



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Colorado Boulder
Semester & Year of Exchange	Spring 2023
Otago degree(s)	BAppSci
Major(s)	Environmental Management

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
GEOG3402 Natural Hazards	English	GEOG200 Science
GEOG4321 Snow Hydrology	English	GEOG300 Science
GEOG4271 The Arctic Climate System	English	GEOG300 Science
MATH2510 Introduction to Statistics	English	STAT100

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

Any comments about these papers?

Both Snow Hydrology and The Arctic Climate System were awesome papers with links to nearby NASA and NOAA offices and the current research going on there.

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

The style of teaching is similar, with lectures and labs, however the workload is organized differently with a higher number of assignments spread out across the semester. This split up the workload rather than having only a handful of assignments worth more of the overall grade. As a serial procrastinator this suited my learning style really well!

Accommodation

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

I was lucky enough to find a relatively affordable apartment close to the university, however housing is tricky to find in Boulder as it is a very sought-after place to live. My advice is to start looking for housing as soon as possible.

Money matters

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

In the US rent is paid monthly, with our apartment costing \$1450 USD per month, split between two. This is really cheap for Boulder! Average seems to be more around \$2000 USD per month. Food is approximately what it costs in NZ, perhaps a little more. Eating out gets expensive as Colorado has high taxes along with the usual tipping culture. Insurance was done through StudentSafe which was around \$700NZD (extremely good value considering what the average American has to pay).

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

I used a company called WISE (previously transferwise), which gives you a debit card that you can use with minimal fees. Much better than just using your current bank card with their currency conversion and other fees. I did run into some issues as my WISE address had a NZ post code attached to it, if you can, get your american address validated to avoid this.

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes, although I previously had a J1 Visa so my interview was waived. My advice is look up what average processing times are, take the longest estimate and add at least 2 weeks to it. I had to rebook flights several times due to delays in the visa process! Also scrutinize all instructions and the different fees that need to be paid. US visas are no joke and are complicated.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, although the StudentSafe met the requirements (just).

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There were all manner of organised activities at CU Boulder, it's relatively large so there's plenty to choose from. They have a really great recreation center that has outdoor gear hire and organised trips. Skiing is awesome in Colorado, and there were free buses for students to a few ski resorts.

What was the university/ city like?

The university is great, very clean. As my courses were mostly within the geography realm I was generally in one part of the campus. The campus is easy to navigate and they keep on top of snow removal, important in the winter! The city is great, not big enough to create traffic headaches but still has everything you need. Similar to Dunedin in that regard, and felt safe.

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

Definitely check out the nearby flatirons and all the trails there, although careful in winter as ice builds up everywhere. Nearby Eldora ski resort is the closest skiing (45min drive) and is on the Ikon pass (which I would recommend getting if you plan on skiing, CU Boulder freeride club offers huge discounts to students on the pass, and it lets you ski all over the US!). There's an upscale food court in downtown Boulder with a rooftop seating area/bar which is pretty sweet.

Any tips for future students?

It gets cold! The coldest I biked to class was -19C, so bring warm clothing, ski gloves etc. On the subject of bikes, Boulder is one of the most bikeable cities I have ever been in. They even plow the bike paths before they plow the roads when it snows! So if you can, find a cheap bike to get around on. There is a bicycle co-op selling used bikes. Alternatively there is an electric bike share program that is free for students, although it's often in high demand so you might not always find a bike to ride.

Overall Experience

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

Overall CU Boulder is an awesome spot to go on exchange, especially if you enjoy the outdoors! It has a safe and inclusive feel, the city is easy to navigate and is a very happening place. I particularly enjoyed the easy access to skiing every weekend, and the ability to easily bike everywhere around town was incredible. The academic staff are top notch, with many of my lecturers on the cutting edge of their field of research which is fairly exciting to be around and learn from. If you're considering an exchange at CU Boulder, do it!

