



Berkeley Law, University of California (United States of America)

Study Guide

1 Overall impression

Studying in Berkeley was overall very fun and educative. It is enriching for your personal and legal knowledge growth as well as for the professional network. You get to know so many interesting people being your fellow students or professors!

To be able to do 2 Degrees in 2 years may be intense but pays off at the end.

2 Making preparations

(e.g. administrative matters, finding information)

Sometimes also a bit of contradicting information received from different offices/universities – best to have everything in writing and printed out at/for immigration.

Very time consuming to find accommodation, best to start early.

Flight booking was easy as there are direct flights from ZRH to SFO frequently.

3 Contacts/Responsibilities

(e.g. important contact persons at the Partner University and Faculty)

For the first summer the double degree coordinator of the UZH supported me especially during the LSAC process.

Depending on the issue at UC Berkeley, ADP and BIO were responsible.

However, be aware that a lot will be your own responsibility and own clarifications/research are needed.

4 Housing

Berkeley is very expensive and there is also not much availability. It is usually cheaper to rent directly from private landlords (e.g. through sabbaticalhome.com or through former student's recommendations/contacts) or by Airbnb. However, be aware that there are many scams especially on the market platforms like craigslist or facebook.

Areas around the Berkeley Law Building feel the safest (residential/family areas, many fraternity/sorority housing). The further you go East, e.g. Central Berkeley or Down Town, the less safe it feels (e.g. more homeless, drugs..).

All the student housing I saw was very small but modern, nevertheless prices seemed comparably high.

5 Arrival

Very easy and quick immigration, just have your I20 and the passport ready.

I took an Uber from SFO to Berkeley. It is about a 40min drive with no traffic and prices change considerably (depending on availability and traffic) between \$65-160.

6 Telephone

(e.g. costs, carriers)

I used the eSim of mint which was recommended by UC Berkeley. You then can have your home number and the new US Number on the same phone. I set it up first thing in the US (as you do not have any reception from the US Number in Switzerland) and it was fairly easy. There are different plans you can choose from. Reception of mint is at times a bit bad compared to other providers. Sometimes there are also very good options to stick with the Swiss provider only and just expand the abonnement option.

7 Bank account

I did not open a US bank account. However, there is a cooperation of UC Berkeley with Bank of America which may give you easy access to a bank account.

I highly recommend the online Swiss based Bank "Neon" – there you do not have conversion fees and very good exchange rates.

Many also used Revolut and were fairly satisfied with it – however, there are some "tweaks" you should be aware of as it otherwise may get expensive. An example is that the fees on weekends are higher then during the week, but if you top up your card during the week the higher rates do not apply – so read the fine print.

8 Transport

There is expansive public transportation.

In Berkeley there are many buses which are free with your student transit card which will be provided to you with your student card on orientation day. The buses are mostly not on time, however, google maps live updates where the buses are, which is very helpful.

There is a train from Berkeley to San Francisco, called the BART which you have to pay for by topping up your transit card.

Nevertheless, I rarely took public transportation and mostly walked, took scooters (like VEO or Superpedestrian - equivalent to Lime/Bird/Zisch), rent a car or Uber'd.

Many students also had bicycles they either bought or had provided by their hosts.

9 General information about the Partner Faculty and student life

Since we are here twice for 3-4 months, it is intense and many stress out – however, once you get the hang of it, it is awesome!

You get to know so many incredible people from all around the world and make real friendships. Many are also already lawyers and the age gaps are huge. However, you can learn so much and may see the difference between countries, culture and theory and practice.

There are quite a few social events as the weekly Traditional Tuesday or different network events with speakers. It may sometimes be tiring as so much is going on...

10 Teaching and studying at the Partner Faculty

(e.g. program structure, methodology, exams, etc.)

We had a 3h lecture every morning for 3 weeks followed by exam days. Some days you also had 3-4h afternoon classes. That makes it very intense, but also very efficient and focused.

The exams were usually between 2-6h.

The teaching style is very interactive and they sometimes even do cold calling.

11 City

(e.g. cultural activities, sports, discounts, nightlife, must-sees, short trips, etc.)

Berkeley is mostly a student village". Unfortunately, it is therefore quite empty during summer as many students actually leave for summer break and return when we are leaving.

There are not many nice bars or restaurant and it has many homeless and there is a lot of violence. Never walk home alone at night and be always self-conscious and attentive.

SF has some good restaurants, bars and clubs but also many sketchy and dangerous areas, just be aware of and prepare for it.

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