

University of East Anglia Semester One 2017

Bachelor of Arts (History)/ Bachelor of Laws

Going on exchange is one of the most worthwhile experiences you will have whilst studying at Otago. UEA was not my first pick of universities to attend in the UK, but during my time in Norwich I learnt that in the end, it's not the university or city which you end up in but the people you meet and experiences you have.

Logistics

Signing up for an exchange is a daunting experience and often it feels like you're doing the whole process on your own. The year I applied, a lot of the processes were being changed from the Otago exchange officers handling the paperwork to the student doing the majority of the work. It's pretty tough to manage signing up for courses and accommodation at UEA as most of the processes are the same as actually signing up for fulltime study at UEA, writing a statement and applying for accommodation along with first years.

I had major issues getting information about a visa for the UK and had to ring the UK Embassy, email the UK immigration offices and talk to people in NZ as well. I got a short-term study visa which is available for 6 months whilst studying. You don't need to pay for it or get it in advance as you can just tell immigration when you arrive in the UK that you are studying and need a study visa (make sure you have your proof of study etc.).

Accommodation

I chose to live in university accommodation. This is definitely the more expensive choice but it was recommended in exchange reviews and seemed like the easiest option when there was so much else to plan. It also took some of the stress out of arriving in Norwich, as often you don't find a flat in England until after you arrive.

Similar to Otago you are able to rank your preferences of university accommodation at UEA. I was put in Constable Terrace: campus ensuite accommodation. It was set out as dozens of flats in the same building, with 10 ensuite bedrooms sharing a kitchen/ lounge. This means it is essentially flatting with the conveniences of having power, internet and cleaning all set up for you. I was a 4th year student when I went on exchange so Constable Terrace was perfect for me as it was slightly away from the noise of the Square, bars and LCR (the University nightclub) but still close enough that everything was within a 10 minute walk.

UEA is set on parkland with the university buildings and the zigs (Norfolk and Suffolk Terrace) overlooking a lake (the Broad) which had plenty of walking paths with ample dog-watching opportunities. Norwich city centre is about a 20 minute bus ride away but this means that the university is its own little village with a supermarket, bookshop, art gallery (Avengers headquarters in the movies), pharmacy, a nightclub and two bars on site.

If you're living in university accommodation you will need to buy bedding and kitchen equipment such as plates, pots and pans. As I went in UEA's second semester my flatmates had already been living in their flat for six months and were happy to share most kitchen equipment so all I really needed was to buy bedding and things for my own room, I recommend Primark and Wilko for cheap

clothing and homeware when you first arrive as its cheap and generally good quality. Laundry services are in the Square so quite inconvenient and at 4 pounds for a load were very expensive.

I would highly recommend living in University accommodation as it allows you to get to know your flatmates and make friends much easier. Arriving in second semester means that you will actually be replacing other international students in flats when they leave so will be joining an established flat. I was lucky that I fit in really quickly with my flatmates, with 3 of us being international students and the rest from the UK, giving a good mix of personalities and making it easier to meet local people. My flatmates were my best friends throughout my whole exchange, I travelled with them, ate with them, studied with them and they just generally made my time in Norwich amazing.



Money

There's no doubt you would have heard that the UK is incredibly expensive. Some advice on this would be to figure out the general exchange rate to get an idea of the difference between GBP and NZD but only as a general guide. You will be spending more overall but once you've been there a while it is much easier to compare the pound in different areas of the UK than to NZD (as it will horrify you and make you never want to spend money ever again). In saying that, things like food and clothing are cheaper than in NZ which is really handy. Norwich is quite affordable but London is incredibly expensive so be prepared for variation across the country.

In regards to actually spending your hard earned cash, it is wise to always carry cash on you as, unlike NZ, a lot of places do not accept card for payments and so you will need cash in both the UK and Europe. Additionally, some places in Europe do not recognise NZ debit cards so it would be handy to have backup cash whilst travelling or have a travel card which is more widely accepted and can hold GBP and Euros on it without having to rely on dodgy exchange rates and fees at ATMS and in shops. I did not open a bank account whilst I was over there as I didn't think it was worth it for only 6 months. Instead, I used travel cards (Cash Passport or Kiwibank Loaded for Travel card) and regularly got out cash which is much easier and meant avoiding exchange rates on cards.

