

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Spring semester 2016

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is consistently ranked within the top ten public universities in the United States. Academics aside UNC boasts to have some of the best college sports and cultural teams and will provide you with your typical “straight out of the movies” college experience. It was easily one of the most enjoyable semesters of my degree and without a doubt I would recommend anyone to go here!



Pictures around the UNC campus

Academics:

I study both chemistry and physiology at Otago (although at UNC there is no physiology department, so I did biology instead). At Chapel Hill, lab courses are run separate to the lecture classes (i.e. you can do the lectures but not the labs). All my classes were manageable but be prepared there are a lot of readings and homework tasks. The content wasn't difficult, and there are lots of term tests so as long as you keep on top of it you should do well. Of course this would depend on the papers you are doing though! My one recommendation is to triple check that you have the right pre requisites to sit certain papers, I had a couple of exchange friends who were doing classes that were far too difficult.

Accommodation:

I chose to live on North Campus in a hall called Morrison. I think it's fair to say that hostels (at least non-freshman dorms) are really different to that at Otago. Firstly you will often have a roommate, which for me was awesome and made my experience. As I am sure you can imagine living with someone else in such close contact can be challenging at some points but I loved it as my roommate and I got along really well. I chose to have an American roommate which was the easiest way to meet Americans and she introduced me to all her friends so I was quickly part of their friendship circle.

Apart from a roommate, halls are different in that there is no dining hall in each individual hall. Instead there are two dining rooms that you buy a certain number of meals for. The meals in general were good with often 3 options of meat and lots of vegetables but if nothing suited there was a salad and pasta bar so you could always find a meal that looked good. The meal plan is quite expensive though and so I would say if you are on a tight budget maybe look into buying a small meal plan. I would definitely recommend getting a meal plan though it's really social as it's an easy spot to meet up with everyone.

University life:

Chapel Hill has a really awesome group called EASE which is run by students and aims to help exchange students settle in. They organise a 'buddy' for you when you arrive who will pick you up from the airport and help you settle in which was so nice after quite a long flight over! EASE also organises heaps of activities throughout the semester so you can meet other exchange students, which I loved. Some of my best friends were from all over the world! And it's awesome as the other exchange students are facing the same challenges as you. The exchange students are also the ones who want to go out exploring in the weekends etc.



Spring Break in Puerto Rico and in Washington DC with exchange students from the UK, Ireland and Denmark.

BASKETBALL is massive at UNC (after all this is the University that Michael Jordan went to!) There is a masssssive basketball stadium and the games are just amazing. The American national anthem is sung at the start, there are cheerleaders and dancers, a pipe band and a half time show. It's honestly one of the coolest experiences ever. The student sections are crazy passionate and the chants and hand actions are something you won't see elsewhere. The basketball team was really good my semester and they made it to the final of March Madness. For weeks everyone was wearing Carolina blue and it's all anyone could talk about. And after any big game that the basketball team wins everyone storms Franklin st and chants and sings which was awesome to be a part of. Apart from basketball UNC is also big on American football, lacrosse and baseball, so check them out also. I joined a social flag football teams which I really enjoyed and there are heaps of other social teams and games you can be a part of. I would definitely recommend UNC if you enjoy watching sport and even to people that aren't interested you will definitely get wrapped up in it all and be chanting the songs when UNC wins.



The Dean Smith Centre and the students 'rushing' Franklin st after UNC beat Duke

Other activities around campus include the Holi Moli festival which was huge (approximately 2,000 people were part of it). One day there was free laser tag, and bubble football. There was also frequent A cappella concerts (the movie Pitch Perfect is based upon the Clef Hangers vs Lorelesis at UNC). There's heaps of clubs and groups that you can join from political groups (as the election is later this year) and volunteer groups. At the centre of Campus is an area known as the pit where every day there are lots of tables set up with clubs or fundraisers which you could join.

At UNC there are also many sororities and Fraternities to complete your American university experience. There are some awesome parties at the frats which I would recommend going to at some point.

The area:

The town of Chapel Hill is based upon the University so there is cheap food on the main St (Franklin St) and also some student bars. Chapel Hill is also within walking distance to Carrboro which is a cute more alternative town. Also via bus you can get to a mall or to Raleigh. But honestly there is so much in Chapel Hill itself you will never be bored.

North Carolina is part of the South, and it's quite different to NZ but I loved it. Southern hospitality is really a thing and everyone is super friendly and want to get to know you. Also southern food is amazing from shrimp and grits (which is like shrimps on porridge) to southern BBQ's you are in for a treat. It's also really interesting being in the South as you meet some people who are brought up completely differently to you and there are lots of interesting debates to be had that's for sure!

From Chapel Hill you can easily go away for the weekend to the mountains or the beach in North Carolina. Or you can go further afield to Savannah (Georgia), Charleston (South Carolina) or Washington D.C. I also went to Charlotte (home town of the Panthers) in NC for the weekend of the Super Bowl as the Carolina Panthers were playing which was a crazy weekend.

I honestly can't recommend UNC enough. From basketball to snow ball fights to frat parties there is something there for everyone and is truly an experience that I will treasure for ever.

