



## **IT University Travel Report**

**Host university: Auckland University of Technology (AUT)**

**Study Programme at IT University: Data Science**

**Exchange agreement or Free mover: Free-mover**

**Courses studied abroad: Forecasting, Academic Communication, Object Oriented Programming for Engineers, Information Security Technologies**

**Period studying abroad: Autumn 2023**

**If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here: [krzi@itu.dk](mailto:krzi@itu.dk) or @chris\_tramps, feel free to shoot me a message (or two if I don't see the first one)**

### **About the exchange**

The host university for this exchange was Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. The exchange took place in Autumn '23 and lasted only one semester. As a Data Science student, I had rather few options in terms of the courses I could choose from to substitute for those at ITU. Ultimately, I was enrolled in the following courses: Academic Communication (COMM570), Object Oriented Programming for Engineers (ENSE602), Information Security Technologies (COMP607), and Forecasting (STAT603). Prior to the exchange, my expectations were quite high, primarily fueled by the positive things I had heard about New Zealand. I was eager to make the most out of this costly trip and ensure I got my money's worth. Did this exchange meet my expectations? To say that it did would be an understatement—my expectations were crushed, but for reasons different from what one might expect. This leads to the question of...

### **Should you choose AUT / New Zealand?**

Before deciding to go to New Zealand, you need to answer the following question: are you going there because of a prestigious university or because you are interested in traveling? Let's be honest, you are most likely going there for the beautiful landscapes and nature, and if that is the case, then this will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. You simply cannot be let down by the beauty of this place. If, by any chance, your main drive is the hope to find a university with a high level of studies, then you might want to look elsewhere. It is important to keep this in mind because in the worst-case scenario, you will simply enjoy your time there instead of being absolutely blown away.

## **My motivation for choosing AUT / New Zealand**

I really felt like I needed to travel more and make the most out of my 20s instead of just studying and working. This was my main drive for considering an exchange in the first place. There were many factors at play that convinced me to choose this particular destination. Like everyone else, I'm a fan of beautiful places, and New Zealand happens to meet the criteria. Additionally, I am keen on hiking, and what other place is better for tramping than the hikers' paradise itself? Moreover, I'm a big fan of Lord of the Rings, and I have always wanted to visit some of the locations from the films. Lastly, there is just something thrilling about going to the opposite side of the world. While you could see similar landscapes in Norway, it's way cooler to see them 20,000km away from home. Why did I choose AUT in particular? It was the only available university for exchange students. I might not have ended up as an exchange student, rather a free-mover, but when I found out about it, it was already a bit too late to consider any other university.

## **Academic level**

Obviously, the teaching style at AUT is a little different than at ITU. From my personal experience, AUT's courses feel easier. I simply made sure to attend most of the lectures, participate in the majority of the exercise sessions, spend a week preparing for exams, and I ended up with A's and B's. I think the reason why it felt easier is that at ITU the courses and the course material are carefully tailored to specific degrees they apply to whereas at AUT, students choose their own courses. Consequently, with students from diverse backgrounds attending the same course, the focus tends to be on covering the basics rather than delving deeply into topics. While I found the courses to be satisfactory, it's hard to elaborate further since some of the things that I considered boring or uninteresting could possibly apply to the analogous courses at ITU.

## **Accommodation**

For my accommodation, I chose one of the three places offered by AUT – Wellesley Student Apartments (WSA). My general view is that WSA is okay at best. The main advantage is that you will meet a lot of other students there, and WSA's staff will organize a handful of events that will help you get to know each other. Another benefit of the place is that it is located in the city center, near the campus. That's about it when it comes to the positive things to say. Some of the disadvantages that come to mind are as follows – expensive rooms, messy flat mates (luckily, you can request a change of room), people triggering fire alarms by smoking, small fridges, and lastly, poorly isolated windows. Yeah, it is going to be really cold in your room if you are moving there in winter. As for the process of arranging the accommodation, you can find all information on AUT's website. Basically, you only have to start worrying about applying for accommodation after you have been enrolled at the university. Personally, I would not stress about not being able to get a place due to a lack of rooms. The entire application process was rather easy to follow. Do I recommend the place? I am a little bit more on the 'yes' side. Normally, I would recommend searching for another place to stay, but you will probably have the least problems applying for one of AUT's places.

## **Finances and expenses**

The trip to New Zealand is going to be a costly one. As a fee-paying student, I was responsible for covering tuition, insurance expenses and the visa, totaling around 60,000 DKK. Fortunately, the Udlandsstipendium provided substantial coverage, leaving me with approximately 11,000 DKK to pay. Accommodation costs were significant as well, amounting to around 35,000 DKK for the lease period from July 8 to November 18. Consequently, monthly rent far exceeded what I would typically pay in Copenhagen. Call me crazy, but I did not apply for any grants. My impression was that it was not easy at all to obtain one as an international student, and I also did not want to deal with more documentation (and trust me, there is a lot to deal with already). Despite this, other expenses, such as food, remained similar to those in Copenhagen. The most expensive part of my stay in New Zealand was traveling and outdoor activities. While I don't remember the exact figures, the car rental cost ranged from 50 NZD to 75 NZD per day (220 DKK to 320 DKK), depending on the time of year and location. So, make sure to make some friends who will be willing to travel with you to split the costs.

