

Report

Spring Semester at Appalachian State University, NC

My semester abroad at Appalachian State University in North Carolina, Boone, was one of the most magnificent and educationally valuable times of my life. It is an experience that I would recommend to anyone.

After being accepted into the program, I had to deal with various bureaucracy, which included filling out numerous forms for both universities. Thankfully, both the International Outgoing Office of Innsbruck and the International Student and Scholar Services and Outreach Office (ISSSO) of Appalachian State were very helpful and constantly sought ought to make the process as easy as possible. Right from the start I was introduced to the online portal(s) of AppState and had to apply to housing as well as chose my courses. While this seemed stressful in the beginning, it was actually nice to be acquainted with the AppState online systems before I got to campus as it helped me navigate the portals better once I was on site.

When I arrived at the Charlotte airport, I was welcomed by students of INTAP, which is an organization run by students who work together with ISSSO and, among other things, deal with international students. During the semester, they will organize various events where every international student is always welcome! I definitely recommend going to these events as it gives you a chance to interact with other international and local students (plus you get free snacks)! I was amongst approximately 40 other international students, and we were taken to AppState by a bus. Once we arrived, we had time to bring our belongings into our rooms and spent the next few days at orientation, where we learned a lot about the campus and were introduced to everything AppState has to offer. There are a ton of clubs and activities to take part in during the semester. Especially in the warmer months you will find many activities taking place on Sanford Mall (a green area in between lecture halls). Additionally, sport events on campus are free for students so make sure you go to a football, basketball, or baseball game at least once during your stay!

Housing is assigned, so one cannot really choose where one would like to be living. That being said, international students tend to be put into nicer and newer buildings, so I would not worry too much. I have to say that I had a bit of trouble with housing in the beginning as I had to switch rooms in my second week. However, the team of ISSSO is incredible and they were very helpful in this regard as well. In fact, I would recommend getting into contact with ISSSO with any concerns you might have, as even if they do not have the answer, they will help you find the correct contact partner. I ended up living in Thunder Hill Hall which was one of the new buildings and I enjoyed living there very much. I was put into an apartment, which meant I did not have to have a meal plan. If you are in a dorm with only rooms, you will be automatically enrolled and charged for a meal plan and will have to eat on campus. There are two main dining halls with many different places to eat from, as well as three coffee shops. There are also two small markets on campus, and you will be able to use your meal plan card for all these locations. Food on campus is rather expensive, so if you are not required to have a meal plan, I would suggest buying and preparing food from off-campus grocery stores.

I would recommend staying on top of your classes from the beginning. While the classes I took at AppState were not more difficult than my classes in Innsbruck, they did seem to require more effort, i.e., more homework and assignments. It is easy to get caught up in out of school activities and it will be hard to catch up if you forget to do your work. I also had to get used to having my classes twice a week instead of once. It can be overwhelming walking into a classroom and hearing only English. I suggest that after your first session you go introduce yourself to the professor and let them know that you are an international student. Most professors are incredibly friendly and if they know you are in their class, they will offer additional help where they can. Another piece of advice I can give you is to try to make as many friends with your classmates as possible. Chances are you will become friends with other international students during orientation or you might even have some of your classes with them. While it is nice to make new friends quickly, you will enjoy your time at AppState even more if you have local friends who can show you the area and make for a more authentic experience.

Boone has public transport; however, the system is not as reliable as it is in Austria. Busses show up too late or too early, or if there is the tiniest amount of ice and snow, the bus may not show up at all. It is easy to walk around campus and get from the dormitories to the lecture halls, and you can walk to King Street, which is the “downtown” area of Boone. King Street consists of one street with small shops, coffee shops and a few restaurants. We often went to hang out there after classes if we did not hang out in one of the coffee shops on campus. If you want to venture further than King Street, however, you will find it hard to get anywhere without a car. There is a car rental service in Boone, but it is expensive, especially if you are under the age of 25. If you do decide to rent a car, make sure to gather a few of your friends to split the costs and driving. There will be enough opportunities to go on small trips.

