



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Bergen, Norway
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2 2022
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Marine science

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Paleoecology BIO250	English	GEOL263/272 - Paleoenvironments and Basin Evolution
Systematics and Evolution of Marine Invertebrates BIO232	English	MARI202 - Ecology and Biology of Marine Invertebrates
Ecology BIO201	English	ECOL211 - Ecology of Communities and Ecosystems

Total Otago credits gained: 54 points 72 points 108 points _____

Any comments about these papers?

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

I found the workload very similar to courses at Otago. All of my courses had a mixture of lectures and labs but each course was run very different. The BIO232 was condensed to 2 weeks of lectures and labs consecutively each day from 9am until 5pm (sometimes 6pm!) this was very challenging as I could only commit myself to that paper and the content was very heavy! This information however is clearly explained when you apply for courses and look up the course on the university website.

I loved BIO250 as the course was well run and not too difficult but difficult enough to be learning a lot, this course also involved a field day which was very fun. BIO201 was run more as group exercises and one individual essay. I didn't enjoy this paper as much and the exam was an oral exam which was very challenging and something new to me.

Accommodation

What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?

I stayed in the student accommodation offered by the university/Sammen housing. If I could do this exchange again I would not choose this. All exchange students are put into a place called Fantoft no matter what you apply for (unless your lucky) and you have to share a very small space with a stranger and this is too close for my liking. It was cool to be involved with exchange students who are in the same situation as you and are keen to adventure, but sharing a very small room with bunk beds was not for me. If you are staying for 2 semesters, I would recommend the accommodation however as you will get your own room.

Money matters

Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance

Flights to Europe are very expensive at the moment I spent around \$2,200NZD one way (however I stayed/stopped in Switzerland for a month then flew to Norway)

Accommodation was around \$600NZD a month including expenses (can change depending on winter or summer/autumn semester)

Visa costs about \$900NZD

I purchased the Student Safe Insurance which was \$655NZD for 183 days

Food in Norway was expensive, I never budgeted how much I spent weekly but would always look for deals and never once went out to a restaurant.

What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)

I would recommend the wise card which you can set up and organise in NZ which allows you to use foreign currency at a low exchange rate

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?

Yes, I had to apply once I received my acceptance letter from UiB. I followed the prompts on the Uib website, and this was easy to follow. I then had to fly to Auckland to physically hand them my passport to send to Australia as there is no Norwegian office in NZ.

This was very stressful for me as I only received my acceptance letter mid-June and I was planning to start my travels on the 1st of July, therefore time was tight for booking an appointment, flying to Auckland (in the middle of exams) and sending my passport away which only got back to me 2 days before I departed NZ! So I recommended considering this when applying... sadly you cannot apply for a visa until your acceptance letter has arrived however.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

No

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

UiB offered plenty of organised events and the city of Bergen held many public events in general. If you are into the outdoors there is BSI Friluft which offers awesome trips from hiking to kayaking and you can rent good quality outdoor gear for very cheap! I missed out on signing up for language courses but I would recommend them if you are staying for a year or are interested in the language. However Norwegians speak perfect English, they appreciate you learning basics about the language too.

What was the university/ city like?

I'm not much of a city person but I found Bergen quite a pleasant city to live in! public transport is amazing and you can purchase a semester ticket for all public transport in the city and there is no need for a car. Trains out of Bergen to the mountains are expensive but I found hitch hiking to be very safe and the Norwegians are very friendly! The university block where I spent my time (biology building) was very beautiful right beside the harbour, all of the facilities are very nice and well equipped. The museum is free for UiB students and well worth a visit!

Being there during the winter semester was tough in terms of weather (all of November was either grey or raining) but there were many night events and Christmas lights to bring up the mood. I only spent 2 weekends over the whole semester in Bergen itself otherwise I was out in the mountains.

Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

Norway has over 500 cabins in the mountains and coast I highly recommend staying in these as much as possible! Even if you aren't into hiking/tramping a lot of them are very accessible and some you don't even have to walk to. Imagine NZ's best huts and add a lot more character and cosy items such as couches and cushions! They are equipped with everything you need from utensils, pots, plates etc. to gas, firewood and duvets! If you plan to stay more than 2 nights in these cabins I recommend becoming a member of the DNT association and prices are heavily discounted. This is a good way to get out and actually see more of Norway. Join BSI Friluft if you want cheap gear to hire, an awesome opportunity to meet likeminded people and great outdoor adventures!

I recommend checking out Voss if your into Whitewater kayaking/rafting or adventure. There are student discounts available. If you want to stay active in the autumn semester I recommend buying the semester gym pass if your into that, it also has a sauna and rock climbing/bouldering gym (which is why I bought it)

Shop at Kiwi or coop supermarkets! Meny is the most expensive especially the one right beside Fantoft student accommodation.

