



University of Hawai'i (Mānoa)

Basic Information

Host University	University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2, 2019
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Anthropology and Archaeology

Academics/ course load

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Understanding Buddhism	English	RELS300	18 points
Hawaiian Studies	English	ANTH100	18 points
Japanese Culture & Behavior	English	ANTH300	18 points
Ceramics	English	Any 100 level paper	18 points

Any comments about these papers?

I would definitely recommend taking one of the Hawaiian studies papers that is on offer at UH. In a state where the effects of colonisation are still so apparent and lived everyday by the Hawaiian people, taking this paper really allowed me to connect with Hawaii as its own place, rather than just another state of the USA.

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

I found the style of teaching here to be very different to that of Otago. In all honesty most of my teachers did little to 'ignite a fire' of interest and I found a lot of my classes to be rather tedious. The classes are a lot easier (even for 300 level) than Otago and with a much lighter workload.

Accommodation

I lived in one of the off-campus dorms (Hale Mahana), a 10 minute bike ride from the uni campus. When it comes to finding accommodation, be prepared to be independent as the UH exchange office does little to help or narrow down options. Hale Mahana is a 14 storey apartment building with the option of having 1-3 roommates (each with your own rooms). It was a great option as the location and facilities were awesome, I had my own kitchen (which was a must for me - especially considering how expensive it is to eat out in Hawaii!), and allowed me to have my own space for down time.

Money matters

I can't remember how much my flights cost, but I don't think they were very much. Air New Zealand are always doing great deals to Honolulu so keep an eye out and hopefully you'll find some cheap ones.

I cannot stress enough that Hawaii is EXPENSIVE. They call it the Aloha Tax - the price of living in paradise! Don't let it put you off going to Hawaii, it's totally worth it, but just make sure you save a decent amount before you go. I went with \$10,000 NZD (excluding rent, insurance etc.) and that was sufficient to cover my spending costs for the semester including trips to two of the other islands and a week long trip to New York. My rent was on the more expensive side, \$1,500 USD per month, but I had friends living in cheaper student accommodation or flatting who paid around \$900 USD per month.

I set up a bank account with Bank of Hawaii as this was the easiest way to pay my rent and saved me a lot of money on international transfers. To transfer money from my ANZ to my BoH account I used TransferWise (google it) which gives you the best exchange rates and charges hardly anything for international transfers.

Visas & Insurance

The visa process is a bit of a nightmare. Sorting all the paperwork takes a long time and then you need to have an interview at the US embassy in Auckland. Due to limited interview spots I had a bit of a last minute stress and luckily managed to get one a few weeks before I flew out! Make sure to do it in advance.

I booked my insurance through InsurancesafeNZ and this covered everything I needed. Insurance is expensive, mine cost \$1000 NZD.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

There are plenty of clubs you can join at UH, have a look when you arrive. I didn't sign up to any as I preferred to keep my time open so I could go and explore with friends but they would be a great way to meet like minded people and do some fun things!

Honolulu grew on me. As a city it's not that great, but the beach is close and everything you need is in a convenient location. There are some epic hikes to do in the hills all around the city which feel like you're miles away, and it isn't hard to get out of the city to explore the rest of the island (which is beautiful).

Definitely get out and visit at least one (if not more) of the other islands. I went to Kauai and the Big Island and both were very different from each other and from Oahu. These trips were some of the highlights of my exchange. My favorite hikes on Oahu were the Ka'au crater trail for some intense hiking, or the Pu'u'upia trail in Mānoa valley for a nice easy hike that's close to campus. The food in Hawaii is expensive, but it's definitely worth

treating yourself out every once in a while. Check out all the food trucks on the North Shore, or grab a burger from Seven Brothers. I loved the North Shore, definitely my favorite place on Oahu and by November/December you can park up for days on end to watch all the pro surfing comps. If you have a friend with a car that's the quickest way to get there, but on days where no one was driving over we would put our bikes on the bus and head over (about an hour and a half on the bus) - and then spend the day riding our bikes up and down the North Shore!

I was lucky enough to be given a bike for free when I arrived, but you can buy second hand ones on craigslist. My bike was my savior, and I used it every single day to get around - I also ended up being quite fit because of it! The buses get you pretty much anywhere you need to be around the island, and your UH ID acts as a free bus pass, but having a bike made getting around a lot quicker and I hardly had to spend time waiting around in bus shelters.

Another thing I would recommend is to bring camping gear! I didn't think of this, but luckily one of my exchange student friends came prepared with a cooker, tent, hiking pack, and sleeping bag which came in handy on more occasions than I can count! We camped on the north shore a lot, and when it came to traveling around the other islands we stayed in campsites every night which saved so much money on accommodation.

Overall Experience



View of Honolulu from the top of Diamond Head crater



Na Pali coast of Kauai - we did a boat trip along the coast with Kauai Sea Tours, this day was one of the best days of my exchange



North Shore of Kauai

Overall I absolutely LOVED my semester in Hawaii. I made friends that I hope to keep for a very long time, and definitely appreciated the life lessons that came from challenging myself over the course of five months. When it comes to being on exchange, the more you push yourself outside of your comfort zone and immerse yourself in everything you can, the more you will get out of it.

My biggest shock was wrapping my head around the fact that Hawaii is actually a state of America. Obviously I knew this, but I assumed that once I got there it would feel more like Polynesia than the US. I was very wrong! The university is very much an American university, with majority of the students coming from the mainland. I would also say that a majority of the people living there are also from the mainland. I wish I had known this before I went, as it took a bit to get my head around. Hawaii has a very interesting and controversial history with the USA, and I highly recommend making an effort to understand this in order to feel more connected to the Hawaiian people and their culture. I actively sought out things that would connect me to real Hawaii, such as volunteering in traditional taro patches, visiting the museums, and spending time with the Hawaiian people. I really recommend doing these sorts of things in order to experience the true Hawaii and appreciate everything that it is, rather than just seeing it as another state of the US.