



Basic Information

LLB, BA (Spanish Major, Economics Minor) *** only completed Spanish Major on Exchange ***

Otago degree(s)	Major(s)
Host University PUC Chile	Semester & Year of Exchange: 2018, S1

ACADEMICS/ COURSE LOAD

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Spanish intensive (LET090P-1) – BEFORE SEMESTER, INTENSIVE COURSE	Spanish	SPAN332	18pt
Spanish Advanced (LET086P-1)	Spanish	SPAN332	18pt
Historia de la fotografia Chile (ESO2282-1)	Spanish	SPAN200	18pt
Arte, Cultura y Estetica Mapuche (ESE4441-1)	Spanish	SPAN300	18pt
Seminario de Cultura Chilena (IHI2370-2)	Spanish	SPAN300	18pt

Any comments about these papers?

I did the intensive Spanish course prior to the semester starting. This was one of the best things I could have done, because I met the majority of my best friends in this class. It was Monday-Friday 8.30am till 1pm, meaning you have the rest of the afternoon to explore the city and spend time with the people you meet (who you form a really close bond with). I already had my accom sorted, but a lot of the students used their down time to flat hunt. It was also a good chance to validate the visa, something you need to do within a certain period of time entering the country. I purely took this class to get my Spanish up to speed, as I had not studied Spanish for 2 years prior to coming to Chile. Therefore, I also did a Spanish grammar class during the semester (avanzado) in order to complete SPAN332 for my Spanish major. N.B. both papers cost \$500 USD each and are not covered by Otago fees. Also, the semester course is only worth 6 credits, as opposed to 10 (which all other papers are usually worth).

As for my semester papers, they were all internally assessed and had no exams. I believe this is the case for basically all arts faculties e.g. estetica, historia, letras, geografia...This is great if you want to travel at the end of the semester, because the papers generally finish around 21st of June (as opposed to 14 July as the calendar states). But it also means there is a lot of essays/projects/tests throughout the semester. They are also quite keen on group projects, so you will meet lots of Chileans!

Seminario de cultura is for extranjeros only. This is a really interesting class, and has four blocks (politics, economy, history) and each block has a different teacher followed by a test at the end. I would definitely recommend this. Even though it is for extranjeros, you will still improve your Spanish because it is taught in Spanish, and the teachers are really understanding if you need to miss a class or sit the test on another day because they realise you are on exchange and encourage you to get out and travel. There is no assistance requirements. There was another extranjero class called mujeres y sociedad which a lot of my friends took. They said it was not as enjoyable, but a similar sort of format.

Arte, cultura y estetica mapuche was really interesting and good to learn about the indigenous population. The teacher is the head of the faculty and can be quite a hard marker. She also takes compulsory attendance, so don't take this class if you want to travel and miss a couple of classes here and there. It was also held at Campus Oriente in Nuñoa which you need to get a bus to.

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

As I said above, I didn't have any exams (all my papers were internally assessed). Therefore, my semester finished a lot earlier than I anticipated which was great for travel! To begin with, this was quite overwhelming as I felt like I had tests or assignments due every week. But you learn to get the hang of things, and how much work you need to put in to get the grades that you want. The system is marked from 1-7, and you need 4 to pass which is very achievable.

I think the work load is probably comparable to Otago. Chileans are very relaxed, and I think Otago has set its students up with a really good work ethic that makes exchange quite easy!

However, BEWARE of Chilean Spanish. I really do not recommend studying at PUC if you do not have a good level of Spanish! They say level B2 or 4 semesters experience for a reason....Chilean Spanish is a whole different kettle of fish so be prepared to feel completely overwhelmed by the language. They speak very fast, they don't pronounce the ends of their words, and have a whole dictionary of slang or 'chilenismos'. I 100% recommend looking into the language thing before you go, even just a quick google search.

Another thing about PUC chile (or University in Chile in general) is be prepared for strikes and irregular classes. Almost every week I have had a class cancelled or tests changed, so there is no predictability in the schedule, you just have to go with the flow. This semester, the feminist movement has been huge and one of the universities has been on strike for 8 weeks now. They are called 'toma' – when the students take over the university and teachers are legally prohibited from entering. Luckily PUC has not been affected too much by the strikes and protests because it is a very reputable university, but it has been a problem for other students and could be something to consider. In saying this, the student protests have been incredibly interesting and it is inspiring to see students take a stand for what they feel passionate about!

ACCOMMODATION

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

The university do not offer accommodation, but they provide a list of recommendations on their website. Before I left, I joined lots of facebook groups like 'roommate and flat finder, Santiago'. I ended up booking a room with a company called FINDYOURPLACE before I embarked on my exchange. This was one of the many apartment companies targeted at students. Depending on the experience you are looking for, will totally determine the type of accommodation you want.

To begin with, my apartment with FINDYOURPLACE was comfortable and I was living with a mixture of really nice exchange students. However, it was extremely overpriced, quite far away from campus (in Nuñoa) and from the main areas of the city, and I was speaking English every day. There was also problems with parties, because everyone had different schedules so there was a party basically every night. Therefore, the company began to install cameras in the houses which was quite uncomfortable and put a damper on the experience.

