

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

PLEASE TYPE THIS EVALUATION FORM & EMAIL IT TO VICTORIA ABROAD AS A WORD DOCUMENT

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Marine Biology and Environmental Science
Exchange Institution	University of California, San Diego
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1 2016

B: Finances

Please 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	\$200
Accommodation	\$10000
Return Airfare	\$2000
Local Transportation	FREE (with student ID)
Meals	Majority included in cost of accommodation. \$30 extra per week
Visa	\$500
Health & Insurance	\$500 travel insurance and \$1000 health insurance
Personal Spending	\$3000 including lots of travel
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$40 per month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	\$100 for Tuberculosis test

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

I spent more than anticipated on travel, however it was well worth it so it's best to set aside a decent amount of money to make the most of being there.

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

I opened up a chase bank account (there was a branch on campus) and did international bank transfers in chunks. I would recommend transferring larger amounts as there are fees on both ends of the transaction (about \$30).

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

In the first quarter I used the UC SHIP health insurance which was expensive (\$600USD approx.) but in the

second quarter I got a waiver for this health insurance by using ISO Student Health insurance which was a lot cheaper (\$200).

What was the average cost of a can of coke or coffee in your host country?

\$1.50 coke \$3.50 coffee

C: Visas & Insurance **Please note this information is recommended by VUW students & current at the time of their exchange. For all up-to-date visa information you must check with the embassy/consulate of your host university.*

Did you have to apply for a visa? If so, was it difficult? What was the process, how long did it take and how much did it cost?

It took a couple of months. You/your financial supporter needed to go to the bank to get proof you have enough money to sustain life over there, apply online (large application fee), go to Auckland for an interview, pay a SEVIS fee.

Do you have any advice for future students when applying for visas to your host country?

Make sure you follow instructions on exactly what you have to do otherwise it'll delay you by a while.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance? Or a particular insurance they recommended? If Yes, what was it and how much did it cost?

Mandatory Health insurance UC SHIP but I opted out for ISO Student Health Insurance

What insurance company did you use and would you recommend it to future students?

I opted out for ISO Student Health Insurance. I would recommend it due to the price however I didn't have any health issues over there so couldn't comment on the service

D: Academics at Host University

Which courses did you take while on exchange? Please rate the difficulty of each course (1-5, 1 = Very Easy & 5 = Extremely Difficult) and leave any comments you may have.

Course Title	Language of Instruction	VUW course equivalent or elective	VUW points/credits value	Rating (1-5)	Comments
VUW Trimester 1/YEAR					
Coastal Ecology	English	BIOL370/371	10	2	Really fun, only class work was a field trip every thursday
Introduction to Biological Oceanography	English	BIOL370/371	10	3	

Data analysis and inference	English	STAT392	10	3	
Calculus 10C	English	STAT392	10	4	Hadn't done calculus since high school so would be easy for someone who had done more calculus
Introduction to Earth and Environmental Science	English	ENVI314	10	1	
Undergraduate Research Project – BISP199	English	BIOL370/371	10	N/A	Made contact with a Coral Reef ecology laboratory and started volunteering with a PhD student, later was able to do this
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

In the application process you give a draft of what you would like to take. You are able to enroll in 11.5 credits in the first enrolment period (2 courses usually but not 3) and then however many else in the second enrolment period which was a couple of weeks after the first period

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?

I got into all the classes I wanted. Exchange students are one of the first to have their enrolment period so we get priority.

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

If you don't get into a course email the professor – they are very accommodating and they like exchange students. When getting waived from prerequisites, it is useful to use the virtual student advisor rather than

trying to email the professor directly (some take a while to reply)

Academic Experience

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

The professors were more friendly and approachable which was unexpected. The exams and tests were very laid back/less strict

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?

There was a relatively similar teaching style to at VUW. The workload was a lot easier than I expected.

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?

12 credits. I recommend doing field based courses such as Coastal Ecology as it gives you an opportunity to see the San Diego area

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

Even if you aren't sure about something, write it down/give it a go anyway as they give away points very easily.

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

The iconic Geisel library was a great place to study. I also enjoyed studying at MOM (middle of Muir). Internet access was good all around campus.

