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Overview

Get ready for an amazing experience!

Participating in an exchange semester abroad has been eye opening and mind broadening, a great way to complete my final semester in the MBA program and an opportunity to meet many people and make friends from around the world.

If you are considering applying for an exchange semester, I highly recommend it. Would I do it again? Definitely.

I hope you find this summary useful when considering your application and choice of university.

I tried to cover as much as possible in this document, but if you have any further questions or want more details, or to get a guideline checklist that covers all the required stages, please feel free to contact me.

NYU and Stern Business School

Located around Washington Square Park, the NYU is not a typical university campus – there is no enclosed area; instead, the buildings are part of the NYC landscape and once you exit you are out in the city. NYU is one of the most prestigious universities in NYC and Stern Business School is ranked highly in the US business school list.

There will be several orientation events for exchange students (including a tour of the NYU campus). Try to go to as many as possible to meet other students (exchange and local) from around the world before the semester begins.

NYU organizes many events for students, so be sure to check them about. Use the NYU app and CampusGroup app to see what's going on (more about apps below).

Finding your way around the Stern buildings can be confusing. There are 2 main buildings- Tisch Hall (don't confuse it with Tisch School of the Arts, which is also part of NYU) and Kaufman Management Center, also known as KMC (and don't confuse Kaufman with the Kimmel Center for Student Life). Most of your courses will be in KMC. See the map at the end of this document for more details.

There is a lot going on in Kimmel, from international student meetups to music rooms. Make sure to sign up for email notifications about their events.

Look for events at the Leslie eLab (NYU Entrepreneurial Institute) and get on their mailing list.

Washington Square Park is always full of people (if it's not raining heavily). On nice days you'll see many street artists and musicians. At night you can look through the arch and see all the way up Fifth Avenue to the Empire State Building.

Courses

This is an opportunity to take courses that aren't available at your home university, or topics that you think will be of interest.

You will notice that the teachers demand more from the students: if there are reading materials for class, you should read them; in many courses, participation is a significant part of the grade (5-15%), but I'm not sure how much they adhere to it when final grades are calculated. Read the syllabus carefully to avoid any surprises.

All classes are video-recorded and most of them can be viewed on NYU Classes (their Moodle) under "media site". If a course's recordings are not available you can ask the professor to make it available (but they might not agree).

Don't be put off by demanding courses, but choose those that will give you the most added value.

I took the following courses:

Programming in Python / Prof. Navin Manglani

This course teaches python from scratch - for people who don't know any python and have no programming experience (it helps if you do, but might be a bit boring).

Just completing this course won't make you a programmer, but the professor tries to give real business-world examples so students would have a better idea of what can be achieved.

The course is not very challenging or time-consuming.

Overall – recommended for those who want to learn some python and have never learned.

Data Science for Business Analytics – technical / Prof. Foster Provost and Prof. Josh Attenberg

This is a rigorous course that aims to teach basic topics in data science. The course has a theoretical part and a practical / hands-on part, each taught by a different professor (but they were both in class together).

The theoretical part was taught by Prof. Provost, who is an expert in the field. He sometimes jumps from one thing to another and it can be hard to keep up (I watched the videos of most classes as well as attending). He builds up the course from fundamental ideas and occasionally gives examples of how businesses misunderstand, misuse and misinterpret data science concepts. The main takeaway is mentioned in the title of the course book – understanding the process of “data analytic thinking” - how to construct the full data science cycle.

The hands-on part was taught by Prof. Attenberg, who has many years of programming experience. You are expected to have some knowledge in python, but you won't be learning to program - rather, how to use various python code and data science packages (such as Pandas and SKlearn). If you've never programmed in python but have some programming experience, taking a short online course before the semester would be enough (such as edX or Coursera).

Make sure to read the relevant chapters in the book (handed out free in the first class) before each lesson. The course is somewhat challenging and very time-consuming.

Overall – recommended for those who are interested in a comprehensive introduction to the world of data science, and are prepared to work hard.

Data-Driven Decision Making – managerial / Prof. Xiao Liu

This course is intended for people who want to learn more topics in how to use data to make business decisions, at a less technical level.

The course mostly covered using data science software (JMP pro, Tableau and R), and not so much the theories, methods or in-depth understanding of the models which could have been more interesting.

The professor is very friendly and knowledgeable, and no question goes unanswered.

I think there was too much overlap with the data science course, and therefore would not recommend taking both.

The course is not very challenging but somewhat time-consuming.

Overall – recommended for those who want some understanding into data science concepts and software without delving too much into theory and the technical side.

Foundations of Technology Entrepreneurship / Prof. Ari Ginsberg

This course covers fundamental concepts and processes in entrepreneurship related to the tech world. There are 2 parts to the course that take place simultaneously: home assignments and mini-cases based on various readings that cover these topics, which are then discussed in class; and a group project in which each group is assigned a real technology (either from NYU researchers or suggested by the students). The project simulates core processes in a tech start-up, but you won't be assuming the roles of CEO, CTO etc.

The course is both challenging and time-consuming. Almost every week there is a mini quiz or case based on the weekly readings, in addition to project updates and related tasks.

