

# Testimonial

## The University of Texas at Austin



My name is Arnick Boonprathuang. I went to The University of Texas at Austin in Fall Semester in 2013 as an exchange student. It was a great opportunity for me. UT Austin is one of the best universities in the United States. I've never thought that I would be in The University of Texas at Austin before but I was there and it was amazing.

### **How to survive in the first week?**

The weather is hot in Austin, during fall semester, when I got there. But it would be really cold, around 0 Celsius at the start of spring semester. My dorm didn't provide bed sheet, blanket and pillow. So my friend and I decide to go to "Bed, Bath and Beyond" store to purchase stuffs for our room on the first day that we arrive there. Living near campus is easy, if you need anything, all of them are available at "CVS pharmacy" located on West Campus. Even though it is pharmacy, it has almost everything that you use in your daily life so you better check it out once you get to Austin. Food price is around 10usd – 20usd per meal and there's a lot of Mexican restaurant and Thai restaurant on West Campus. If you want to cook, you can buy some fresh product from Wal-Mart.

The semester started around the middle of August but there's a bunch of stuff to do before the class actually started including meeting advisor, orientation, class



registration and etc. Basically, what to do in the first few weeks is to follow the schedule, UT Austin will send us a schedule on what we need to do and which meeting we need to attend. In every meeting, we don't need to wear business formal or formal attire at all; T-shirts and shorts are ok for every meeting and classes.

Try to get to know other students and make friend with them during orientation and other meetings; it is normal to talk to stranger. Once the class started, you really don't have much chance to talk to other student. Classes are back-to-back so everyone leaves immediately after the class over and students don't really talk to each other in class.



### How to prepare for studying?

I was expecting classes in United States to be tougher and harder than those in Thailand but I was wrong. They are really easy comparing to classes in Thailand, so I



have time to relax and enjoy an exchange student life.

Readings before class is not essential but some classes do require them. For a 3 credits course, classes are split into two 1.5 hours classes per week so it is easy to focus on the subject. In UT there's a lot of homework and group work and they contribute a lot to the

grade. The exams are relatively easy compare to the homework. One of my US friends

told me that UT has “GPA inflation” and it is true. 30%-60% of the class can get an “A” grade.



### **Lifestyle**

There is a stereotype where Texas is full with cowboy and horses. When I was in Austin, I had not seen any cowboy or horses. Living in Austin is easy, there's a motto “Keep Austin Weird”. It doesn't mean that you need to be crazy to live here but Austin is where you can be anything you want. Nobody cares on what you are wearing or what you are doing.

### **Activities and Traveling**

My friend and I decided to fly to the United States early and travel along the West Coast before we actually arrived in Austin. I also travel to another state or city during the semester. I have a lot of free time when I was in Austin, because there's no class on Saturday and Sunday for business school and I don't have any class on Monday.



Most of the time we rent a car and drive; it was fun and really bond us together.

During fall semester, there's a football game almost every week for the whole semester. There's a 3-days concert “Austin City Limit” which was really fun. Halloween was crazy at 6<sup>th</sup> street, the place was wild. And there are some days off on thanksgiving.



For the “must go” places in Austin. These are the list; Zilker Park, Barton’s spring, the Capitol, Congress Bridge and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. And “must eat” restaurant would be Rudy’s, Plucker’s Wing Bar and Hobdoddy Burger Bar.



## University of Texas at Austin



University of Texas at Austin, or UT/UT Austin for short, is a massive campus on a 40 acres land. The UT spirit is very strong and it feels like the whole city's culture is based around the UT. Even though, Texas is a very southern state and you may be led to believe that it is a very outback, dangerous, full of cowboys riding horse in the middle of the desert, I assure you that it is nothing like that. Especially when it come to Austin. Austin is like a different country comparing to the rest of Texas. Everyone is very friendly and open. The town feels very chill and homely.

## First Week at UT Austin

International students have to arrive a week earlier than normal UT students for the special orientation for international students, therefore, you wouldn't get to meet many Americans on your first week. The International Office will offer you many activities such as taking you sightseeing around the major spots in Austin, offer rides to Target to buy stuff you need or trips to other city such as San Antonio. Taxi in the US is very expensive and it will be hell if you try to use the bus to go shopping. So it's best to wait for Inter Office.

Housing: This could be tricky because most of the student dorms such as "The Castilian" that I stayed at are catered towards UT students therefore the housing plans would start a week after you arrived. You could negotiate with the property to extend the lease to cover your dates or stay in motels and youth hostels downtown.





## Studies

This will be a big cultural shock for you. The format is entirely different from in Thailand. Instead of being free the whole semester, you will have a lot of homework, projects, and assignments to do; the workload would be huge throughout the whole semester. Unlike Thammasat, there is no such thing as a "Midterm Exam period." I once had an exam in the morning, a class, and another exam all back-to-back. If you're looking to take multiple classes in the same day, be prepared. I find that the exams here are much easier, and the environment in the exam is not as intense. People sit next to each other and they don't check your pockets or scan for metals. People frequently walk up to the professor sitting in front of the class to ask questions throughout the exam. It's a very trusting environment that people just don't cheat.



