



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Leiden University
Semester & Year of Exchange	Fall semester, 2023-2024
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Psychology

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Culture and Society of the Netherlands: An Inside View	English	Unspecified
Developmental Psychopathology	English	Unspecified PSYC300
Group Dynamics	English	PSYC315 Social Psychology
Consciousness	English	Unspecified PSYC300
Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology	English	Unspecified PSYC300

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

Any comments about these papers?

I found the consciousness paper particularly interesting. It was challenging, as there was a lot of philosophy which was new to me. However lots of the research discussed was very engaging and topics I hadn't learnt about before.

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

The style of teaching and workload did not differ much from Otago in my opinion. The main difference was having workgroups instead of labs. These classes were much smaller and interactive. This was a great opportunity for discussions, asking questions and meeting other students.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in student housing organised by DUWO. I was in a studio apartment. This was a bit expensive but the living conditions were really great and I had an amazing location. It was a little isolating at times but I made friends and we did shared dinners together. I felt I grew a lot learning how to live on my own.

Money matters

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

Flights = \$2657.25

Visa = \$368.39

Insurance = \$618.75

Accommodation ~ 700 euro per month

Food ~ 30 euro per week ??

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

I got a wise card at the start for travelling. This worked really well, and was easy to convert NZD to any currency. I later got a Dutch bank account with Revolut which was also super easy. I would recommend either.

Visas & Insurance

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

I applied for a working holiday permit. This was done through my host institution. I had to go to The Hague to measure biometric data and go back again to collect my residence card.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes. I went with Student Safe – recommended by Otago.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

I joined Aquamania which is the uni swim club. The official language is English so there is a good mix of Dutch and international students. I went to a couple swim meets and they have lots of social activities, including dinners every week. I would definitely recommend this as a way to meet new people. The club is very welcoming to all swimming abilities.

What was the university/ city like?

Leiden is a great place to live. Very close to many other cities in the Netherlands. Many people describe it as a little Amsterdam. It's very cute and easy to find your way around. The university campus is very central to Leiden and has good facilities.

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

- **ROOS - nice cafe**
- **I scream coffee - good coffee and study space**
- **Madame Marie's - BEST appeltaart and so lovely (have to go here)**
- **Paco Ciao - very cool cafe/restaurant, go through the wardrobe when you get in (make sure to look in the bathroom)**
- **Kapsalon de Morsch - really good hairdresser! Has student discount and the lady is so nice and communicates well**
- **De Twee Spiegel - jazz bar**

Any tips for future students?

Get a bike as soon as you can once you're there.

Overall Experience

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

My exchange was better than I could have imagined. I chose to go to Leiden university because I liked the sound of the Dutch lifestyle, biking around and being surrounded by canals. I also wanted to be somewhere close to other countries I could visit. Leiden worked out perfectly. Often described as a "little Amsterdam" it had the Dutch charm, but was smaller and felt easier to find your place. I made the most amazing friends. It's such an exciting opportunity to move somewhere where no one knows you and has prior expectations of you. You learn so much about yourself and I found it so much easier to just be myself. I think this is why I connected so well with the friends I made. Leiden has a separate orientation week for international students so I met people from all around the world. The study-life balance was good. I was taking psychology papers and found the courses engaging. The content didn't feel too unfamiliar but had some cultural differences in the sort of research being done which was interesting.

I had a few weeks to travel when I first arrived and I decided to go to Portugal, Spain and France. I was nervous for my first time solo travelling but it was the most amazing experience ever. I got so much more comfortable with meeting new people and not having a plan. I learned to trust myself and got better at problem solving. I think doing this before my exchange made me a whole lot more confident when it came to moving into Leiden. I did a weekend trip to Berlin with some friends I made and met my friend from home in Paris another weekend. It felt like a dream being able to do this. I spent Christmas in Ireland and New Years in London. My last trip before I left was to Italy. I was glad I saved this till last because I felt like I knew how to travel better and that was somewhere I wanted to travel with someone and by then I had a friend to go with.

I had so many moments where I couldn't believe where I was. I felt so incredibly grateful to be able to go on exchange. There were many times where it wasn't easy. I often felt homesick, and lonely at times but it made me appreciate a lot about coming from Aotearoa. There were cultural differences I had to adjust to and I had to learn to lean on myself. It helped knowing that all the hard things weren't bad, they were just hard, and I feel stronger because of them.

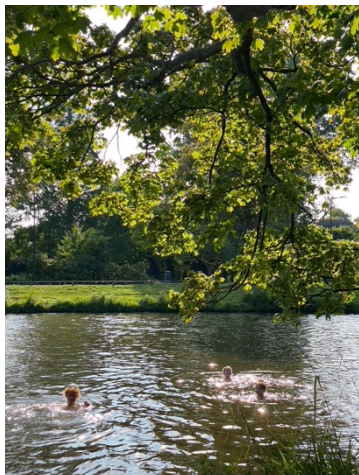
When I was flying home I was next to a woman from Sweden travelling and a man from Ireland moving to Aotearoa. I loved talking to them about travel and how exciting and scary it is to move across the world. It felt unreal that I did it! I wrote both of them a list of all the things I love to do here. Coming home I felt more like myself. I feel so thankful to have met the most wonderful people and seen the most beautiful places.



My first night in Portugal, in Lisbon. This was right at the start of my trip. I remember walking into this square and after the long journey to Europe I finally relaxed and teared up because I was just so happy to be there and couldn't believe it was real.



My first time going to Ikea! It was so funny all my friends couldn't believe I had never been to Ikeas because there wasn't one in New Zealand.



When I first moved to Leiden it was still summer and we could swim in the canals.



Day trip to Utrecht.



We had a lot of dinners together.



Me in Venice.



The first time I went to Paris was only for a day and it was in summer. I went back in winter because there was more I wanted to see and it was so amazing being able to hop on a bus to get there!