Any tips for future students?

If you don't mind grey rainy weather the autumn semester is awesome! However I would recommend the winter semester if you like skiing and the days get brighter rather than darker... avoid eating out if you don't want to spend lots of money.

Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!

Gabby Bruce

University of Bergen, Norway. Semester 2, 2022

My overall experience in Norway was a hot, cold, freezing, snowy, rainy adventure! I chose Norway as a destination because of the amazing accessibility to the outdoors. Much like New Zealand, every weekend there was an adventure to be had whether it was multi day hiking, kayaking, rock climbing, glacier trips or back country skiing in winter, not to mention the incredible perk of seeing northern lights!

The university in Bergen was well equipped, very accommodating to exchange students and overall was a very enjoyable university experience. The Norwegian people are very kind and willing to lend a helpful hand and they love kiwis! I recommend the challenge of a non-English speaking country, I feel I gained valuable cultural knowledge from



Photo: enjoying my frozen eyelashes while out on a back country ski touring



Photo: while on a 3 day fjellski trip in the mountains we came across an amazing display of northern lights outside our small cabin!

many European countries as most exchange students were from Europe (I didn't meet a single kiwi or Australian).

I recommend joining outdoor clubs and meeting Norwegians outside of the exchange bubble because they are amazing people. Get out and see more countries too! It is very easy for kiwis to travel Europe and you can gain valuable insight to other countries perspectives and ways of living, I found this very inspiring. If I had some recommendations for Norway, always take a swim no matter where you are, hot, cold, raining or snowing, you never regret a swim! Climb the hills and mountains, venture out of Bergen and spend as many nights as you can in the cosy DNT cabins in the mountains! One last recommendation is to try Fjellski (pronounced fyellshi), this is the traditional Norwegian skiing/mountain travel, it is very fun and an awesome way to travel around the mountains in the snow!



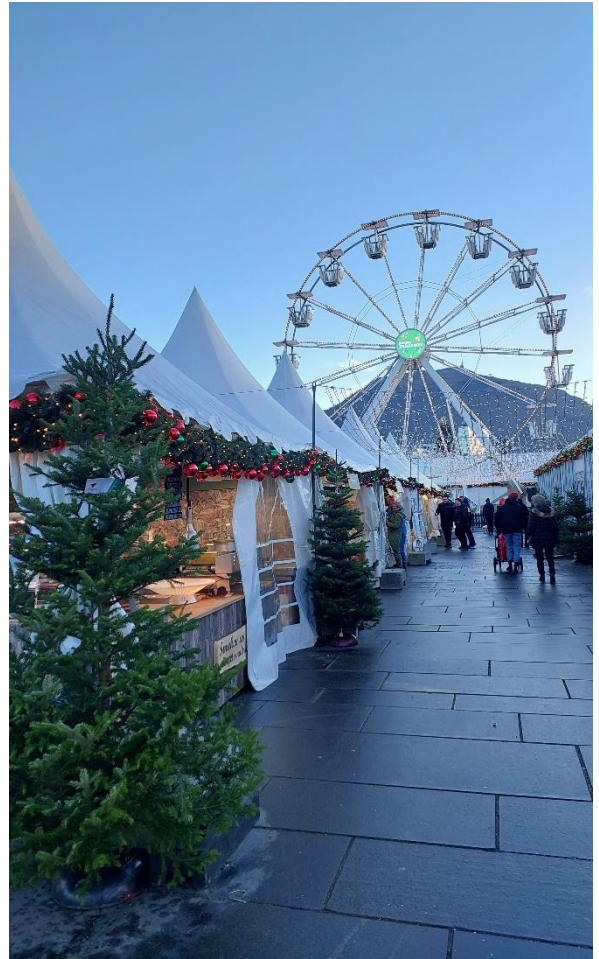
A solo hike to Nansenbu cabin 6hrs walk from a small town called Voss



Another beautiful hike, 3 days



A hike in winter with clear skies and -12degrees



Christmas market in Bergen, the time of day is 2pm and the sun is already gone...



Sunset beers watching the night lights of Bergen from Mt Ulreiken



Ski touring out the back of Finse, very cold -18 degrees down by the frozen lake!



Building an igloo beside our cabin to fill in the day after we decided to stay another night because the snow was so amazing



Summer hut trip in the warm weather



Fonnabu hytte trip with the Fonnabu glacier in the background which we explored and did some ice climbing and glacier exploring

Sea kayaking with my partner who came to visit in the Naeroyfjord

More ski touring around Finse with my friend Sam



A trip in late autumn in the mountains where all of our bottles froze and we were surprised with how cold it was!



Exploring Fonnabu glacier with my two friends

A refreshing swim on another cabin trip!



Northern lights on a multiday fjellski trip



Northern lights just 30min bus ride from my student accommodation in Bergen!