You are required to have some technology or business background.

Overall – recommended for those who are prepared to work hard. If you are not looking for a tech focus, there are other entrepreneurship options available.

The Strategist / Prof. Adam Brandenburger

This course discusses 4 approaches to being a strategist and understanding strategic ideas.

Professor Brandenburger (who will ask you to call him Adam) shares several interesting papers and chapters from books (some of which he wrote) and they are part of the discussion in class, which is followed by untypical mini-activities in groups.

Unfortunately, the course is rather short and does not cover many topics in great depth. It focuses mostly on outcomes, and there is little discussion of strategic processes.

The course is not very challenging or time-consuming.

Overall – recommended for people who want to explore new creative approaches to strategy.

Housing

Finding a place to live is not a simple task. I was fortunate to have friends in Upper East Side who invited me to stay with them until I found my own apartment. If you don't have that option, it's safer to find something before you arrive in NYC. You might prefer to book a place for your first week or so, such as an Airbnb or a hotel, and once you arrive go to see apartments in person. If so, make a list of apartments to view and contact the landlords to book a meeting.

After over 2 weeks of apartment searching, I found a really good sublet in Chelsea (sharing with 1 roommate in a big apartment, I had a big bedroom, my own full bathroom and entrance). It wasn't cheap - \$2490 a month, plus electricity + heating (\$75), FIOS/Netflix/internet (\$80), etc. But as I was living there for only 4 months, the total wasn't too bad. And it wasn't a lot more than other (much smaller) apartments I had seen.

I found the apartment via SpareRoom.com. See below for good ways to find apartments.

There are scams around so be careful and never agree to send money or bank details before seeing the apartment. Always remember: if it's too good to be true, it isn't true. And you don't have to settle for the first place you find if it's not right for you.

I recommend living within walking distance to campus (the includes the Palladium), although the area around the university is not cheap. A nice place in East Village could be great, as it is one of the more lively parts of NYC. West Village is another great area but more expensive.

Don't forget that you'll be living there for about 4 months, so find a place that is comfortable enough for the time you're there. Note that most Manhattan apartments are small and have tiny kitchens. If you are sharing an apartment with roommates, you will likely be sharing a bathroom.

An apartment that has one and a half-bathrooms means that the “whole” one has a bath and the “half” one is only a toilet.

List of housing sites and apps:

Facebook groups:

You will notice the same posts in different groups. I also saw posts that might be fake, so if you’re not sure - move on.

Israelis in NY: https://www.facebook.com/groups/463331913772329/?ref=group_browse_new

NYC housing: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1225966920763001/?ref=group_browse_new

Gypsy housing:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/NYC.BK.Apartments/?ref=group_browse_new

Israelis in NY housing:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/627890500678514/?ref=group_browse_new

Israelis in NY sublets:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/193653367456773/?ref=group_browse_new

NYC housing: https://www.facebook.com/groups/NewYorkCityhousing/?ref=group_browse_new

NYU housing: https://www.facebook.com/groups/838592299562056/?ref=group_browse_new

The next 2 groups are subgroups of NYU housing (which you must join first):

NYU international students: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/573689222835516/>

NYU off-campus housing

https://www.facebook.com/groups/nyuoffcampus/?ref=group_browse_new

Websites and apps:

<https://www.listingsproject.com/> - sign up and every Wednesday you’ll get the weekly update.

<https://www.spareroom.com/> - available as an app too. They also arrange free “speed rooming” (like speed dating) events at local bars: <https://www.spareroom.com/events/speedroomming>

<https://www.leasebreak.com/>

<https://www.sabbaticalhomes.com/> - For academics and students

<https://www.nyu.edu/students/student-information-and-resources/housing-and-dining/off-campus-living/registry.html> - NYU housing registry

I tried all of these. Some more options are listed on the NYU housing page :

<https://www.nyu.edu/students/student-information-and-resources/housing-and-dining/off-campus-living/agencies.html>

I would not recommend using craigslist for finding apartments (very risky as it's full of scams nowadays).

Campus housing at the Palladium

The available student dorms are small studio apartments with a single bed, desk, chair, cupboard, kitchen (sink, gas cooker, microwave-grill oven), bathroom and toilet, all fairly small.

The fees are approximately \$10,700.

The dorms are available from about 1 week before the semester until 1 day after exams are over (check the dates carefully).

This may not sound great, but there are some big advantages to living in the Palladium:

You will be right next to Union Square - a major hub for shopping, transport, 10 minute walk to campus, living next to other exchange students and right above a large and well-equipped sports center (which is free for NYU students).

For more details about the Palladium I can put you in contact with friends who lived there.

Insurance

All students in the USA must have health insurance.

The default is via NYU, but you can get a cheaper deal with other companies. Most of us used ISOa (www.isoa.org). Make sure you get the right plan - contact the company before buying it and tell them you are exchange J1 at NYU.

If you are 30+, it's more expensive (I paid \$1472), but still cheaper than through NYU (about \$2500).

Once you have paid for the insurance, send the company the NYU Health Insurance waiver form for them to sign. You then must send the signed copy to NYU for approval.

