



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	Pontificia Universidad Catolica Argentina (UCA)
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Semester 2 2019 (August-December)
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	BA
<b>Major(s)</b>	Politics

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

<b>Course title</b>	<b>Language of instruction</b>	<b>Otago equivalent</b>	<b>Otago credit value</b>
Comparative Politics	English		
Argentina in the World Today	English		
Macroeconomics	English		
Spanish	Spanish		

Any comments about these papers?

Both “Argentina in the World Today” and “Comparative Politics” were taught by the same professor. He was very informed, having worked for the Argentine Ministry of Defence, and would present all sides of an issue. “Argentina in the World Today” focuses on Argentine foreign policy, regarding relations with key countries, international institutions, and the South Atlantic. “Comparative Politics” compares Argentina’s political system to other countries, particularly the USA and Britain. Both are good for learning about Argentine politics.

Macroeconomics is not a class I would recommend. Most of the class time was spent on student presentations, where we were required to learn about a topic ourselves and present on it. When the lecturer did teach, she offered only her own personal views, shut down any other view, and argued that the “primitive” working class people of Argentina shouldn’t be allowed to vote.

The Spanish placement test is very difficult, and barely anyone passed. It will cost about \$500NZD. Due to this, you will almost certainly have to take a Spanish class. There were 6 different levels. All of them are taught in Spanish.

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

The workload was much less time consuming than Otago, with only a few classes requiring readings. However, like most things in Argentina, it is a lot more disorganised. Don't expect class to ever start on time. In fact, sometimes the lecturer won't even show up at all.

## Accommodation

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

For the first month in Buenos Aires, I stayed in a large student house in Balvanera. However, I moved because the people there had parties 24/7 and I got very little sleep. Argentines generally start a party between 11pm-1am, very different to New Zealand. I then moved to an AirBnb in La Boca. Some say it is unsafe, but I never felt that. At night, there were even women and kids walking around. The main downsides to La Boca were that there is no metro line there, and most people have dogs but don't pick up after them. It does, however, have cheaper food and was only a 25 minute walk to UCA. UCA will not help you find accommodation, so it is entirely up to you to do it.

## Money matters

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

Argentina's history has been plagued with economic crises. When I arrived in Argentina, on July 28 2019, \$1NZD was worth 28.8 pesos. By November it was worth 38.3 pesos. Due to this extreme inflation, it is necessary to check the exchange rate daily. Due to this, almost all accommodation is paid in USD. My flight to Argentina, in late July 2019, cost about \$900NZD. The return, at the beginning of December, however, was about \$1500. Buenos Aires is currently the only Latin American city that Air New Zealand flies to. Due to inflation, there is little point in trying to give my daily expenditures.

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

I used ATMs, which are easy to find in Buenos Aires. However, in Argentina, they charge ridiculous fees (about \$15NZD each time). Due to inflation, it is also not a good idea to get a lot out at a time. Using a debit card in shops is also difficult in Argentina. You have to show ID (most will only accept your passport if you are foreign), and the process takes a while to set up.

## Visas & Insurance

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

You can enter Argentina on a tourist visa. However, the university will make you get a student visa once you arrive. They will guide you through the application process a couple of weeks into the semester. What follows is the most tedious process I have ever experienced. You have to go to the immigration department for an appointment. They say you will receive an email within 30 days of your application. However, it can be weeks after. In my case, I never even received the email. The university's international office told me to go to immigration and ask. After being directed to three different rooms, all with lines that were at least an hour long, I finally got to where I needed to go, and they told me that they had reconfirmed my appointment and that I would get another email later. I never received it and left Argentina without having gotten a student visa. UCA say getting a visa is compulsory, but due to the circumstances, I was still able to get my transcript at the end.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

No, the insurance Otago makes you get is fine.

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There is a group called PALS that organise activities. Most of these involve sightseeing around Buenos Aires, or parties. They also organise a trip to Iguazu falls, which is an absolute must. The university does not have a gym, but there are sports teams. Being a Catholic university, there are also events for Catholics (you can still attend UCA regardless of your religious beliefs).

*What was the university/ city like?*

Buenos Aires is a beautiful city, where historic and modern buildings co-exist. The city dominates Argentina, with nearly half the country's population living there and in the surrounding area, so it is the key place to live. Plaza de Mayo is perhaps the most significant part of the city, and has many more sites surrounding it, such as the Casa Rosada (presidential palace). The Casa Rosada museum also has a full summary of Argentine history.

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

Due to its size, Argentina is very geographically diverse. For me, the highlights of this were Perito Moreno glacier in Patagonia, and Iguazu falls on the border with Brazil and Paraguay. I never went to the north of Argentina, but I have been told it is worth seeing too. From Buenos Aires, it is possible to take a short boat trip to Uruguay, which is a good weekend trip. While in South America, going to Machu Picchu, in Peru, is a must. Make sure you book well ahead of time as it can sell out quickly. If

you book early enough (because it's very expensive if you don't), flying to Easter Island is also a must. You can only fly there from Chile, so it is something else to do while you are in South America.

*Any tips for future students?*

As literally any Argentine will tell you, Argentina is a very dysfunctional country. It requires a lot of patience.

## Overall Experience

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

Argentina, and South America in general, are definitely places you should consider for exchange. There is so much to see and do, that one semester only allows you to scratch the surface. Regardless of what country you pick, going on exchange is something I cannot recommend enough. You will likely grow as a person more than you thought possible. Student exchange is also one of the only ways you are able to travel frequently, while also being based in a foreign country, so it is an opportunity you should not let pass.



Buenos Aires



Casa Rosada



Iguazu falls



Perito Moreno glacier



Machu Picchu



Easter Island