Exchange report – New Zealand, autumn 2017, Sabina Berntsson

Basic information
Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand, autumn 17, Environmental Science, Master in Climate strategies

Christchurch
More than five years later, Christchurch is still characterized by the two earthquakes that struck in 2010 and 2011. The planning and rebuilding process have taken long time and new parts of the city centre is constantly reopened and the city life are about to comeback moving back from the outskirts. It is a modern and a bit alternative city where initiative from dwellers have gotten a large place. The best thing about Christchurch is that the nature is so close! Beautiful surfing, kiting and swimming beaches. Amazing climbing less then an hour from uni. And tramping, skiing and white-water kayaking just a couple of hours away!

Canterbury University
CU is a concentrated university and I really like how it is so easy to get exchange from people that are studying all sorts of different subject. There are plenty of green areas in-between the buildings where you can study or take a break when it is warm outside. The University was also affected of the earthquakes and are under renovation and there are top modern buildings and libraries as well as older parts. There are also a gym with classes, climbing walls and sports courts just next to it.

Arrival
We arrived on their second semester and there where almost no arrival activities, but the university clubs are very welcoming, and it is easy to get to know people and find friends. Studying wise however, I would really have liked to get more support on choosing the right courses.

Courses
General
It is easy to get help from and talk to the teachers just as in Sweden and the classroom structure is similar. The studying tempo is a bit lower and the requirements on the 100-level is low. It is also a big gap between under-graduate level and graduate. The courses span over the whole semester and there are a mid-semester break and the term ends with a studying and exam period.

Course/s
Rethinking Development, Kelly Dombroski.
Presenting development in an alternative perspective and explores the way normal people are making a living and building community economies around the globe based on ethical concerns for more sustainable and equitable features.

The course uses the switched classroom approach where video-lectures and readings are given out before hand and the sessions are allocated to discussions and interactions
with the teacher. It is a very well-planned course with both group work and individual submission. The work-load is similar to other courses I have taken before.

Freshwater Ecosystems, Angus McIntosh, Helen Warburton  
Teach advance theories and concepts of freshwater ecology and their practical application to current climate and environmental issues. There are also a four day long field trip to a research station in the Alps included in the course to educate important practical skills.  
The lectures are very engaged in the subject and the lectures are very interesting and brings up water issues that are discussed politically and in the news on a weekly basis. I would wish that there would be more time for discussions but the subject is broad and many perspectives needs to be covered.

Strengthening Communities through Social Innovation,  
The course started as a response to the earthquakes when students understood that there are things that are more important than long-term learning in the event of an emergency. The university needed to be closed in the aftermath of the earthquake and students started a “Voluntary Army” to gather and try to help the city and people in need. The course is about how individuals and organisations are strengthening communities and it also integrate up to 20 hours of hands-on community engagement projects related to the post-earthquake context.  
It is a unique class and way of learning with perspectives that you normally don’t get from the university but that are very important in our society today. It is interesting in that prospect, and it is a popular course amongst exchange students. However, the course was about to be reconstructed when we took it and therefore it didn’t have a very good quality.

Science, Maori and Indigenous Knowledge, John Pirker, Hamuera Kahi  
Provides a basic understanding of Maori Science and indigenous peoples’ knowledge in fields such as astronomy, physics, conservation biology, aquaculture, resource management and health sciences. As well as perspectives on indigenous knowledge in regard to western science and the overlap that exist between the two.  
With Maori as such a large part of the history of New Zealand and with the reclaim of their rights today it felt important to include this type of knowledge in my studies. I think it is important that we give the rights back to indigenous people and the exchange gave me a special possibility to get to understand how science can learn from their knowledge and how exposed indigenous people in societies today. The requirements of the course was quite low, but there are large possibilities to go beyond the basics and got to learn more in the subject.

Accommodation
The university provides students with accommodation just next to campus, but the rents there are a bit higher. The students live in shared flats and it is easy to find accommodation, so I would recommend finding something on your own which is easy i.e. using facebook. I stayed in a flat with just kiwis which gave me a chance to get to know the culture, ask all sorts of questions and it gave me amazing friends so I would highly recommend doing that!!

Leisure/spare time
There are so many fun and active clubs at CU so it is impossible to get bored. Most weekends we had problems to choose form hiking, skiing, climbing, kayaking… Join the clubs! It can feel a bit slow and difficult before they have started and Christchurch itself is very confusing, but just relax, you will find your thing to do. I think the best thing is to join just a couple clubs and really try to join on as many activities as possible. It is the best way to get to know kiwis, have fun and make great friends!
Costs
Similar both for the rent and the living. Thanks to the student clubs there are many opportunities to go around and see parts of the country for cheap.

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