Note that travelers insurance (e.g. Harel) will not be accepted.

Visa

The Visa application process is long and can be stressful, but if you follow the instructions and do everything as soon as you can (once you receive the forms from NYU) there shouldn't be any problems.

For more details, check out the NYU Checklist spreadsheet (make yourself a copy and keep it updated).

You will receive a J-1 Visa, which enables you to enter the USA one month before the semester begins, and stay there up to one month after it ends.

For more details contact the OGS (Office of Global Services), who are located near Stern.

USA and NYC

There is so much to do in NYC, and you will have time to travel around the USA (or even abroad) so make the most of your time there (I travelled to Puerto Rico for spring break and took a bus to Philadelphia when the semester was over).

It's probably easiest to get a local SIM card. Mobile plans in the USA are a lot more expensive than in Israel (I had AT&T unlimited for \$60/mo. + tax). Wifi is abundant in the city and at NYU.

Transportation is fairly easy. Most places are accessible by subway. Use the apps to find the stations and check schedules. You can get a MTA card which is valid for subway and busses (the fare is \$2.75 a ride, there also weekly and monthly options. See <http://web.mta.info/fares/> for more details).

Many places (from museums to shops and restaurants) give discounts (or free entry) to NYU students. Always have your student card with you

Drinking age is 21 in the USA, and most bars check for ID when you enter. Always have your driver's license with you. By the way, you don't need to get a US driver's license to drive or hire a car in New York State (other states might have different laws), your Israeli DL is enough.

I was there from late January till the end of May. The weather was cold until the end of April (NYU closed due to snow storms twice!), so bring a lot of warm clothes and consider getting some there.

Working in the USA

I cannot give you much information about working. You are allowed to work under certain conditions as an internship.

For more details make sure you go to the OGS (Office of Global Services) orientation, where you will get more information.

Tips

- Take studying seriously, but don't spend all your time doing coursework. Enjoy the many opportunities the city has to offer.
- As a NYC resident you can get a free NYPL (New York Public Library) card. To get the card, go to any library (I recommend going to the central one on 42nd street and 5th avenue, where you can take a free tour) with photo ID, proof of your permanent residence (drivers license) and proof of NYC residency (a letter sent to you at your NYC address is enough).
- Look out for events on Facebook, group apps (see Apps section) and via friends. You can even see some events of google maps (such as marathons and special markets).
- As exchange students you are considered full-time students.
- During cold days, the buildings in NYC (especially at NYU) will be heavily heated so make sure you have a coat that is light and easy to carry.

Important

- Almost everywhere in the US, prices shown do not include tax (and fees). The full price you'll have to pay might be shown to you just before you complete your payment. If you've never been to the USA, it can be confusing and it may seem like you are being cheated, but that's just how it is. New York State tax is around 9% for most items, for more information look online.
- Always check the subway updates (via the apps) before planning your route. There are usually improvement works and delays at night and weekends, and sometimes during weekdays.

- You will come across many panhandlers (beggars, homeless, etc.) around the city, especially in subway stations, parks and other crowded places. Do not feel obliged to talk to them or give them anything. The best thing to do is not stop to talk, or just walk away.
- Avoid entering parks at night time if they seem empty and you're alone.
- Keep updated about the weather. The forecast can change on a daily basis, one day being very hot and the next very cold.

Useful apps

MyTransit (green icon) and **New York Subway** (red icon) – subway map, routes, updates and schedules. The 2 apps are similar, but I found that it's useful to have 2 different apps (one for checking the map and one for checking the route).

Google Maps - I found that it doesn't give accurate station information, but I used it for walking around. I also found events and POIs on it by chance, so keep your eyes open.

Yelp – restaurant recommendations (and shops etc. too).

Venmo – transferring money (like pepper pay). You might need a US bank account to use it.

Uber – quick and easy taxi rides. Use UberPool for sharing (cheaper, but with restrictions). Not always cheaper than yellow cabs. Promotions may be applicable when you sign up.

Lyft – like Uber. Promotions may be applicable when you sign up.

Via – like Uber but for specific routes.

BoFA (Bank of America) app – for banking.

Duo Mobile – needed at NYU for multifactor authentication.

NYU mobile – at the beginning of the semester there will be lots of events that you can view and sign up for with this app.

CampusGroups – see what events are going on in the NYU groups.

GroupMe – like whatsapp for students.

Truecaller – even with a new phone number you might get spam calls. This app identifies the caller ID.

Citi Bike – use to get easy access to city bikes all around NYC. A great way to tour, commute or just get some exercise.

StubHub – use to buy (and sell) second-hand tickets.

SimplyE –with your NYPL (New York Public Library) card, get access to a free e-book library service on your phone.

Kanopy – like SimplyE but with movies.

Finding your way around campus



Key:

1 – Stern Business School (Tisch Hall); 2 - Stern Business School (KMC); 3 – Bobst Library; 4 – Kimmel Center for Student Life; 5 – Washington Square Park; 6 – NYU Bookstore; 7 – Leslie eLab

SoHo and East Village are full of bars and restaurants and never sleep

Subway stations:

A – West 4 st station; B – 8 st station; C – Astor Place station