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?

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I-House which is a set of apartments with half exchange/international students and half domestic students.

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

Pros: Around lots of like-minded exchange students who are all keen to go on cool trips and make the most of their time there. One of the most social places on campus – domestic students all want to live there as it's very sought after accommodation. A really friendly community where you end up knowing everyone

Cons: NONE

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Definitely I-House. If you didn't get into I-House then I'd recommend still living on campus in The Village, Muir, Marshall or Revelle College

How early can you move into accommodation? I went in winter quarter and I could move in the weekend prior to the start of classes.

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

Living on campus you were obliged to choose a dining plan. Dining plans use 'dining dollars' so you buy a certain amount of these that can be spent in all of the dining hall/cafeterias and markets around campus. The food wasn't amazing but there was a lot more option than residence halls at VUW. The apartments I stayed in also had a kitchen so making your own food was easy however I found it more convenient to eat at the halls. I would recommend getting the cheapest dining plan, as there is an option for buying dining dollars from other people in spring quarter where you can get them for half price

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

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

Make a big effort on the I-house application as they're looking for people who are serious about getting in – it's worth it!

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

I-house made making friends very easy. I made a few local friends who were also in the I-house community and a few in my classes.

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

Not very difficult, the lifestyle is relatively similar to NZ. Even by the end of the exchange I found myself being stingy with tipping, as I wasn't used to it.

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

Just be prepared for people to mock your kiwi accent (but they love it).

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The relaxed lifestyle of living right by the beach

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

Everyone loved international students and was always really interested about 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?

There was definitely an LGBT association on campus, and everyone was very open-minded. I didn't notice anything that would prevent anyone with disabilities from having a great time.

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

None

G: 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?

There was Intramural sports (social sports), which you could get involved with – I didn't get involved but many of my friends played soccer. I didn't join any clubs and I didn't hear of many outstanding clubs that appealed to me.

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

Go to loads of national parks – my favourites were Zion and Yosemite. Renting a car is very easy and not too expensive when split between 5 people (also make friends with people who have cars). Go to Tijuana if you're under 21 for a night out. Head up to San Francisco for a long weekend. Spend a lot of time at Blacks beach (10 min walk from campus) but be warned that it is a nudist beach.

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

Plenty of work on campus working at the dining halls, rec center etc.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I volunteered at a biology laboratory, which was great to put on my CV. It was easy to get experience with professors if you just contact them

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	A few jumpers/sweatshirts (San Diego does have beautiful weather but there is a slight unexpected chill on occasion)
2	Swimming togs
3	Sleeping bag for trips away
4	Hiking boots
5	Sunglasses

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

1	Make the most of where you are in the world – it would cost a lot more to visit other places in the US once you leave
2	Don't stress about school work or grades – your experiences will give you more to talk about with future employers than grades
3	Make a very realistic budget
4	Be confident in meeting new people
5	Go to the beach lots

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Do Sake bombs at Sushi Ki
2	Road trip around California
3	Visit Mexico
4	Go to Lightning in a Bottle for a very unique festival experience
5	Eat a California burrito from a hole in the wall Mexican place in Downtown

H: Personal Experience

Please write one paragraph about your exchange experience. Plus, don't forget to submit some photos to the exchange office!!

I absolutely loved my exchange at UCSD. At first I was nervous, as I'd heard how it was known as UC Socially Dead – but my experience was quite the opposite. I made so many friends from all over the world, I-house is mainly to thank for this. At I-house there was such a unique community of people wanting to have as much fun as possible in the restricted period of time we had there. In I-house I found myself living a 5-30 second walk from all my closest friends which resulted in spontaneous nights partying and getting very little sleep. There were so many places 'close by' to visit on weekends away. The 7-hour drive from Wellington to Auckland may seem daunting but I found myself taking these journeys and longer rather frequently but road trips will become your new best friends. The inevitable car breakdowns and disasters that accompanied the weekend trips away only brought me closer to my new friends. One of my highlights was travelling down to Cabo San Lucas for a somewhat typical Spring Break experience. Traditional Mexican tacos will change your life. I can't express in words how grateful I am for this experience and strongly encourage others to do the same!



