

SBM Exchange Report

Cornell University, USA (2017 Fall)



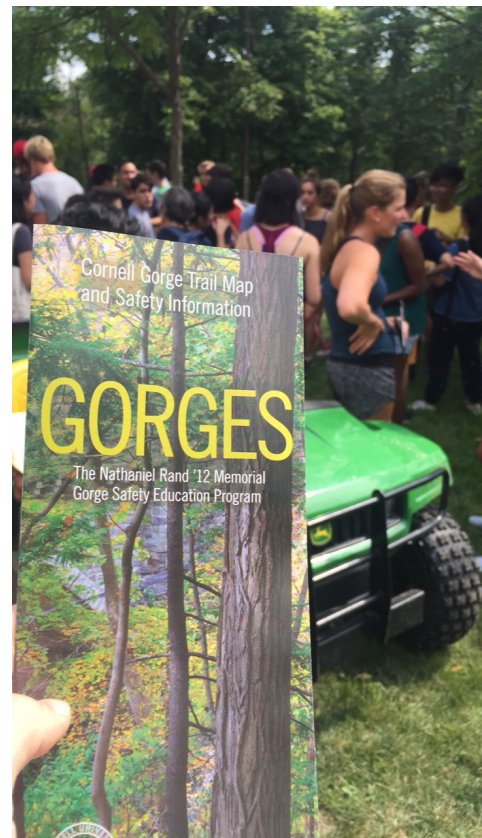
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Monthly Activity Log

August 2017

I arrived Cornell on the 17th and settled into my apartment at Collegetown Terrace. I spent the first few days exploring the area and familiarizing myself with nearby restaurants, shops and the campus. I bought most of my daily necessities such as toiletries and cooking equipments from Walmart as it is probably the cheapest option, but do keep in mind that Walmart is quite far away and the buses are quite infrequent, so do plan your shopping list so you can get everything in one go. Uber-ing there is also an option but it can get pricey depending on the time period. On the 20th I went to the first orientation dinner for exchange students. This is probably the best time to meet the other exchange people and make friends so definitely go. Talk to as many people as possible and exchange contact details. Remember, other people are also eager to make friends. I met and made most of my friends there.

As for the remaining week, I went to my classes and a few school-wide events.



September 2017

As I did not have classes on Fridays, it was a lot easier to make travel plans for the weekends. For the first weekend of September, I travelled to NYC with some other exchange students to explore the city. We went to a music festival and a few museums, did some shopping and had so much food. The food choices were endless. Definitely do try out the local New York pizzas and ShakeShack (expensive for its portion though). Also try Toto Ramen and order the largest one, expensive but worth it.

Of course, we also did a lot of sightseeing such as Timesquare, Highline, the Brooklyn Bridge etc.



The start of the semester was pretty chill in terms of workload so I did as much traveling as I could possibly fit in. The ISSO (International Students and Scholars Office) offers a few tours/trips and I joined their Niagara Falls day trip.

There was Club Fest in the middle of month where clubs and societies recruit people. As for exchange students, you can still join them but you can't really offer much for a semester.



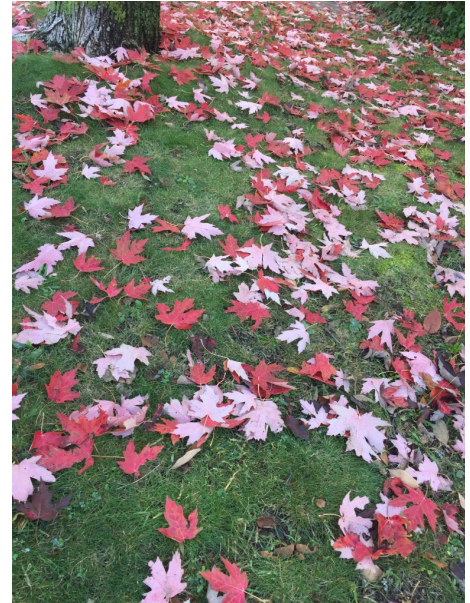
At the end of the month, I went to Washington DC. Flights from Ithaca Airport are very expensive so we took the bus to Rochester, stayed the night, and flew from there.

October 2017

October is when first round of exams (prelims) and assignments are due. I did some studying and explored the campus more. My go-to lunch place was the Terrace at Statler Hall and they have these massive burrito bowls for \$9, would definitely recommend. My go-to study place was the library in Sage hall: quiet, comfortable and printers are available.

Fall break is also this month. We rented a car and drove up to Toronto and Montreal. Fall in Montreal is very nice and comfy so if you do plan to go to Canada, go before winter comes. They also have very nice brunches.

