

**University of California at Berkeley**  
**Semester One, 2017 (spring semester)**

**Bachelor of Commerce – Marketing/Management (double major)**  
**Bachelor of Science – Psychology (major) Economics (minor)**

**Accommodation:**

I was very relaxed before heading over to the states on exchange. I initially had a look through the Berkeley Accommodation Facebook page and found a triple room for \$500 USD a month, which is considered pretty cheap in Berkeley. This was the plan from about two months ahead of the exchange, before going travelling. On arrival, however, the place ended up being pretty sketchy (with a girl living on the couch in the lounge) and nowhere near what had been promised over the internet. The whole deal was a bit of a shambles and so I decided to move on from there pretty quickly (never signed a contract until seeing the place).

Luckily, I googled “housing in Berkeley” and the first place to pop up was a double in the Crew house for \$700 USD a month. This place was pretty sweet, being right next to the business school on campus. It was an athletic house, with 24 people in total living there, mostly (12) Berkeley students on the Crew team. It had an epic view, huge kitchen and utilities all included as part of the bill.

The biggest thing with accommodation is having a good idea of what you are getting into. Places get snapped up pretty early on, but it is still possible to find on campus housing throughout the semester.



### **Money Matters:**

California, in general, is a pretty expensive place to live, both in terms of living and eating. Find a place early on that is cheap and you will be fine. Flats/Apartments are generally a lot better than what you see in the North Dunedin Slums. Definitely take extra budget over to smash on all the activities and travel you could ask for.

I spent \$4,000 NZD on housing and \$1,500 NZD on food while in Berkeley, but it was the travel and activities that killed the budget (also a campus bar that goes by the name of KIPS aka the starters of Berkeley).

Take another \$5,000 NZD to whack about on the finer things in life.

### **Academics/Course Load:**

Berkeley is known for being a challenging school. Compared to Otago, the courses required a vastly increased work rate in the form of mandatory attendance for classes (they actually take role) and weekly assignments which would constantly be asking for word count to be churned out.



I was taking classes in the HAAS School of Business and it was super competitive. All of the students are constantly trying to “beat the curve”, or score higher than the average grade, as the results are curved to a fixed distribution.

I don’t think that the classes were necessarily any harder, however, in that the level of learning was similar to what is here in Otago. Signing up for classes early on CalCentral is a huge factor – and if you don’t make it into classes, then make sure that you still add them and attend the first week as a waitlist student. Most professors will bump you up the list if you have a word (just mention that you are a senior back home and they will give you preferential entry over non-haas students).

## Transportation:

I was lucky in that I was living on campus, so transport wasn't an issue. Your student ID doubles as a pass for all AC-transit – so you get free buses in the Berkeley area and across the bay into San Francisco. There is also the BART (Bay Area Rail Transport) which you can take across the bay into the big smoke and also to and from the Airport for any flights.





If you are flying in America, it is a good idea to go with United Airlines. The best thing to do is make sure you book a day in advance of when you need to actually get there, turn up at the airport and they will have overbooked and be asking for volunteers to catch the next flight (make sure to volunteer). I did this on the way to Mexico and ended up getting \$700 USD in flight credit, a night stay in a hotel and \$50 USD to spend at the airport. This cost me 12 hours in Mexico but let me fly across the country a few times free of charge.

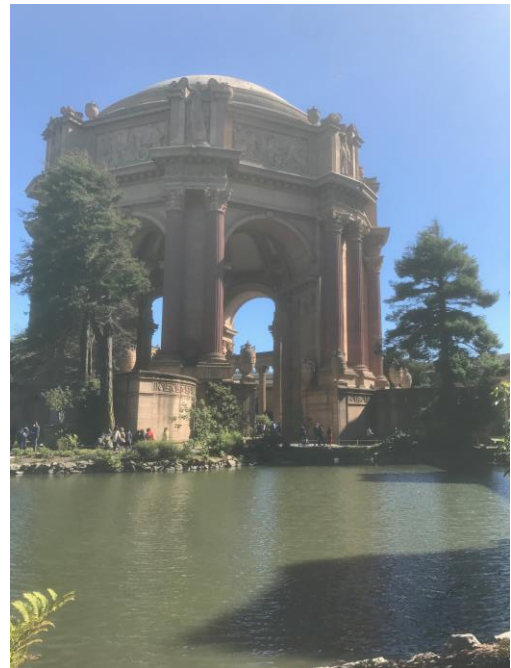
### **Weather:**

The Bay Area is pretty warm compared to Dunedin at the same time of year, it doesn't get too ridiculous in the winter in that you might get a bit of rain – but by the time spring rolls in you will start to see some good heat. I came home with a Jandal tan at the end of it all.

### **Eating:**

I got myself 100 swipes at the I-House for something like \$800 USD. This paid for me to have lunch and dinner every day if I wanted it at the I-House. I made friends with a few I-House residents and they were always happy to swipe me in for meals too (they have more swipes than they need).

I would buy breakfast in bulk from Costco or the necessities from Trader Joes (also does an epic \$3.99 bottle of wine).



## Things to Do and Places to See:

There is so much to see and do in California! Whether it's going down to So Cal for some of the spring music festivals, hiking through Yosemite or Yellowstone, visiting the tourist traps in San Francisco, or heading to the Silicon Valley to say giddy to Mark at Facebook HQ. On campus, there are some epic food and drink spots in Artichokes Pizza, Triple Rock Brewery and Gather. You can hike up the fire trails for a mint view in the afternoon and climb about on Indian Rock. The campanile on campus has a little elevator that takes you to the top for a nice view of the bay area, or you can go up to the Big C and catch the sunset. The school sports teams are a huge part of campus culture too, and for just \$10 you can see them go up against some of the biggest schools in the nation (would recommend the Stanford rivalry game).

Off Campus, you have the Golden State Warriors and San Francisco Giants to get behind. Tickets can be picked up pretty cheaply on StubHub on the day of the game. Don't be afraid to grab a rental car at any stage and have a look around Napa Valley, which rivals Central Otago in some of the reds it produces.

I can't stress enough just how good the national parks in the US are! Definitely get amongst the big ones in California, but don't be afraid to venture out and have a look at some of the others too. I would recommend getting to Zion National Park at some stage and having a look at Angel's Landing and The Narrows (two of the most epic day walks you will ever do).

While you are in that neck of the woods, it is a great idea to see some other spots in North America. Get ready to head to Mexico or Hawaii or some other tropical destination for Spring Break. American students are going nuts and it is exactly like what you see in the movies. If you have time before the exchange, be sure to make it up to Canada to get some of the best snow you will ever see.