Academics

You are able to rank your preferences of all available papers when you enrol in UEA but there are often limited numbers of students in each paper and you cannot see the timetable of papers when you apply so often you will just be placed in any 3 of the papers on your preference list. Therefore, don't get overly attached to one paper in the curriculum as there is a high possibility you won't be placed in it. I was enrolled in 3 history papers, (1) Propaganda, (2) The Age of Extremes: Europe 1918-2001, (3) The English Landscape 1066-1600. They were all really interesting and were quite similar to papers at Otago with more of a focus on participation and group presentations. They were also a lot more modern with an emphasis on online quizzes, participation medals for using online resources and wiki pages. I personally enjoyed my modules because they were completely different topics to what is offered at Otago and included field trips to castles and cathedrals (and the pub). I would say that history papers at UEA are a similar level of difficulty as at Otago with slightly more hours of non-contact work. The increased group work meant that you had a lot more student support and I made close friends with people in my group.

For an Otago exchange you only need to pass your papers so there is a lot less pressure at having to achieve good grades. This is good as it is much harder to get a good mark in England than in NZ. Their system works in terms of first, second and third class honours instead of an A,B,C system so a good mark equivalent to an A would only be about a 75% so having a mark around 50% or 60% isn't as bad as you think it is.

Travel

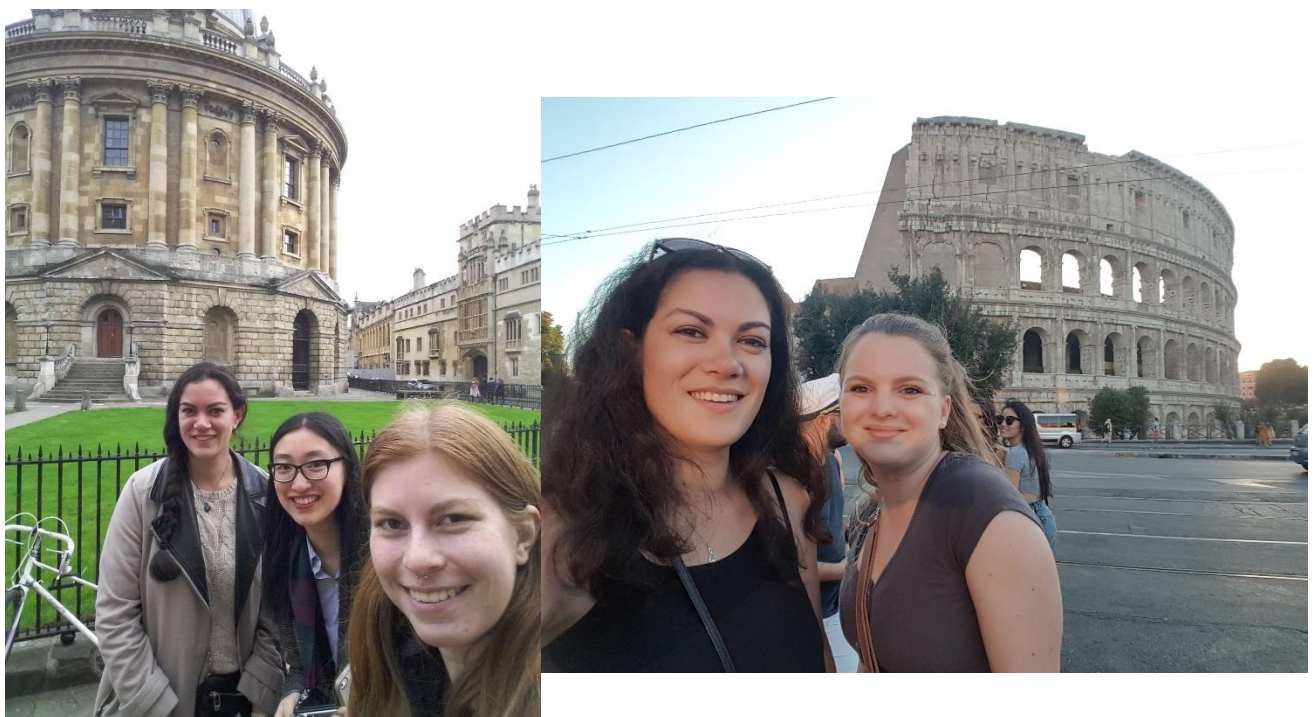
I travelled enough to make my family question whether I even attended university at all. I arrived in the UK with my family and spent time in Scotland for New Years before flying down to Norwich to begin the semester. Throughout the semester I travelled around the UK and Europe with other

