

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

Student Details

VUW degree(s)	Master of Landscape Architecture
Major(s)	Landscape Architecture
Exchange Institution	University of California Berkeley
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 2 2016

Finances

Detail your basic costs in New Zealand dollars. This will help future students plan their own budgets. (Enter your number rounded to the nearest dollar.)

Books	\$50 + materials
Accommodation	\$5694
Return Airfare	\$1,700
Local Transportation	\$0 free for Berkeley students
Meals	\$70 a week
Visa	\$480 + \$120 flights to Auckland for interview
Health & Insurance	\$2,706
Personal Spending	\$100 a week
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$216
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Berkeley has medical insurance which costs \$2000NZD Food, phone plans and internal travel was expensive. When traveling to National Parks there are entry fees. A lot of class trips where transport and materials had to be purchased came up.

How did your financial expenses compare to what you originally expected to spend?

I expected expenses to be much cheaper once I arrived than what they were and I would not of had enough money to do all the trips I did while I was there had I not gotten a part time job at the university.

By what means did you maintain your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, foreign bank account, travelers checks, etc)?

Got a US bank account once I started my job, would have been best to get it from the start, instead I just used my home bank card since my OneSmart was not accepted everywhere.

What financial advice would you give students attending the same university as you?

Plan to spend the same in USD as NZD regardless of exchange rate, i.e coffee typically \$4 in NZD will also be \$4 in USD

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
LA 103 Energy Fantasy and Form	English	LAND 421	19	3	Studio was very to Victoria, all work was hand done, with large focus on gardens and small scale projects. Very interesting to see how landscape was approached in such a different climate. Some lingo was different and imperial system was hard to understand.
LA 135 The Art of Landscape Drawing	English	Elective	11	4	Very relaxed and fun class, a lot of field trips and ended with figure drawing classes.
ENV 107 Design and Difference	Englsh	Elective	15	5	Very intense course with high expectations. Large amount of reading and intense discussion sessions ran by students. Very interesting though and eye opening. Great course.

Course Registration/Enrolment

Please describe the registration process at your host university. What kind of help was available?

Few exchange students to the faculty meant the coordinators knew you and would always help. I was placed in my studio course then had to sign up for my other courses as they opened through the phases process, if they are full you can still sign up and attend and hope other drop, if you approach the lecturer and say you are an exchange student they will generally let you in.

How successful were you in registering/enrolling for classes you wanted? What advice would you offer to

next year's exchange students about registration at your host university?

Not to panic if you do not have enough points of classes fill up, there are still classes available after the first phase it is easy to add and drop course once you start.

Do you have any advice for future students when choosing and applying for courses?

Make sure you get accepted into the ones you need to cross over and studio courses require prior acceptance.

Academic Experience

How did your academic experience differ from your time spend at Victoria? Did the academic experience meet your expectations?

It was very different, all hand done work, with very different approach to landscape. 100% worth the experience.

How did the style of teaching at your host university compare with that at VUW? How did the workload compare to what you would expect at VUW?

Undergraduate courses are run more like school where you do work in class, ungraded homework and must attend class, it was more relaxed, there was higher work load but lower expectations.

What would you recommend as an appropriate course load for other VUW students visiting your partner university? What specific courses would you recommend to visiting VUW students? Why?

Take less courses with higher points that way it will free up your schedule to plan trips away as you cannot miss more than two classes and there was no break until Thanksgiving.

What advice would you give VUW students about succeeding academically at your host university?

Have confidence in your work, everyone can be quite intimidating but they are no different or better than at Vic.

What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, and internet access at your host university?

A lot of places to study on campus, would recommend bringing own computer. Free printing is available at Student union building.

If you went to a country where English is not the native language, how did you prepare for this? Were there any intensive language courses provided by the host university?

Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Shared room homestay

What were the pros and cons of this form of accommodation?

Pros: It was nice to be in a home setting and be living with a local. I decided to roomshare with a girl also on exchange from the UK and we got along really well. Much cheaper than flatting and meant I had a room waiting for me and did not have to buy all the furniture and linen once I arrived.

Cons: It was not close to campus and so although buses were free and went directly to campus frequently, most people live on campus so it took an extra effort to be part of the campus life with everyone else.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Homestay

How early can you move into accommodation?

We select our move in date so we picked it but were not given the address until the weekend we moved in.

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities? How satisfied were you with the food?

We could use the kitchen ourselves, could have requested meals but opted to cook for ourselves due to cost and preference, it was wise but even supermarket food was expensive.

If you lived in off-campus housing, how easy was it to find? What should future VUW exchange students know about living off-campus?

I used the site USH it was good but little communication from them and they keep a large portion of the rent.

Do you have any tips of advice for future students when applying for accommodation?

Area is dangerous, if living off campus you will not be able to walk home a night if living on south side, further than Berkeley or Albany will be too inconvenient.

Personal & Cultural Connections

What was it like making friends? How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students?

People were very friendly and although I made more friends with international students, it was easy to make local friends.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange country/university?

It was a surprising large change and was a shock at first but only took a couple of weeks to settle in.

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? How would you recommend students to prepare for these differences?

People at service desks are polite but very unhelpful, allow a lot of time before classes start to get everything organized.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Everyone was very dedicated to campus life. Road trips and festive celebrations were a big part of US life.

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students?

Everyone is very polite and friendly and love that you are from New Zealand.

As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university? For students who are visible minorities in your host country? For students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered?

Very easy, Berkeley is known for how liberal it is and its progression with disabilities.

Did you face any issues regarding discrimination in your host country? What were they, and what advice would you give to future students?

No

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

More than you could think of, my friends and I took weekly Yoga and De-Cal courses (courses run by students) but mostly kept our timetables free for trips away.

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays?

Road trip around California (Yosemite, Tahoe, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbra, LA) spend days in SF seeing the Golden Gate Bridge, Sausalito, Muir Woods, Ocean Beach, Alcatraz. On break road trip to Las Vegas and Grand Canyon.

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus? Off-campus?

Visa did not permit off-campus work, quite a bit of on campus work is available, work at Cal-Dining is easy to get and you can start when you like and is extremely flexible around class.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I was only there for a semester so did not look into it.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Laptop
2	Backpack
3	Clothes for all weather
4	Raincoat
5	Travel pillow

5 pieces of useful advice would tell a VUW student going to your host university

1	Bring towel and toiletries so when you arrive after a long flight you don't have to go through the ordeal of finding supermarkets before you can freshen up.
2	Make the most of campus life and get involved where you can
3	Don't take class too seriously, most people there over worry but balancing class work at social life and travel was not too hard.
4	Find people to get on a family plan for your phone plan as they are much cheaper
5	Get a bank account and the app venom to make transferring money easy.

Top 5 Things to do

What are your 'Top 5 Things To Do' future VUW students at your host university or city/country?

1	Yosemite
2	Road Trip the Pacific Coast Highway to LA
3	Cycle the Golden Gate
4	Alcatraz
5	See a Cal football game

Personal Experience – write 1 paragraph about your exchange experience

My time at Berkeley was everything I had hoped for and so much more I did not expect. The University life was so much fun and the course work was so interesting and different to how it is approached at Vic. Berkeley was a great place to be situated for travelling around California to LA, the National Parks and over to Oregon and Nevada. I made the most amazing friends and have no regrets from my trip apart from not being able to extend for a year. Running the Golden Gate Half Marathon and Camping in Yosemite were two of many highlights.