Textbooks are very expensive to buy and even just to rent. NEVER and I repeat, NEVER buy or rent from the Coops store. It is the most convenient and the professors will advise you to buy from there. This is because most, if not all, of them get a cut from the store. The price is 2-10 times more expensive than what you could find outside. Try online. Website like bigwords.com will search the Internet for the cheapest place you could buy a book. The delivery may take up to a few weeks so get this done early.



You are encouraged to talk in class and speak up. The professors will love you. The professors are friendly and you are welcomed to visit them during office hours. Some class focus very heavily on participations. I took a leadership class and it was 100% participation with 1 term paper and no exam.

## **Orange Bike Project**

There is a bike cage in Guadalupe Garage that offers to rent bike to students for \$20 a semester. It's ridiculously cheap and you get a bike lock along with it. You could also take your bike there for free repairs (People usually donate some money to the program) It is student run and they reserve bikes for international students. If you want to get a bike, you best go early so you can get the good bikes. Beware: It is basically hidden inside and you could walk right past the garage and not notice it so I suggest you walk inside and look carefully.

## **Food**

There are many good places to go for food and lots of them offer delivery service. My favourite is Pluckers, a chicken wings restaurant. They have many good activities throughout the week, you can watch (American) football and many other sports here. If you're into Barbeque, Rudy's is a good place to check out. It has a very unique environment but it's also very far from the campus. Note that for the delivery lovers, you can ask them to deliver it right to your desk in study rooms. So you could get food while also cramming for the exams.



## Parties

6<sup>th</sup> street is where it all goes down. Everybody goes there to party. House parties are rarer and they are usually held by fraternities. If you want to go to these you'll have to get your American friends to invite you in. Of course, like any party, if you're a girl they will let you in regardless.





Graffiti painting like these are Everywhere!



## Travels

The best thing to do is to find American friends who have a car. It will make your life a lot easier. There are many things to see, both in Austin and Texas. If you like going out of town you should visit San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas.

## Activities

Austin is filled with things to do. From the congress bridge downtown horde of Bats will come out at sunset from under the bridge. From atop Mt. Bonnell you could see a spectacular view of the whole Austin. You could also visit Barton spring at Zilker Park. They offer kayaking and canoeing there. Be warned, the water is freezing cold. If you try the water by dipping your feet you wouldn't be able to go in the only way to get in is to jump right in!

Also be sure to check out Castle Hill. It's a place where people draw graffiti all over. Everything will be different everytime you visit because everyone there is constantly painting their own thing. You could join them too!

## Planet Longhorn

This is basically and organisation for organising activities for International students. Be sure to check them out.







These are all bats!

Austin calls itself “The capital city of live music,” as the name suggests, there are many live music events throughout the year. ACL music festival is one of the most popular one.



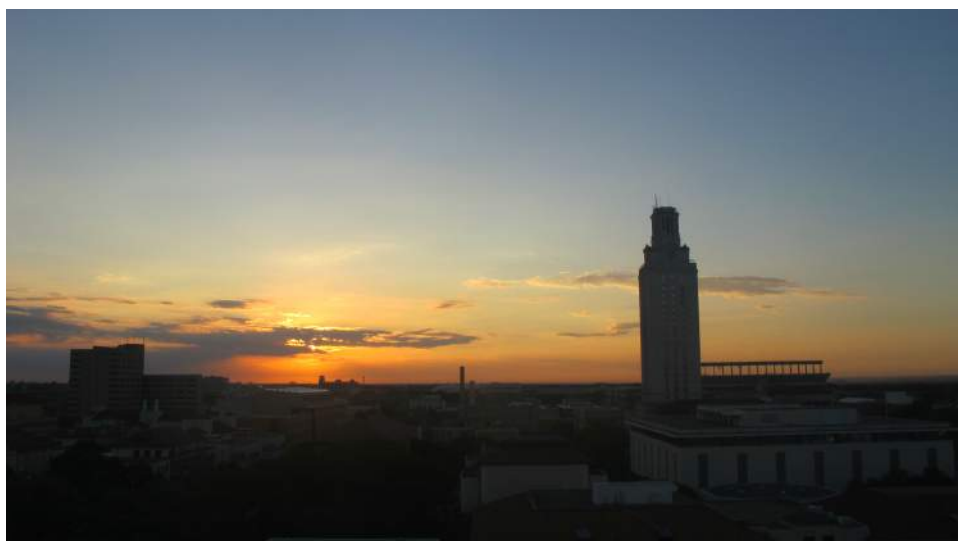
## Clothing

People here dress however they want. There is a famous saying “Keep Austin Weird” and for that people tend not to judge or even be surprised when people dress strangely or do weird things.

Be sure to pack both summer and winter clothes. Temperature in August could go up to 40c while in November it could go down to -2c. When a cold front comes, it could be burning hot one night and the next morning it would be freezing cold.

## Online Shopping

Try not to get carried away but online shopping here is great. Products arrive right to your door very quickly. You could register for amazon and use the trial version of the “Prime” service for free for a few months. This offers 2-days delivery, sometimes it even arrives the next afternoon!





## **Black Friday**

This is the Friday after thanksgivings and prices of everything become ridiculously cheap. You could get discounts ranging from 50% to 90%.



With Bevo the University's Mascot!



This is one of the famous saying in Austin. It is also accompanied by a hand symbol that they will teach you very early on. When we were transferring from LA airport to Austin the security guard even gave us the sign and said Hook 'em kids when we told them we're going to UT.

Hook 'em,

P' BeeJay

