

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 Arts
Major(s)	English Literature, History
Exchange Institution	Universidad de Chile
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester One, 2015

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	\$100
Accommodation	\$100 pw including all but food
Return Airfare	\$2200
Local Transportation	\$1.20 for metro or bus ride
Meals	\$45 pw
Visa	\$300
Health & Insurance	\$590
Personal Spending	\$5000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$30 a month for mobile. Internet included in rent.
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Taxis, Buses, Alcohol and Rent are considerably cheaper in Chile than in New Zealand. Supermarket shops were surprisingly expensive, much better to go to local markets.

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

I spent roughly what I budgeted to spend. After the first month or two I took less weekend trips and started shopping at the markets and this reduced costs.

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

Before you go to Chile head in to your bank and ask where you can withdraw money with extra fees in Chile. I'm with Westpac so I was able to withdraw money from ScotiaBank without extra charges. Try to get into a habit of going to a nearby ATM of a bank where you don't pay extra fees and withdrawing a reasonably large amount of cash each month. I got lazy and started getting money out fairly regularly from nearby ATM's and probably lost \$100-200.

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

Buy your lunch on campus. There are delicious, big meals for cheap in the cafeterias around the different campuses.

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

A coffee would be about \$4. If you want something other than Nescafe ask for "café de grano". A lot of places in Barrio Italia and Bellas Artes make genuine coffee but outside those places it can be pretty hard to find.

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?

I got a student visa. I began the application process in New Zealand a few months before I left to be safe. There's a lot of paperwork and photocopying to be done so the sooner you get on to it the better. The staff at the consulate are friendly and will have a chat with you about Chile. On the Chilean end of things you need to go first to the PDI and then to the Civil Registry. I struck it lucky and didn't have to wait around for long but some exchange students were in lines for hours so get there early if you can.

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

You need to decide between a student or tourist visa. The student visa costs a bit, and is somewhat complicated to get, but you're covered for the whole time. The tourist visa is the little slip of paper you get on arrival. It's effective for 90 days then you have to leave Chile and return. If you want to renew it, I know students who got by fine on the tourist visa, they just ended up taking a couple of weekend trips to Mendoza, but it could be a stress if you've got an essay due and one week left to renew it.

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?

No

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

STA. Straight forward to set up. Made no claims.

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					
VA-01-0258-1 Memoria, Historia y Identidad	SPANISH	HIST 100	20	3	Fair amount of work but interesting. Held in Jewish Institute of the Universidad de Chile
Literatura Hispanoamericana Contemporánea	SPANISH	ENGL300	20	4	Really interesting but fairly tough. Needed to submit two big essays.
Español para Extranjeros	SPANISH	SPAN 315	20	3	Spanish for Foreigners. Well taught and good way to get to know other students.
Acoso multilateral al cine de Raúl Ruiz	SPANISH	FILM 100	20	2	Relaxed paper on Chilean director Raul Ruiz.
Pueblos Indigenas de Chile	SPANISH	ANTH 100	20	2	Course on Chile's indigenous peoples. Professor is great.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Registration process at U. Chile is fairly shambolic. After the initial welcome at the university you'll have a course registration day where the staff from the international students office will try to help you register for the courses you want. There is a selection of general interest courses you can choose from called CFG's or you can try to apply for specific courses that relate to your degree (you need to get approval from the faculty that takes the paper for this).

After the registration day you should, in theory, be all signed up however most students needed to return to the office a couple of times to finally get things straight.

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 was only able to enroll in some of the classes I wanted due to clashes and uncertainties about workload. I initially didn't sign up to the Spanish for foreigners course, but after the first few weeks decided I could use some time dedicated to learning Spanish rather than just trying to keep up with classes. I was glad I took the course as it was really well taught and covered not only the language but lots of Chilean history and culture as well.

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

Relax, don't give yourself too big a workload and choose courses that seem interesting. The students who got the most out of their time at Universidad de Chile were the ones who worried less about getting the exact courses they needed for their degrees back home and instead focused on getting to know other students and improving their Spanish in fun courses. FEN, the faculty of economics, offers classes in salsa, athletics, photography etc. that any international student can take part in. I'd do one of those.