## **Travel**

If you're unfamiliar, traveling by car is the best way to explore New Zealand. It's worth noting they drive on the left side of the road there. Initially, the idea of left-side driving might seem intimidating, but it's a relatively easy adjustment. My suggestion is to familiarize yourself with the driving rules and obtain an international driver's license. If you're fortunate enough to hold a driver's license from one of the more privileged European countries (unfortunately, Poland isn't one of them), you might be able to obtain a New Zealand driver's license by simply paying a fee. As for accommodation while traveling, you don't have to worry. There are numerous camping grounds scattered around towns and villages, typically at reasonable prices. Alternatively, if you're traveling with friends, you might want to consider Airbnb's. While exploring New Zealand by car offers breathtaking vistas, don't overlook the abundance of stunning locations accessible only by hiking. I highly recommend tramping, and for the adventurous souls, backpacking is an option worth considering. Fortunately, New Zealand lacks wildlife that poses a threat to humans; however, your camping gear might encounter mischief from mice and Keas, cheeky, little buggers!

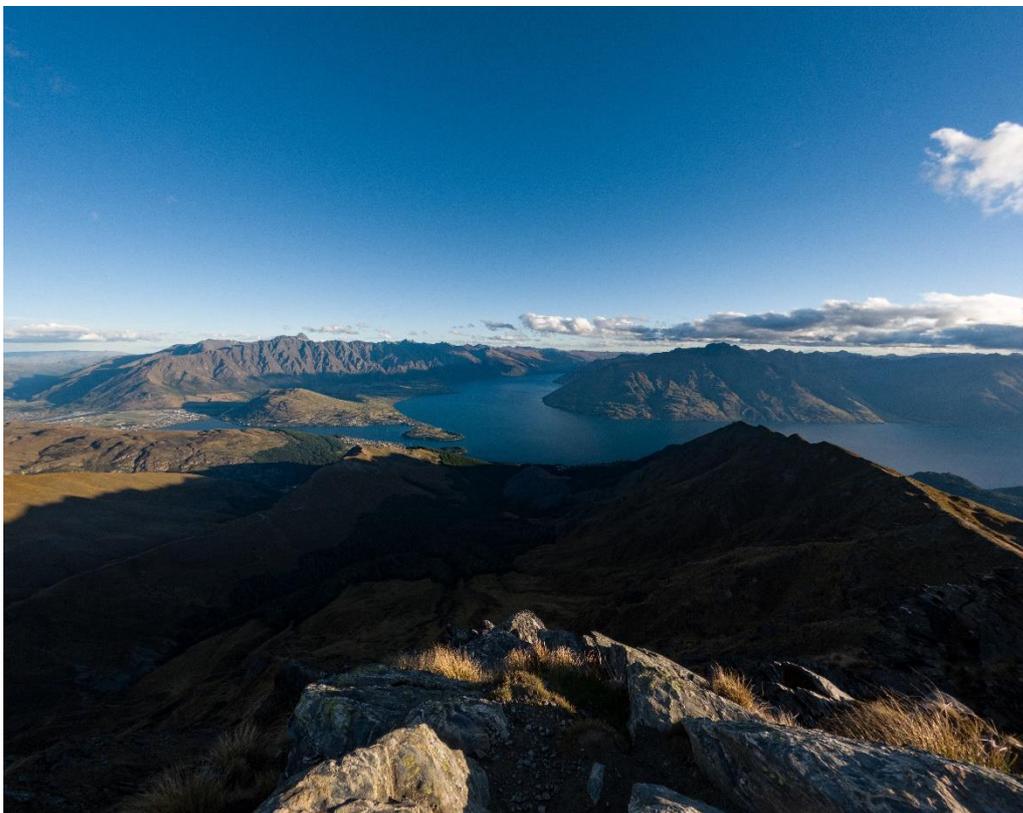
## Looking back

I fell in love with New Zealand and I aspire to move to there in the future. There is nothing more to add to this. The people I met during my studies or on the trails were some of the most wholesome human beings I have ever had a pleasure of interacting with.

## Some other tips

- Don't be scared of reaching out to AUT's admission team if you have any questions, they were really kind and eager to help
- Visa processing times tend to be a lot shorter than what the immigration office's website says, just make sure to attach the right documents
- Make sure to research customs and border control in New Zealand, they can be very strict when it comes to food or camping equipment you are carrying or else you are risking a hefty fine
- Unless you are planning to get New Zealand driver's license, get an international driver's license even if you are not planning on driving initially
- If you are going to work remotely, it is a possibility, as long as your stay is under 6 months
- If you are thinking of extending your visa and are staying a little bit longer than 6 months in New Zealand, do not, and I repeat, do not register yourself as a person staying outside of Denmark for more than 6 months unless you absolutely have to
- Feel free to reach out to me if you would like to know where I have been or what I recommend visiting

## Photos for encouragement



*Figure 1: Summit of Ben Lomond with a view of Queenstown and Lake Wakatipu*



*Figure 2: A drop dead gorgeous view of Brewster Glacier*



*Figure 3 Beautiful rainforests on Milford Track*



*Figure 4: Morning at Lake McKenzie*



*Figure 5: Earnslaw Burn's many waterfalls and Earnslaw Glacier*



*Figure 6: The ever so beautiful Milford Sound*



*Figure 7: Roy's Peak summit in Wanaka*