After 2 months in the house, I decided to move into the city (close to the green metro line, parquet bustamente). I actually found the apartment through air bnb, and it changed my whole exchange experience. I lived with a lovely Chilean girl who was a kindergarten teacher, and this was incredible for my Spanish! We did crossfit together, and she showed me lots of Chilean local spots around the town! I also preferred living closer to the Providencia area, because a lot of my friends were living there and it is a lot more social! I must say, if you're in Chile for winter, find somewhere with a heater because it does get really cold.

Overall, accommodation completely comes down to what you prefer. There are certainly companies that are out to make a living off the exchange students, so be prepared to feel ripped off if you go with them. Although the most comfortable option would be to have something organised prior to your arrival, I would recommend arriving a few weeks earlier and finding something in person. You will get a better feel for the city and the area that you want to live in. In hindsight, this is what I wish I had done, and is what the majority of my friends did.

Areas I would recommend getting accommodation: Near the GREEN or RED metro line. The majority of my friends lived in Lastarria, Bella Vista, Santa Lucia (me), BellaVista. However, my friends that lived with host families lived in Los Condes/Tobalaba/La Reina which are more upmarket (for families). They are good locations too, but perhaps a bit more pricey and not so close to the fun attractions for students!

MONEY MATTERS

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

Transport:

- If you get a visa, you can get a student transport card. However, this takes up to 5 months to arrive, and the university do not recommend applying for it if you only have one semester, as it almost never arrives before your semester ends. Therefore, expect to pay 660+ for every metro ride/bus. It gets expensive, but it is the reality of living in a city!
- Uber is huge here, much cheaper than taxis and really safe
- Download MOVEIT – this app changed my life and is really helpful for using the buses

Accommodation:

- Depends where you live.
- Nuñoa area: this is more residential, so should be cheaper (around 250,000CLP a month)
- Providencia: 260,000-300,000 a month including bills.

Visa:

- I think I paid around 350 NZD for this. You also incur a small fee (around \$30nzd) to validate it when you arrive

Food:

- Eating in restaurants can vary – depending on the area and type of restaurant
- Eating outside of San Joaquin campus is reallllly cheap and delicious! If your classes are here, it is cheaper to eat lunch at uni than to try and pack a lunch
- Supermarkets can be quite expensive I found – lider, unimark and jumbo are the best
- Fruit and Veg – go to the markets! They are everywhere, but the best one is called 'La Vega', it is really cheap and fresh and an experience in itself!

Insurance:

- I went with southern cross travel insurance, comprehensive cover
- I think it was around \$1000 for me, but I am completing two semesters abroad

Flights:

- Remember that Chile is a big country, and a weekend is not usually long enough to travel. But you almost always need to get a flight somewhere, or a bus if you have time! These can be pricey, just depends on the time of the year etc.

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

- I used my visa debit and cash. There was a transaction fee every time I withdrew cash, so I usually took out large sums at a time.
- Also handy to have a credit card
- ** My bank was ANZ – I had no issues, I just told them of my travel plans before leaving. However, **I would highly recommend** getting an account with WESTPAC because they have a global ATM alliance so you can withdrawal without incurring a fee at SCOTIABANK

VISAS & INSURANCE

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

Yes, the university said that I needed a visa and because I was the first person to study in Chile for 4 or so years, I did not want to risk it. I remember the process being relatively straight forward. I filled out the documents and sent the application, along with my passport to the consulate of Chile in NZ. Then when you arrive in Chile, you have a certain amount of time to validate it. This can be quite a process, you need to go to two different offices. I recommend allocating 2 days to complete this, because the offices are located in different areas of Santiago, and they are only open till 2pm. Also because of the large amount of immigration in Chile, the ques are huge! The uni are quite helpful with this as all exchange students need to do it, so don't stress.

Once you get your visa validated, you will get a RUT number, which is useful for almost everything in Chile. E.g. getting a phone plan, gym membership, or general ID purposes.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, however they never checked it. Some of my friends didn't get a visa, and just relied on their tourist one. They had no problems at all, just had to leave the country for a weekend in order to renew the 90 days.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

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

The uni has heaps of activities but you need to sign up quite early in the semester. I signed up for Pilates with a friend. They had volleyball, crossfit, yoga...lots of options!

If you like to go to the gym, I would recommend getting a membership because the gym at the uni is nothing like Unipol – very small and limited capacity so you have to line up and wait to enter. I went with StarFitness which was 20,000CLP for a month (student pass).

What was the university/ city like?

The uni is awesome, depends what campus you are on! The majority of my classes were at San Joaquin, which is like a little city. I had one class at Campus Oriente, which is really hip and the people are super chill and down to earth. This is where all the protests petitions take place too. Then, Casa Central is a whole different vibe again!

