

# Studying Abroad Experience report

## *Duration of Stay, Country, City, Institution, Type of Stay, Course of Study*

From 23-08-2023 to 15-12-2023, I embarked on a transformative 4-month journey to the University of Florida in Gainesville, USA. My stay, characterized by immersive cultural experiences, academic growth, and personal development, was an integral part of my academic journey. Pursuing a one semester as apart from my master's degree in integrated Façade Design. during this period broadened my perspectives and enriched my academic pursuits.

## *Preparation (Planning, Organization, and Application Process)*

The preparation phase was a meticulous process involving visa applications, academic planning, and cultural adjustments. The University's dedicated support services and online resources proved invaluable in navigating this complex process. The well-organized orientation programs eased my transition into the academic and social fabric of the university. From securing the necessary travel documents to understanding the cultural nuances of life in Gainesville, the preparation phase laid a solid foundation for a successful semester abroad.

## *Accommodation (Type, Considerations)*

Securing suitable off-campus housing at University Commons was a crucial aspect of my stay, as on-campus opportunities proved challenging to find. Opting for an apartment near the university not only provided proximity to campus but also allowed me to experience life beyond the campus and engage with the local community. The process involved researching neighborhoods, and fortunately, University Commons stood out as a vibrant and student-friendly community. Contacting the management, understanding the lease agreements, and ensuring accessibility to local amenities and public transportation were essential factors in my decision-making. Living at University Commons provided a more independent and diverse experience, allowing me to explore Gainesville beyond the university bubble. While the convenience of on-campus living is undeniable, the competitive nature of securing those accommodations made University Commons an appealing and more accessible choice. Although off-campus living required a bit more responsibility in terms of utilities and maintenance, the freedom and exposure to local life enriched my understanding of American culture. Future students considering University Commons or other off-campus housing options should explore various neighborhoods, connect with current residents, and thoroughly review lease terms for a well-rounded accommodation experience.

## *Study at the Host University (Events, Coursework, Supervision, Credit)*

The academic experience at the University of Florida was exceptionally dynamic, primarily due to the option of choosing independent courses. Beyond the structured coursework, the

university offered students the flexibility to explore a diverse array of subjects. This freedom not only deepened my understanding of various disciplines but also allowed me to tailor my academic journey to align with my specific interests and career goals. The inclusion of independent courses added a dynamic and enriching dimension to my studies, fostering intellectual curiosity and encouraging a more personalized learning experience. Regular supervision sessions with professors and the seamless credit transfer process further supported this academic flexibility, contributing significantly to my overall growth and satisfaction during my semester abroad.

### *Finances (Local Cost of Living)*

Managing finances during my stay required a well-planned budget, and it's crucial for future students to be aware that the cost of living in Gainesville can be a little bit expensive. This encompassed housing, meals, transportation, and leisure activities. Despite the need for careful budgeting, the experience proved invaluable. Exploring cost-effective options, such as cooking at home or leveraging student discounts, became essential in maintaining a comfortable lifestyle while navigating the slightly higher expenses. Understanding the local currency and financial systems, opening a local bank account, and tracking expenses were critical aspects of financial management. While the initial adjustment phase involved some financial challenges, the overall experience was well worth the investment, with the exposure to diverse cultural and academic opportunities making the expenses worthwhile. Future students should plan accordingly, exploring budget-friendly options and seeking out available resources to maximize their financial well-being during their semester abroad.

### *Everyday Life and Free Time (Daily Routine, Activities)*

Balancing academic commitments with leisure activities defined my daily routine. In addition to exploring Gainesville's local scene, I took advantage of my free time by hiring cars on weekends to embark on memorable trips to nearby destinations. Whether it was discovering the enchanting springs, visiting cities like Tampa, Saint Petersburg, Orlando, or exploring the historical charm of Saint Augustine, these weekend getaways added an adventurous and enriching layer to my semester abroad. The flexibility of having a car allowed me to delve into the diverse landscapes and cultures of Florida, turning weekends into mini adventures. This not only enhanced my overall experience but also provided a unique perspective on the state's rich tapestry of attractions. Future students are encouraged to consider similar weekend excursions, as they offer a perfect blend of relaxation, exploration, and the opportunity to create lasting memories beyond the university environment.

### *Tips for Future Students*

For future students, embracing the local culture is key to a fulfilling experience. Building connections with both international and local students create a supportive network that enhances the overall journey. Actively participating in university events, joining clubs or societies, and taking advantage of study abroad programs contribute to a well-rounded

experience. Flexibility and an open mind are essential in navigating the challenges and opportunities that arise during a semester abroad. Exploring beyond the campus, connecting with the local community, and being open to new experiences are invaluable aspects of a successful and enriching semester abroad.

### *Conclusion (General Experience, Best and Worst Experiences)*

In conclusion, my semester abroad at the University of Florida was an enriching and transformative experience that extended far beyond academic pursuits. The diverse academic environment, cultural immersion, and personal growth have left an indelible mark on my academic and personal journey. The best experiences include the vibrant academic and extracurricular activities that shaped my perspective, fostered meaningful connections, and broadened my horizons. While challenges such as cultural adjustments and financial considerations were present, they provided valuable lessons for personal growth. The support systems in place, both within the university and the broader Gainesville community, contributed to a positive overall experience.



Saint Augustine 3. September 2023





Volleyball Court 22. November 2023