



Relazione di fine scambio

Scuola del Design

Istruzioni

Indicare di seguito tutte le informazioni che possano essere utili ad altri studenti che parteciperanno a uno scambio. Preferibilmente in lingua inglese, lunghezza min. 2500 parole + possibili immagini, file di max. dimensione 2 MB in formato PDF. Questo documento sarà pubblicato nel sito web della Scuola.

Informazioni generiche

Anno Accademico di Scambio:	2019/2020	Nome della Sede in scambio:	Carnegie Mellon University
Cognome e Nome:	Magarelli Mauro	Stato:	USA
Matricola:	915425	Codice Sede:	
Corso di Studio:	Interior and Spatial design	Tipo di scambio: (Semplice o Doppia Laurea)	Semplice
Anno di Corso:	2 magistrale	Semestre di Scambio:	secondo
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Racconta la tua esperienza di scambio:

When I had to choose my options for my Exchange/Erasmus experience, there was just one main consideration I took into account: the destination. I had always dreamed of studying in the US and that was the proper occasion. As an Interior and Spatial design student I had just two possibilities back then. Either *Carnegie Mellon University* in Pittsburgh or *Rhode Island University* in Providence. Honestly, I did not pay much attention to the prestige of the partner university or the offered courses. So, I opted for the one in the biggest city. I went for CMU.

Before leaving for Pittsburgh, I was a little bit hopeless. That is because a friend of mine, who lived there for some years, told me that Pittsburgh was not as entertaining as New York or as warm as Los Angeles. He also told me that most of CMU students were fully committed to their studies and were not into partying or getting to know new people. He definitely rained on my parade even because when you decide to leave for an Exchange/Erasmus experience, partying and making new friends are a big part of the experience. So, my expectations started to get lower and lower and I was almost regretting my choice to go there.

January arrived, and I left for the USA with a lot of excitement regardless of what my friend told me about Pittsburgh. It was my first time ever in the States and I was eagerly waiting to finally walk down the streets of those cities full of skyscrapers. I flew from Milan to New York and then took a night bus to Pittsburgh (Greyhound lines. For your own good, never use that bus company.) One of the downsides of

the USA is that they do not have high speed trains. Pittsburgh is not very far away from NYC. However, it takes around 7 hours by bus to get there (you can also take a flight but it is usually a bit expensive.)

When I arrived in Pittsburgh I was totally disoriented. The sky was densely covered with gray clouds and, at a first glance, the city did not appear to be as quaint as I was hoping.

I went to my university residence (Fairfax apartments) where I got to know my roommate. Honestly, I did not receive the welcome I wished. The guy did not even say "Hello" when I entered the room and he spent most of his time playing video games in front of his computer. A few days later, I asked the secretary if I could change my room. They turned out to be extremely approachable and said they were sorry for that situation that did not reflect the welcoming spirit and inclusivity the university always tries to stand for. Consequently, I moved to a room with another Exchange student from Mexico. And I have to admit that I found a great friend in him.

Even though I liked my room there, I would not recommend to stay at a CMU residence for two reasons. Firstly, they are costly. I spent more than \$1100 each month. Secondly, the activities they offer there are not worth it in my opinion. You can definitely find a better solution by looking for a single-room in normal houses for students. They are way cheaper, some friends of mine paid between 500 and 800\$ for a single-room in a normal house. The best neighborhoods if you are looking for a house are either North/Central Oakland or Shadyside.

On the first day there, I went to take a look at the college. I was simply astonished because it seemed exactly like in a movie. The campus is huge and there are various activities that you can do there and an endless number of facilities to host them. There are two swimming pools, two huge gyms, a basketball court, tennis courts and I could go on for hours. You can access everywhere by simply using your ID card that CMU will provide you with on the welcome day. This sort of badge will also give you access to the public transportation system and also to all the wonderful museums Pittsburgh has.

In addition, you will be impressed by the connection between the university buildings and nature. Probably, you will have to wait until April to fully appreciate this, but it is really worth it. In fact, Carnegie Mellon campus is next to Schenley Park, a wonderful place if you want to be fully surrounded by nature. Particularly, you will see a lot of squirrels (yes, these cute animals are literally everywhere in Pittsburgh) and, if you are lucky, deer. Another amazing park that you must visit is Frick Park close to one of the fanciest neighborhood of the city, Squirrel Hill.

Carnegie Mellon is one of the best universities where you could study at. That is a fact. All professors are extremely kind and approachable and they will always do their best to help you out with any kind of issues. It was hard to see them as professors and not as friends. Actually, everyone at CMU is willing to help you!

Design Studios at this university are a whole experience. You will be provided with your own desk and the keys of the classroom so that you can access it whenever you want, at what time you want.

I am not going to lie, my first week in Pittsburgh was not exhilarating. I still had to get used to a totally different city and culture and also I did not have any friends. Probably I was a little bit excessive because I should have expected that, but I almost wanted to go back to Italy.

Fortunately, some days later, the very first ISU meeting took place. ISU stands for International Student Union. It is one of the many organizations you will find at CMU. Particularly, ISU is for all international students who study there. There you will definitely find the best people ever. ISU will be your family for six months. They will make your Exchange experience unforgettable. They always organize events, nights out, trips, visit to museums and of course parties! A lot of parties!!! I found amazing friends in this wonderful group of people and I still keep in touch with many of them.

Time started to pass and my first impressions about this place started to fade away. One month after my arrival there, I did not want to leave Pittsburgh anymore. I started to love the city more and more, I made a lot of new friends and I fulfilled my weeks there with memories that I will never forget. This experience taught me that we have to give things their time to fully appreciate them. So, if you are going to Pittsburgh, do not worry if you will not like it after the first day. After a while you will literally fall in love with it. As I mentioned, before leaving my friend told me Pittsburgh was not a great city to live. I can say that he could not be more wrong. Pittsburgh is the perfect city for students. There are many things to do, many places to visit, many bars and clubs. You will have the time of your life there. You will cry, you will laugh, you will want to leave, you will want to stay there forever. Oh, and if you are lucky you will also fall in love with someone.



If you do not know whether to go or not to Carnegie Mellon and Pittsburgh, remember that if you will go there, you will come back (or maybe you will want to stay there forever) as a different person. I am not just speaking about the education you can get at CMU (that will be great, nothing to say about it.) I am mainly speaking about how your perspective on life will change. You will learn that life is something that we have to live right now, without thinking of our future perspectives. You will learn how to fully live your emotions without any boundaries, without the fear of them ruining your plans for the future. You will learn to always say “YES”, to any kind of proposal (“NO” is banned on an Exchange experience.) You will live, for real. Go to Pittsburgh, you will not regret that.

P.S.

Actually, I have one regret. That is that I had to come back to Italy earlier because of the Covid-19 outbreak. I wish I could have stayed there longer.

Firma: *Mauro Magarelli*

Data: July 28th 2020