Academic Experience

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

I found the academic environment at my campus in U.Chile was considerably more relaxed and informal than at Victoria. Students saw the university as a place to study, but equally as a place to party, protest, socialize and practice their hobbies. A student's academic experience would vary from campus to campus however. The campus for economics, for example, is a modern, serious and efficient whereas the campus for Humanities – where I was – is much more colorful, run-down and political charged. Student's went on strike about the lack of affordable public education while I was there and my campus was "en paro" meaning classes were suspended for a month.

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?

Workload was less than at Vic. The teaching was similar. Professors in general were really friendly.

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?

I'd recommend taking no more than four papers. I took five, as many of my classes were only an hour and a half each week, but regretted it later as I couldn't spend as much time socializing and getting to know the city.

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

If your Spanish is anything like mine when I went over you'll need some kindly Chilean friends to look over your essays before you hand them in. I tried to work with other exchange students as much as possible when I was writing my essays and then I'd ask a Chilean friend to have a read and talk me through any mistakes. In saying that, don't freak out if your writing isn't perfect. The professors I had were all understanding and generous when it came to marks.

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

Facilities seemed okay, albeit a bit dated. I didn't study too much at the university as there was an awesome library, Café Literario, close to my flat.

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?

As mentioned, the 'Español para extranjeros' paper is worth a go if you're wanting to give your Spanish a bit of a boost while you're over in Chile. Otherwise, give yourself time, no matter what your Spanish is going to improve. The less you worry about making mistakes, and the more you ask questions about the language, the easier you'll find it. Try to flat with some Spanish speakers and speak with other exchange students in Spanish when you've got the energy.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Two different flats.

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

I stayed in two flats. The first was a massive 18 person flat with a mix a Chileans and exchange students. It was great for improving my Spanish and getting to know people but being in close quarters with a new bunch of people was hard work. Half way through my time I switched to a seven person flat with Chileans and two other extranjeros. It was more relaxed but everyone worked so we had different wants and schedules.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

If you are an independent person, or used to flatting, then I'd go ahead and flat. Take your time to decide on the place and if you can avoid signing up for a semester long contract then that's best.

Otherwise, you can stay with a family. I knew a few people that did this and they had varied experiences. For the most part they seemed to enjoy having a settled home to go back to, with cooked meals and a family environment. Some of them wanted more independence. Depends what kind of exchange your looking for.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Most international students move into a flat mid February.

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

Shopped at local market and supermarket and cooked at the flat.

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

It is fairly easy to find a flat in Santiago in February. Many of the flats available around this time are specifically geared towards exchange students. Most people use the site "CompartoDepto". You should be paying somewhere between 180,000-220,000clp for a nice room.

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

Take your time, ask as many questions about the places as you can, and don't be afraid to try out a place for a few days then move on if it isn't your style. I really enjoyed flatting with other international students, as you all have similar schedules and challenges and want to explore.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

There are lots of opportunities to make friends, especially in the first weeks of the exchange with all the orientation events and parties. Don't worry if some of the people you hang out with aren't exactly your type, all of the international students feel a bit out of place and try to make it work. I got to know a really great bunch of students from all over Europe and we would make dinners, have drinks and go out each week.

I was lucky enough to flat with Chileans so I got to know a few very well. The students at UChile are very friendly too but it's easy to not see them outside classes. In general Chileans are a friendly bunch and love to talk about their country and yours so if you put yourself out there even a little bit you'll get a good response.

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

I found the adjustment difficult at times. It wasn't so much the culture of Chile that I found it difficult to adjust to as the experience of living in a big city. Santiago is a city of 6 million and has a pace and stress to it which I hadn't come across in little Wellington. This meant I found stuff like catching the metro across town, waiting in massive lines and the constant hustle and bustle in the streets fairly exhausting at times. Santiago also spends much of the year shrouded in smog which can add to its big city grittiness.

However it is also a fantastic city with lots of wonderful parks and museums, a good transport system and a great nightlife. I guess the trick is not trying to do too much in a day, factoring in all the delays that come with a big city, and enjoying the good parts. Also feel free just to spend an afternoon watching Flight of the Conchords. You don't have to be immersing yourself in all things Chile 24-7.

