courses from the business faculty because the ESE just has a partnership with the business school. There is a variety of business courses to choose from, but in general the level of studies is a lot lower than what we are used to at the ESE, AUT is more what you would call a university of applied sciences. I chose 2 creative design courses, one entrepreneurship course, and a finance course. They all didn't give me any difficulties but I think I especially learned a lot from the creative courses and the entrepreneurship course. For these courses the emphasis was put on collaboration and self-reflection. Even though the intellectual level of the courses may not be of the highest level you still learn a lot and have an opportunity to develop yourself. These courses have helped me learn how to think rather than what to think.

### *Finances*

The exchange rate deteriorated a lot after the Brexit that has costed me about 10 percent ☹️.

kind of expense	NZD	EUR
<b>cost of living</b>		
application fee housing	150.00	92.97
meals (ma-do)	494.00	308.00
large room	6005.00	3692.00
other	4819.89	3200.67
<b>tickets and visum:</b>		
ticket korean-air		1243.21
ticket chch Sydney		156.00
application fee visum	270.00	164.36
<b>insurance</b>		
health insurance	310.00	192.32
<b>travelling and fun stuff:</b>		
travelling and fun stuff:	9446.39	6272.93
<b>total</b>	<b>21495.27</b>	<b>15322.46198</b>

In total I spend: 15333 euro.

Make sure you switch your student travel product off and ask for a financial compensation instead, this amounts to around 100 euros per month.

I got a New Zealand bank account at ASB which is free for students. It is not necessary but it is very convenient and a little cheaper than using a credit card for everything.

### *Daily life*

My daily life consisted of: lectures, gym, eating, hanging out with friends, planning fun stuff, going on trips in the weekends, going out, studying.

The semester is divided into 2 parts of 6 weeks with a 2 week break in the middle and 2 weeks of exams at the end. Halfway through the semester just before the 2-week mid-semester break I decided to buy a car with one of the other exchange students. This was one of the best decisions I made in NZ. It enabled us to go on trips with seven people every weekend and to go to the beach or one of the other beautiful places close to Auckland whenever we wanted. But if you want to know more about buying a car and the pros and cons you can contact me.

I would say don't spend too much time in the city try to get out into the beautiful country as much as possible.

I would just like to finish by saying that an exchange is a great experience, an opportunity and it has changed my life in many ways. I am sure that wherever you may end up going you will have a good time. But going on exchange also has some less beautiful sides. When you go home you have to say goodbye to people you have become really close to or even to your new girlfriend or boyfriend. Transitioning to different cultures broadens your perspective but it can also make you homesick. But overall it is just a great time having little to no responsibilities and a lot of time to just live life.