I would also recommend signing up for Tandem too, it is a good chance to practice Spanish and meet more locals!

Santiago as a city is incredible. It grew on me so much, and the sunsets are amazing. During winter, the mountains are capped with snow, and there is always something to do being surrounded by the Andes. Some musts if you like hiking:

- ✓ Cerro manquehue
- ✓ Cerro manquehuito
- ✓ Augas de ramon
- ✓ Cerro san Cristobel
- ✓ Santa Lucia
- ✓ Cerro Pochoco



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

In terms of travel, I went to the following places:

- Pucon: stay at Chili kiwi hostel, climb volcano villarica. This town is known as the 'Queenstown of South America' – so I don't really need to say much more
- Torres del Paine, Patagonia: Do the W trek. This requires planning, but 100% worthwhile and the highlight of my exchange!
- Mendoza: I didn't go, but you can get a bus here and there is lots of vineyards. In my opinion, it sounded a lot like Central Otago, but you might have to go and find out for yourself!
- Cordoba: Heaps of fun and worth the trip across to Argentina! Lots of sightseeing, architecture and is a well-known university town.
- Valparaiso: You can go here for a day trip, or for the weekend. Has amazing nightlife, street art and character! This is an absolute must – I think I went to valpo 4 times in total!
- Viña del mar: Really close to Valparaiso and is close to the beach. Beautiful city!

- San Pedro de Atacama: I am going soon (I am still finishing my semester here at uni as I write this), but have heard it is an incredible place and better to arrive and book a tour company as opposed to booking in advance as it can be cheaper.
- Cajon de Maipo: This is a short bus ride out of Santiago and full of naturaleza (nature). Try and go in the winter, because the whole town is covered in snow and is incredible! You only need a day for this trip ☺

For Santiago as a city, there is a lot to do. As I mentioned earlier, there is lots of treks and day hikes to do which are beautiful and give you incredible views of the city. I must admit the smog is quite overwhelming, and is definitely noticeable here. But after rain, the view is incredible! Make sure you head up a cerro or to the top of the Costanera Centre after the rain to check out the skyline. Also take care doing the hikes and try avoid going early in the morning or at night as they are renowned for theft and robberies.

Bellas Artes is a really cool bohemian area of the city, and Bella Vista is cool for going out!

Costanera Centre – for shopping, it is the tallest building in Latin America

Los Condes – this is the very wealthy district of Santiago. Before I came to Santiago, I heard there was a really obvious distinction between the wealthy and the poor. But it was not until I visited Los Condes (e.g. Estación El Golf/Alcantara) that I noticed this.

Food:

This is an interesting one. Personally, I wouldn't say that the food in Chile is to die for. They pride themselves on Palta (avocado), Completos (basically a hot dog), Mayonnaise (there is a whole aisle in the supermarket dedicated to mayo), Chusacos (one of the 1023947193821894 different types of sandwiches you can buy), Schop (jug of beer), and papas (Hot Chips). The empanadas are pretty yum, the traditional one is called Pino.

You have to try a Pisco Sour and Terremoto – both traditional drinks. Especially if you have a sweet tooth, you will love them! The wine is also really good.

Any tips for future students?

General tips:

- I joined lots of Facebook groups that organise weekend trips. One group I joined was called 'trekking family' and it was really well priced and a no-brainer if you don't like the stress of organising things too much. My friends and I were generally the only foreigners on these trips too (they are usually just locals).
- GET WATSAPP – you will need it for literally everything.
- If you want to buy data (you won't need texts) I went with Entel. I tried WOM to begin with but it didn't work on my phone, but Entel was really good!
- Winter is cold, and heaters are basically non-existent – so take warm clothes

The exchange life is incredible, and you really just have to go and experience it for yourself! If you have any questions, feel free to add me on Facebook or ask the exchange dept for my email and I will be more than happy to help! I remember planning my exchange and feeling so confused!

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Overall, my exchange experience here in Santiago has been incredible. Everyone told me that going on exchange was a once in a lifetime, and it is true! I have made some of my best friends here, and cannot believe how much I have learnt in such a short period of time. I am thankful that I chose to embark on a two semester exchange, because one semester seriously is not enough and is over before you know it!

One thing I have learnt, is that almost everyone speaks English (especially the student population), so if you want to practice your Spanish you really need to go out of your way to do this. A good way to start is looking for accommodation with Spanish speakers, and avoiding the exchange company traps.

It is so important to put yourself out there and really make the most of every opportunity that comes your way! Learn to say yes, and you won't regret it! I am usually not an overly spontaneous person, however I can confidently say that my most crazy and memorable experiences here in Chile have come from the most unexpected encounters.

Finally, Chile is a super laid back country – people are always late and expect everything to be done the hard and long way. Also, everyone will tell you 'tomar cuidado', and there is a general impression that Chile is a very dangerous city. However I have not had one bad experience here, and think it is an amazing place! Living so far away in NZ, we are quite susceptible to the negative information we receive, but in reality, you just have to have your wits about you and you will be fine!



