

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BsC
Major(s)	Environmental Studies and Development Studies
Exchange Institution	University of the South Pacific
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 1 and 2 2014

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	Included in fees
Accommodation	1470 each semester
Return Airfare	1200
Local Transportation	40cents bus, 5 dollars taxi
Meals	Dirt cheap fruit and vege, similarly prices dairy and meat
Visa	500
Health & Insurance	200
Personal Spending	2500 each semester
Communications (phone, etc.)	10nzd a month and 50nzd phone
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Mainly diving costs so from the certification to shark, turtle, normal reefs dives, manta ray dives etc. Also sky diving was expensive, and a lot of my money was spent on surfing trips, boat transfer are an expensive unpredicted cost on every trip you go on in Fiji. They get tourists with the boat transfer costs, but get to know locals because they will take you to the same place for 1/10 the price or even much less than that.

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

Much cheaper than what I expected

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

I had a kiwibank debit card but did also open a local bank account to reduce credit card costs

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

It is a lot cheaper than New Zealand but take savings for the more expensive touristy things you won't want to miss out on

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

\$3 coffee, \$2dollars

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?

Visa takes a long time so don't do it last minute but it wasn't difficult. It cost 500 and then 300 to extend it for 2nd semester.

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

Don't do it last minute and don't leave after it's expired, as exchange students do this and you get banned for a least a few years which can suck if you are planning to go back.

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?

Yeah insurance is already covered in your fees at USP. It was \$60

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

I also got southern cross travel health insurance. I would recommend covering your bases with insurance even though I was lucky enough not to have to use mine.

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					
GEO303 devl in the Pacific	ENG	GEOG316	20	3	Good field trip, quite easy course
GEO301 Biodiversity in the Pacific	ENG	GEOG300	20	5	Amazing reef and village fields trips, incredible lecturer (Randy Thaman)
LL116 Fijian language	ENG/FJN	Language 100	20	4	Very useful and fun, easy course
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

PL203 Pacific Politics	ENG	PUBL207	20		Very easy course but not very engaging
PD301 Urbanization issues	ENG	GEOG312	20	3	Average difficulty
DG100 Governance and leadership	ENG	POLI SCI 100 level	20		Very interesting and engaging, took as an extra and really enjoyed it

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Very easy, write the course you want, take to international office and thats it, very simple.

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?

Could do them all. Some others had clashes but the tutors and lecturers are very helpful when it happens.

Academic Experience

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

Much easier, but felt a lot more engaged in course than at Vic, in terms of knowing people in the classes and I think this was because of the incredible free field trips with geography

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?

Some teaching styles were a lot worse in terms of very slow or incredibly wordy and confusing lecture slides. While other lecturers were very good

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?

3 to 4, I would say 3 so you have more time to enjoy being there but they are alot easier so 4 is good too.

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

Shouldn't have a problem, the computers are quite bad and the Internet is unreliable however so take a laptop and buy an internet stick or assignments are alot harder to physically complete.

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

see above

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?

all courses in English

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

half year hostel, half year uni flat

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

cons were the rules were unreasonably strict between females and males, for example, they weren't allowed to be in the opposite genders buildings, and there are intense consequences if you are in the opposite sex's room. Pros is everyone is closer and its easier to hang out with your friends, and its very cheap.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Hostel based on price

How early can you move into accommodation?

0 week

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

Self catered

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

NA

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

be aware of the rules

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Fijians are extremely friendly and hospitable. If you branch out of the exchange group a bit and independently go to villages and meet locals, it will be the funnest and most memorable experience you have.

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

Very easy, didn't have culture shock or any difficulty with the culture

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

none

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Humor, kindness, hospitably, Fiji time attitude

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

Very well, constantly taken care of

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 trans gendered?

People can verbally discriminate against the LGBT community at times but are also very accepting at other times, I would say depends on the person but overall it's not an issue.

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

There are a lot of Indo-Fijians who harass white people when you are shopping or try to overcharge you but you learn very quickly how to stop this, and that is to tell them you live there and learn how to haggle.

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?

A sports team is a good idea, I did volleyball and netball.

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

Get out of Suva to the islands or hiking, diving, surfing, snorkeling, fishing, stay in villages etc

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

It's technically violating your student visa if you do any work even volunteering but a lot of the exchange students volunteer for NGOs

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

see above

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Many pairs of Togs
2	Mask and snorkel
3	Summer clothes, even if you are going in Winter (Fiji Winter is just like our Summer)
4	Some kiwi things to give to locals in villages

5 A laid back attitude

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

- 1 Dont waste your suitcase space with warm clothes, I wore a jumper maybe twice all year, and never jeans, you just don't need them.
- 2 Stay in the villages, it will be the most incredible experience you have
- 3 Dive, swim, Snorkel, Surf take advantage of the incredible untouched ocean and reef
- 4 Take pictures of normal day to day stuff, it seems normal at the time but when you look back you won't believe that was your day to day
- 5 Sit back and enjoy Fiji time and not having a care in the world

Top 5 Things to do

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

- 1 Taveuni
- 2 Beachhouse
- 3 Traps and the Traps hotdogs
- 4 Villages
- 5 Cheap beautifully fresh fruit and vege alllllll the time!!!

H: Personal Experience

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

Fiji changed me and my life in so many positive ways all of which I will hold on to forever, it gave me more than I ever could have wished for. The people are genuinely amazing and the way people with so little will give you everything and are endlessly cheerful really taught me about whats important in life. My experience in a developing country as a whole really fueled my passion in studying development studies. I can't wait to finish uni and travel more and meet even more incredible people and hopefully positively influence them even slightly as much as they do me. I had so many experiences I will never forget from diving cageless with hundred of sharks, to staying by myself in a rural village up in the mountains, to giving up on even trying to get reception and just living in the moment, to surfing at sunrise on a flawless reef, to being the only white person in almost every situation I was in, to becoming obsessed with new and exciting food. If you are unsure whether to go to Fiji or not let me tell you that if you do you wont regret it for a day.