Overall, I definitely recommend completing a semester abroad at Appalachian State University. I have made new friends and experiences that I will cherish for my entire life. It is a great opportunity to broaden your educational as well as your personal horizon and you get to experience the United States from one of its most beautiful states. Go Mountaineers!

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Auslandssemester: Januar – Mai 2022

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Report:

Spring Term 2016 at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC

My experience at the Appalachian State University (ASU) last semester was superb. It was one of the best experiences of my life and I am happy to share some details about my time in North Carolina and to give an insight about how academia and life in general are different in the USA.

The initiation was a lot of paperwork and needed a lot of effort and patience. IELTS certificate, application for the exchange, nervously awaiting emails, stress. The letter of acceptance was a big gasp of relief but also carried along new responsibilities: Visa, SEVIS, flights, finances, insurance, family meetings, moving out and foremost: trying to comprehend what is about to happen. Impossible.

After setting sail and arriving at the Charlotte Douglas Airport I was picked up by some ASU students who were waiting for the arriving exchange students. This semester it would be 60 students from 21 different countries. In the first three days we were invited to many workshops and activities that would help us to find our way around campus and to feel home in the new environment.

We were introduced to different clubs such as INTAPP, iPals and the IFP that were all designed to integrate incoming students into the Boone community. These clubs would facilitate direct communication between the exchange students and the university, domestic students and domestic families who had an interest in meeting international students.

Besides the cultural opportunities, the University offers great programs when it comes to sports and outdoor activities. Campus features three gyms free of charge that will leave nothing to be desired. Weight lifting, cardio, soccer, basketball, football, volleyball, dancing, swimming, rock-climbing, kayak – just name it. In addition you can join sport clubs for intramural competitions or national challenges.

Despite the normal curriculum and leisure activities, ASU hosts many events such as talks and movie screenings, festivals and other events that will surely catch your interest and help you to find friends sharing your own interests.

The library is open 24/7 and offers plenty of beautiful space, air conditioning and numerous coffee shops. If you get tired of learning surrounded by books and computers you can simply switch to the solarium – an indoor jungle with water fountains that makes you feel like being in the tropics even if a snowstorm haunts the area. If you feel like having a break just visit Crossroads, a hip coffee shop that features live music and open-mic sessions.

When it comes to living, you will need to be prepared for little privacy. All exchange students are required to share a room with another student, mostly American. You will share a room and bath and therefore spend a lot of time together which is a great opportunity for connecting with the all-American reality which is quite different to Europe. If you should however feel uncomfortable with your roommate there is an option to switch.

Safety and security is of highest priority on campus. You will always find police and security agents patrolling around campus. To make sure you don't have to walk alone in the dark, ASU provides free 'Safe-Rides', throughout the night.

If you struggle with acquiring enough money for your stay at ASU, don't worry. Even your visa is not a working-visa you are allowed to work on campus. Jobs reach from working at the food court, maintenance work to being a night-assistant in the dormitories. You will find the possibility to squeeze one of those many jobs into your schedule to pay for most of your leisure activities at Appstate.

When it comes to academia, I enjoyed choosing from many subjects and was able to pick those that were of my biggest interest. Studying was different from back home: more interactive and dynamic. Your fellow classmates will ask questions and comment on the lessons. The biggest difference to our system was the homework which I personally enjoyed a lot. Essays, presentations, website designs, quizzes will help to acquire credits over the term which leads to less pressure in the finals and a better overall score.

During my time at ASU I have met an incredible amount of passionate and good hearted people that I am happy to call my friends. Not only students but also teachers and staff have made my stay nothing short of perfection. Thank you!

I encourage everyone to seize the opportunity to study at Appalachian State University. You will find yourselves in a home away from home where you will learn a lot that will help you grow academically and personally.

Auslandsaufenthalt: Januar - Mai 2016