international friends, spent some time in Denmark and England travelling solo for the first time and then went on a Contiki after the semester had finished before coming home. All types of travel have their pros and cons but I personally enjoyed the freedom and excitement of travelling by myself or with a few friends although Contiki is brilliant for those who have never been to Europe. I booked Contiki with a friend before leaving NZ as I wanted a guaranteed holiday and people to travel with. I certainly don't regret this but being an international student making friends at UEA it is very easy to find people who want to travel to the same places as you or who invite you to go to places you've never thought about going before. I had never considered going to Portugal and Spain before but went with some of my really good international friends in our month long mid-semester break and absolutely loved it; Portugal ended up being my favourite place that I visited.

Bear in mind that, whilst the English public transport system is infinitely better than NZ, it is inevitable that you will be stuck in a little town in the middle of nowhere waiting for a bus. This is a part of travelling in the UK and while its torture at the time, it provides some great stories for later.

My go-to websites were Trainline (an easy way to book train tickets), Megabus (super cheap bus trips around the UK and to France), Skyscanner (allows you to compare cheap airfares from all companies) and Ryanair (where you could get flights around Europe for 20 pounds). If you don't buy anything else, please buy a 16-25 railcard for 30 pounds. It works on all train companies in the UK and gives you a third off any train journey. It will earn its money back in a few trips and makes travel around Britain so much cheaper.

From Norwich London is about a 2 hour train journey (you can find fares for 20 pounds return), or a 3 hour bus ride (fares range from about 5 pounds return to 20 pounds). I travelled to London very often and you can never really get over saying, very casually, that you were spending the weekend in London, again! Norwich's proximity to London is definitely one of its selling points due to the huge amount of things to do in London. Stansted is the closest airport to London which is really handy as it is a Ryanair hub, meaning there are really cheap fares around the UK and Europe and a cheap train to the airport. If you have time in Britain, definitely go to Scotland, the Peak District, London, Bath and Durham. I enjoyed all the places I went to in the UK and tried to prioritise travelling in the UK whilst I was studying, both because it was close and also because I wanted to see more of the country I was in before exploring more of Europe at the end of the semester.





Norwich

Norwich is very similar to Dunedin; it has slightly colder weather in winter, it is very dry and definitely not as icy as Dunedin so you can avoid sliding down hills on your way to your morning lectures.

Most students buy bikes to get to the city but as an international student only staying for one semester I didn't think it was worth it. Instead, I would recommend getting the First Bus app on your phone and buying a 10 trip bus pass. It lasts a month and is a lot easier than having to carry cash on you (3.70 pounds return to the city) all the time for bus trips, especially when you're new to the UK and can't tell the difference between a pound and 5p.

My flatmates and I would often go on adventures around the city and we even hired a boat on the Broads for a day and visited pubs and ice cream shops along the Norfolk Broads. Norwich, like Dunedin, is a huge student city, so the city has many student discounts and nightclubs. Going to the pub is a big thing in England, as well as picnics and barbeques as soon as it is mildly warm.



My number one tip would be to try everything, whether it be a paper which you think you have no interest in, a trip to somewhere you can't even pinpoint on a map, or new food. My experience in the UK was a highlight of my life and moving back is now 100% in my plan for the future. I would recommend UEA, England and going on exchange to anyone and everyone.

