



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	University of Bergen
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Semester 2, 2019
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	BSc
<b>Major(s)</b>	Geography & Psychology

### Academics/ course load

*Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?*

<b>Course title</b>	<b>Language of instruction</b>	<b>Otago equivalent</b>	<b>Otago credit value</b>
GEO217 – Hydrology, Ground Water and Geohazards	English	GEOG394/399	18 points
NOR-INTRO – Short Introductory Course in Norwegian Language and Culture	English	n/a	
SAS13 – Norwegian Culture and History	English	n/a	18 points

*Any comments about these papers?*

GEO217 was at the appropriate level for a 300-level physical geography paper.

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

I found the teaching style fairly similar – a mixture of teaching methods and assessment types. The workload seemed less than my workload at Otago.

### Accommodation

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

I stayed in student housing, through Sammen, in a shared apartment at Fantoft. This was an extremely affordable and social way of living. Rent was similar to what I pay in Dunedin, however I did have a roommate. This was completely worth it though, as I was able to shared my apartment

with 15 others, in a large living space with a modern kitchen. Fantoft was where I met most of my friends, and events were held at Klubb Fantoft 3-4 nights a week.

## Money matters

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

Norway was definitely an expensive country, but it was able to be made affordable (enough).

- Accommodation = \$520 per month
- Flights = difficult to say, as I didn't travel directly to Norway. I'd guess approx. \$2500 return.
- Visa = \$900-\$1000 (biggest, most unexpected ouch. Such a pricey visa)
- Food = \$60-\$80 pw (this is without eating out at all – this is to eat a pretty balanced diet at home)
- Insurance = approx. \$650

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

I had problems with accessing money without fees when I was in Norway, but just as I left TransferWise became available to kiwis – this is 100% your best way to avoid currency conversion fees. Norway is a cashless society so a TransferWise card will cover you for sure. If you are staying for longer than 6 months then you can apply for a bank account in Norway but I would probably still suggest that TransferWise is your best option.

## Visas & Insurance

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

Visa process was slightly hard work. I applied from Norway, as I left a few months before my semester actually started and I didn't have time to wait for a visa here after receiving my university acceptance. Either way, book an appointment through UDI as soon as you get your university acceptance. I'm not too sure of the process if you complete your visa in NZ, but you will have to go up to Auckland and then still go to the police for an ID card once in Bergen.

I applied online from NZ, and paid the application fee. Then I booked an appointment for the day after I arrived in Bergen. After the appointment then, I also had to follow up with another appointment to get my ID card. If possible, entering on an EU/UK passport would save a lot of hassle – you don't need to pay the visa fee and you don't need an ID card.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

No; I chose my own insurance from NZ.

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

At the beginning of the semester, organised activities were held by each department in an "O'week" style manner, but just for international students. Norwegian students acted as mentors and led groups of people who studied similar subjects to see the city, go for hikes, go to student's houses, have social events etc. This was a really cool way to meet locals! My accommodation also hosted events every

week; bingo, quiz nights, silent discos and so on. There were also lots of different clubs, particularly a lot of outdoor ones which were awesome being in such an active city. BSI friluft is a really cool tramping organisation that leads hikes for all age groups; definitely keep an eye for their information evening to go and have a listen. It was really easy to find clubs and societies to join, and it was an awesome way to meet new people.

Volunteering is also a really big part of Norwegian culture and throughout the semester I had so many opportunities to do so – the film festival and electronic music festival are two things I would definitely encourage students to get amongst as volunteers.

*What was the university/ city like?*

Bergen is an incredible city. It is surrounded by 7 mountains and the city weaves through the valleys around it. You can literally walk up some of the mountains from the city centre and be at the top in around an hour; this was a past time I definitely made the most of during the nicer days. Although Bergen is Norway's second largest city, it doesn't have the rush of a big city. It is super easy to get around using public transport, and the streets are cobbled in many areas giving it a small, old-town vibe. Although it is meant to be the rainiest city in Europe, I enjoyed some really lovely weather – we were still able to swim at the beach and found plenty of nice days for hikes, camping and barbeques. The people of Bergen are incredibly active people; if you go into the mountains in the weekend you will see many families out enjoying the nature together. In the summer there is an incredible fish market, and in November after Lysfesten (the light festival – don't miss it!) the Christmas market starts up and keeps the city bright when the days begin to get darker.

The University itself I found quite relaxed compared to Otago. There was less contact time for sure, and fewer assignments but it was expected that more reading was done in our own time. There were some great student facilities, with multiple gyms around the city and a pool at the student centre. Some of the faculties were a little far away from each other, and I know that some of my friends found it difficult to get between classes on time but my timetable was very relaxed so I had no problems. One of my favourite things about student life on campus was the Uni Bars. Each faculty had its own bar, and this was a really cool place to go out and meet other students, go to quiz nights or grab cheap drinks with friends.

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

- Kafé Spesial is one of the more affordable places to eat and it's super close to campus. Nice pizza, pasta and reasonably priced drinks!
- Take the ferry from the fish market to Askoy – as Bergen is situated on the harbour, there are lots of fjord cruises which leave from the city (which I would also recommend) but if you don't want to splash out, there is a public transport ferry which is free if you have the Skyss Pass (which you will most likely get). This is a nice way to see the city from a different perspective!
- Ice skating at Berghallen is free on weekdays during the winter season. It's a short walk from Sletten, which is only a few stops from Fantoft on the light rail.
- Walk up the mountains – just do it. Take advantage of every nice day to climb up and see this beautiful city.
- Definitely have a Norwegian Cabin experience. If you aren't much of a trumper, you can take the train to Hallingskeid station and there are DNT cabins only 200 metres from the station which you can stay in.

*Any tips for future students?*

Bergen is the kind of city that teaches you to make the most of every day, so I encourage you to do that. Get outside, soak up the nature, culture and all the different people that you will meet in your time away. And go to every information evening you hear about – they have free pizza.

## Overall Experience

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

**My exchange experience was, in every way, a life changing opportunity. I was tested in so many ways, and have come out the other side with a more open mind, incredible memories and friends all over the world. I arrived in Bergen in August, quickly becoming frustrated with having a roommate, overwhelmed by how expensive it all was and feeling a little isolated – as one of the only kiwis around. By the time I left in December I didn't want to leave. I made so many wonderful friends, and learnt so much about dealing with people and their differences. I have a much greater understanding of the way our backgrounds influence our beliefs, manner, habits and social interactions – not only have I learnt a lot about what other cultures are like, I learnt more about kiwi culture than I ever knew while living in New Zealand. I quickly found friends with the same motives as me; wanting to get outside and explore. I enjoyed hiking, fishing, ice skating, cooking and volunteering with new friends. I also had the chance to see so much of Europe, and to appreciate the wonderful things that the world has to offer. Norway is a place that will forever have a special place in my heart; along with the amazing people who I enjoyed my exchange with.**



