

# Texas

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There isn't enough space to write about the great experience my study abroad at UT Austin was! I was able to study film there and UT happens to be the 11th best film school in the United States. I can even say that I went to school where Matthew McConaughey is a professor! He wasn't my professor, unfortunately, but I did see him on the big screen at one of the football games... (he always attends them!). To highlight how good UT is is the fact that Jimmy Fallon decided, out of all the universities in the entire USA, to come to do a live show at UT Austin in November. I saw the back of his head on campus!

The university is always buzzing with vibrant energy. It's so picturesque and you could find yourself spending hours exploring the grounds and going into buildings to explore. I loved every film class I took and have learned more than I ever thought I could during my time there. The professors and TA's are super accommodating regarding any questions or queries you have and they really like to try to forge relationships with their students, which makes the whole experience even more personal. A lot of my classes were on-going assessment, which suited me because it meant I was finished when loads of other students had exams to do. There are lots of different classes you can take. I did a range of film, advertising, marketing, and acting classes. However, this all depends on your academic advisor here at UCD because they have to sign off on your module form to give you permission. I was lucky enough to be able to branch out and study something that I knew I wanted to have a career in, which was very helpful to me. It has enabled me to decide on what aspects of film/tv I enjoy learning most about.

The school spirit on campus is very much alive. Prepare for your wardrobe to transform into an array of burnt orange clothing (that's UT's school colour). I have so much UT merch that I need to dedicate a whole drawer for it in my room. The football games are so fun, even if you're like me and don't know the first thing about football. They're only on during the fall semester unfortunately, the second semester you've got the basketball games which are good too. Tailgates happen before football games - basically when a large group of people get together and drink before they go to the stadium. This can happen on the green grass area outside the stadium or at frat houses.

The social life on campus is quite intimidating at first, but you'll meet lots of international students throughout your time there from orientations/events/parties, etc.. If you're interested in trying to be more involved in campus life and to meet more American people then I'd recommend applying for a spirit group... (they're like WAY cheaper sororities and frats where you don't all live together... it's just like a social club or society, but the same idea as a sorority/frat except for all the extreme

hazing and negative attributes attached to them....in my opinion, spirit groups are way better!) I joined Texas Angels in my second semester, and I was so glad about my decision. I met lots of amazing girls from Texas who I'm still in contact with. There is a whole application process for joining spirit groups that involve going to information sessions and one event that they're hosting, then filling out an application form and going through two rounds of interviews....but in my opinion, it's worth all the stress if you get accepted! It made my whole experience that much better.

Austin is a beautiful city, there's always something to do when you're there. One of my favourite things to do was to explore all the thrift/vintage stores around the area, (Buffalo Exchange being my favourite, only 10 min walk away from campus). The party scene in Austin is amazing. Sixth Street which is like their equivalent to Harcourt Street (but much better) is always packed on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. It's so much fun, the music is so good and there are lots of good drink deals (Shakespeare's have five-dollar pitchers on Thursday nights). My personal favourite places to go on Sixth Street were The Library, Aquarium, and Shakespeare's. There's always frat and co-op parties on too! Other than partying, there are lots of other cool things to do. You can visit Barton Springs to go swimming, even though it's the coldest water I've ever felt... yes, colder than the Irish Sea, but it's nice to go to if it's 40 degrees outside... and yes, it is that hot in August/September! You can go down to Congress Avenue which is a really quirky street with shops and food places. You can also see the bats on Congress Bridge!

The weather is very very unpredictable, even more so than our own weather. I've experienced days where it's up at 35 degrees, then the next it'll be 2 degrees and snowing outside... so pack a variety of clothes! International students aren't able to live on campus because it's reserved for freshmen only. I stayed at Rio West Apartments, very handy if you're in Moody School of Communications as it's only about an 8 min walk. I know people who have stayed in Pearl St Co-Op, 21st Street Co-Op, Crest at Pearl, The Villas, 26 West, Taos. It's very hard to choose a place to live, especially as you can't go and view it first. You'll have to rely on google reviews etc.. I know the co-ops (Pearl St, Taos, 21st Street Co-op) are all much cheaper options, as they're more like a 'shared house' with communal areas, one big shared kitchen and you have to fulfil weekly chores as part of you staying there. Basically, if you're the super outgoing type who likes to always be around people then a co-op might be for you. I myself wanted my own apartment, which I shared with three other Texan girls. We had our own kitchen, living room and I was lucky enough to end up with my own bedroom and bathroom. As mentioned, I stayed at Rio West. Would I recommend it? Sure, but I'm not going to say that it was perfect. The pool was closed for the whole months of August and September which are easily the hottest months there. My apartment got no natural daylight at all, it was completely pitch black all day every day because of a huge wall on our side of the building. As I said, there are lots of different apartments so you can have a look around and pay attention to reviews. I will say, you will never find accommodation with just glowing reviews - there's always going to be a handful of negative ones wherever you're staying. Another thing to add is if you're thinking of opting for an apartment as opposed to a co-op is that you'll have to do your own food shopping, as you get your meals each day at a co-op. This can have an effect on your budget as it's obviously going to make it more expensive doing your own shopping. I started off doing my

shopping at HEB, then tried Walmart then started shopping at Trader Joes which was definitely my favourite and was surprisingly the cheapest. Austin is very expensive for food which is frustrating. Each grocery trip I'd be spending around 90 dollars when you'd get it for about 40 euros if it was Ireland. A great plus is with your UT student card you can get free public transport, which means hop on the bus anytime for free and go anywhere. I saved so much money with this. Of course, there's always Uber and Lyft if you need them.

The food in Austin is amazing. I'd recommend Kerby Lane which is open twenty-four hours and does amazing breakfast tacos, burgers, pancakes, waffles, French toast, etc.. There are also lots of food trucks around and In-N-Out and Chipotle very near the campus. I guarantee that when you come home you'll be missing all the amazing Tex-Mex food.

Overall, my entire experience studying at UT and living in Austin, Texas was amazing. It's something I'm going to remember for life and will always look back on with nothing but positive memories (except, of course, having to come home three months early because of Covid-19). If you've been accepted, I guarantee you, you're going to love it.

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