

# Semester abroad in America

## California Polytechnic State University

Fall Quarter 2017

Oliver Worenz

01.03.2018

E-mail: [oliver.worenz@edu.fh-joaanneum.at](mailto:oliver.worenz@edu.fh-joaanneum.at)

### Content

Introduction.....	2
Preparation for the trip.....	2
Arrival .....	2
San Luis Obispo.....	2
Accommodation .....	3
University.....	3
Costs .....	3
Conclusion .....	3

# Field Report

## Introduction

I absolved my 3th semester abroad at the Cal Poly University in California, America. During my stay I wrote my master thesis which is about temporary bridge constructions in a civil and military purpose. I have been at Cal Poly for the whole fall quarter which was from 7<sup>th</sup> of September until 7<sup>th</sup> of December. This paper should give future students a short overview about the student life in America. Furthermore, it will provide useful information regarding the preparation and of course useful tips how to spend the leisure time in this wonderful country. There are a lot of good reasons to make an exchange semester. In my case the decisions for going abroad were: to have a new challenge, giving my thesis a higher quality, make friends around the world and to see and experience the differences from other cultures.

## Preparation for the trip

When I got the positive commitment for a place in the Marshall Plan Scholarship and a place at Cal Poly I started with the necessary preparation for my trip. First I applied for a Visa at the embassy in Vienna. This process took quite long because I needed original papers from my host university. After the visa I booked my flights with just one short stop in Los Angeles. Most time I spent on the search for an accommodation for my stay. Since my stay was just about 3 month it was not possible to get a place on campus in a student dormitory. First I searched on Airbnb but the prices on that platform for a room in San Luis with more than 1200 \$ per month have been out of my budget. After a first shock moment I tried to find a room on Housinganywhere and Couchsurfing. The people there have been very helpful and recommended me a Facebook group for Student Housing in San Luis. Finally I was successful by subleasing a place from a student who went for the fall quarter to Spain.

## Arrival

The arrival was with a travel time of 23 hours quite exhausting. While nobody of my roommates have been in town on my arrival I had to organize my transportation from the airport by myself. Caused by a delay no public transportation was available during night. Also no taxis have been available by the fact that everyone is using Uber. At this point I experienced the friendly nature of the Americans where an unknown woman drove me to my accommodation.

## San Luis Obispo

San Luis Obispo is a very cosy city in the southwest of California which has an inhabitant from around 45 000 people. The city is close to the coast with a lot of nearby beaches. Beside one of the oldest missions the city doesn't have those much sightseeing attractions. On the other hand the area around San Luis is perfect for many different sport activities. The area is known for mountain biking, hiking, kayaking, fishing, surfing and much more. With around 22 000 students at Cal Poly the city is in my opinion a typical student city. By that fact a lot of bars are located at the main street of the town. To get each day to university and downtown I bought a bicycle. A lot of students are using

bikes in San Luis which is also affected by the well built cycle paths. If I had to go somewhere by car I used Uber to get a ride because I have never saw a taxi in the city. For that it is required to have a phone with internet access.

## Accommodation

As I described before finding an accommodation was really hard. The rent in the city is very high, by this reason most students are sharing a room. I rented a place in a shared room and 3 roommates for 700\$ per month. It was part of a housing complex where lot of residents have been students. The apartment complex was situated very close to campus and it took me just around 3 minutes by bike to university. While the apartment was so close to campus I got a lot of sororities and fraternities in the neighbourhood which partied countless times.

## University

The campus is the second biggest of California and compared to my home university huge. There are over 208 buildings which made the orientation at the beginning tricky. By that high number of buildings and students an own police station, health centre, plenty of restaurants, bowling alley and other useful buildings are located on campus. The university offers their students a lot of activities for the leisure time. There are several stadiums for different sports like soccer, American football, ultimate Frisbee, rodeo, baseball, basketball, lacrosse, swimming and more. Also a huge recreation centre with included a gym and wellness area. As well it was possible for Cal Poly students to rent sports equipment like tents, mountain bikes, kayaks for a small amount of money. The buildings and especially the IT equipment on campus are very modern. For my thesis I spent most of my time at the 5 storey library which was always very crowded. Additionally I got an own table in the engineering department where I got access with a key all time. Also the staff at Cal Poly is very competent and helped me a lot on my thesis and at live in San Luis.

## Costs

The living costs in America are in general higher than in Austria. Especially as I wrote before the rent with incidental expenses were with around 2300\$ in total the biggest cost factor during my stay. But also groceries, alcohol, partying and other activities are more expensive compared to Austria. For the payment in America I highly recommend a credit card. With the financial support of the Marshall Plan Scholarship it was possible to compensate the costs for housing, flight, visa and health insurance.

## Conclusion

I look back on a successful stay abroad which was in many ways different to my lifestyle and study at my home university. Beside some small things like the higher costs it was a great time where I met a lot of new friends, made adventures, saw a lot of new places and get a lot of experience. I recommend a study abroad semester to each student especially a semester at Cal Poly University. As a result, from my stay in America I also want to be more international in future.