There was also the Homecoming weekend where they were plenty of activities to do, including an American football game, Cornell vs Brown.



November 2017

I stayed in Ithaca for most of the month as work was piling up and I was low on money. I cooked for most of my meals and when I did go out for food, I mostly went to Apollo in Collegetown. They offer the best Chinese food in Ithaca for a relatively low price.



For Thanksgiving break, we drove to Philadelphia and Boston. As almost all restaurants were closed on thanksgiving, we made our first American Thanksgiving dinner at our Airbnb and because we couldn't find turkey, we used chicken as substitute and it was just as delicious.

I also attended the must-see Cornell vs Harvard hockey game. It was definitely a highlight.



December 2017

Finals week went by and the semester was over. I met up with some high school friends and travelled to the west coast for San Francisco, Los Angeles and Las Vegas, then flew back to NYC for a week for Christmas and headed back to Hong Kong.



General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

Do it as early as possible and follow the instructions. Also book the visa interview early as slots are often full during summer. Make sure you have the require vaccinations for the health form.

2) Orientation Activities

The first exchange orientation dinner is important in my opinion as it is the first chance to make friends there. There are also many other school-wide orientation events. Do check them out as almost all of them are free and many provide free food (food is very expensive in Ithaca). Do most of the outdoor activities this month as this is still warm out. I went for a hike at the gorges.

3) International Services & Activities

The ISSO (International Students and Scholars Office) offers a few tours/trips early in the semester. They also have many social activities and events, especially for the holidays.

4) Accommodations

I stayed in Collegetown Terrace. It was very, very pricey but the place was nice. Good amenities and very spacious. You share an apartment with one or two flatmates but you get your own room, queen-sized bed, bathroom and a shared kitchen. The wifi was stable. It's quite a walk from campus (15-20 minute walk) but they offer free shuttle bus services to and from campus. Also many other exchange students also live here.

5) Courses Registration

Same system as UST. Add drop period lasts a lot longer than UST but to make sure when the add/drop deadline is for each class.

6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

Mostly same as the courses in UST in terms of syllabus. As for the prelims (midterm) and finals, some professors like to hold review sessions before the exams. Definitely go to them as they often tell you exactly what's going to be tested.

7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

Collegetown terrace, where I stayed, had a free gym and it's decent although there are better gyms on campus (100 dollars a semester I believe). Noyes Fitness Center also provides a few sports recreation facilities like badminton and table tennis available for booking. Also do check out the Helen Newman hall for bowling lanes.

8) Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

I took US cash and mainly used cash. I did not open a bank account there but it is recommended as the coins are quite frustrating to deal with.

9) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

Check out club fest for societies and clubs but they often expect commitment if you want a contributive role. Otherwise you can just sign up for their mailing lists and receive emails about their events and just show up.

10) Health & Safety

Cornell Health is the campus clinic. You are required to buy the health insurance, but it doesn't cover much. Regarding safety, you will be perfectly safe as long as you stay sensible and within the laws.

11) Food

A few campus halls for food if you have class before and after. I'd recommend Terrace in Statler hall for the burrito bowls, or Trillium for their pasta.

For off campus food, your only choice really is Collegetown. There's a lot of Asian food to choose from. For value, I'd recommend Apollo. Other than that, food, even on campus, is very expensive in Ithaca.

12) Transportation

All you need is the TCAT bus to get around. Do not buy any TCAT tickets as your student card is your bus ticket for unlimited rides. There are routes within the campus for going from class to class, or off campus for places like Walmart and the Commons

13) Climate

August is very warm (t-shirt and shorts) and September to October is chill but not cold. It starts to get cold in December, but it's not as bad it seems.

14) Communication

I recommend AT&T for phone plan. \$40 for 6GB of data per month and covers Canada and Mexico (I think).

15) Cautionary measures

Ithaca is very safe. Just follow the rules and you will fine. 911 for emergency, 255-1111 for non-emergency incident and general assistance.

Items to Bring

- Cash
- Clothes (don't bring your whole wardrobe)
- Adaptors
- Medicine
- Visa documents/passport
- Credit card/debit card

Don't overpack, most things you need there, you can find at Walmart or Amazon for very cheap prices.

Useful Links and Contacts

Course Roster:

<https://classes.cornell.edu/browse/roster/FA17>

ISSO:

<http://isso.cornell.edu/>

Grubhub:

<http://grubhub.com/>

Cheapest food delivery option

Collegetown cab:

<http://collegetowncab.com>

For taxi booking for late night trips (to bus terminal/ airport)

Ourbus:

<https://www.ourbus.com>

Cheapest option for bus to NYC