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

See above.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I loved the engagement and energy of Chileans. There is a real desire in young people in Chile to fight for a better education and open up their society after the oppression of the Pinochet regime. There were lots of

marches and rallies during my time there and the University was shut down for a month when students went on strike. In comparison to New Zealand, Chile feels like a real political hotbed full of potential and change.

Chileans are also really friendly, especially when you're travelling around. I was adopted by multiple families, could hitch a ride whenever I needed to and never had someone who wasn't eager to point me in the right direction.

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

I received a really warm response in general. Students were more than happy to strike up conversations and work on projects with me and my professors were understanding about my Spanish and interested about back home.

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?

My faculty at UChile was fairly old, so there may be problems for wheelchair access. UChile is very accepting of LGBT students and there seemed to be a strong LGBT community in wider Santiago.

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

I faced no issues with discrimination. A lot of the female exchange students who I knew found the machismo attitude of many Chileans difficult at times. They had to put up with lots of comments and staring. Most made sure to go out in groups at night and figured out how to ignore any harassment as time went on.

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?

FEN – the faculty for economics – offers lots of papers in a whole range of extra-curricular activities. I'd recommend doing a salsa class of some type as lots of friends did that and then went out to clubs on the weekends and enjoyed it a lot.

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

Go to Valparaiso. It's an amazing port city full of street art, hippies and good clubs only a few hours from Santiago. I went three times. Cajon de Maipo is a valley a couple of hours from Santiago with rafting, camping and nature galore. In Santiago there's a bunch of cool neighbourhoods (barrios) to check out. My favourites were Bellas Artes, Bella Vista, Providencia and Barrio Yungay.

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

I didn't know any students doing work during their exchange.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

UChile has a number of volunteer and internship opportunities. I went to a low decile college in a nearby town and talked to students there. Others went up to the North of Chile to help out when there was a flood. Check in about what is on offer at the international students office.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Patience and a good sense of humor
2	An Adaptor
3	A good sleeping bag and shoes for hiking
4	A travel diary
5	A kindle

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

1	Chileans speak an odd form of Spanish. Don't freak out if you can't understand a thing to begin with.
2	Get to know other international students and take part in group activities when you can. It's nice to have a group of friends who are going through the same things that you are.
3	Get out of Santiago when you can. Chile's full of amazing spots outside the capital so take weekend trips and get out in to the country.
4	Have some big nights out. Chileans know how to party and can dance at least three times as well as your average kiwi. Bellavista has all the big clubs but check out Barrio Yungay for Salsa Clubs and raves.
5	Keep in touch with friends and family back home. Everything will feel much less extreme if you set up some weekly skypes, debrief and hear news from back home.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Take a weekend trip to Valparaiso.
2	Head North to Valle de Elqui to soak up the sun, star gaze and sip on some Pisco, Chile's national spirit, which is produced in the valley.
3	Read a book in one the Café Literarios. There are few cafes/libraries dotted around the cities parks where you get a coffee and read the paper.
4	Go for a stroll up Cerro Santa Lucia and Cerro San Cristobal. Santiago's two main hills are good places to get away from the hustle of the city and do a bit of exercise.
5	Check out Reserva Nacional Rio de los Cipreses. Rio de los Cipreses is a national reserve 3 hours south of Santiago near the town of Rancagua. I went camping there twice and had fantastic weekends both times.

H: Personal Experience

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

I found my exchange the most challenging six months of my life. Moving to a huge city where everyone speaks Spanish, and living with a whole bunch of new people really put me outside my comfort zone and forced me learn some resilience and rely on those around me. At times, I found it overwhelming, and wanted to be on the next plane back to Wellington. At other times however I felt so lucky to be improving my Spanish, coming to grips with such a different part of the world and meeting so many new people. The thing I value most from my exchange, and what helped me through the tough times I had, were the friends I made in Santiago. All the exchange students I became friends with were really open and supportive people, and we all made the experience work for each other. I think that exchanges can be really enriching experiences if you build a good group of friends, keep patting yourself on the back for doing something as courageous as flying off to some other part of the world for six months and take the good times with the bad.

