



Tips on Studying Abroad at Bilkent University in Turkey

Want to know what it's like to study abroad? Want to know what your peers think? Your fellow Georgia Tech students who have previously gone on this exchange program gave their opinions so that future participants have the inside scoop on their host institution and host country.

Preparation & Getting Started

- Bilkent offers EXCELLENT advisors for international students who are always willing to help and offer continued active support throughout the year.
- The program offered me a first-hand experience of living in Turkey as a college student. However, the university was not representative of typical Turkish life and learning Turkish was difficult in the setting.



Housing

- I lived in a dorm with a Turkish girl who was a translation major. She had volunteered to live with international students. The dorms were at times interesting. Curfew was not strictly enforced at the dorm; however the doors were locked so you had to wake someone to unlock the door. The general hallway bathrooms could also be disgusting at times and they offer only two "western" toilets in addition to their six or so "eastern toilets". Boys were not allowed into the girls' dorms and vice-versa. This rule was strictly enforced. The rooms were basically what you would get any other normal college, except for the really expensive ones, which were extremely nice.
- I lived in a dorm room with a roommate. The accommodations were very similar to Tech's and in many cases they were better. The dorms are single gender and you are not allowed into the dorms of the other gender. This makes hanging out with friends difficult when it is too cold to sit outside. There is also a curfew, though it doesn't really apply to exchange students.



Classes

- All of the courses were in English with the exception of my language courses, which were conducted in Turkish. I would highly recommend these courses. They nicely supplemented my previous knowledge of the region and were not available at Tech. The IR department is particularly friendly to international students. It should be noted that other language courses including German, French, Spanish, and Arabic are taught in Turkish.
- It would be nice if there were also an exchange with METU University, a more Technical school might be a better fit with Tech students' academic needs.
- The overall quality was mixed. My courses ranged from highly challenging with excellent professors-- easy courses with poor professors—and the worst, hard courses with bad professors. The departments tend to be lenient on international students as they expect them to experience more than just the classroom. Information from other students on the quality of professors' instruction is recommended before taking the course.
- Some of the classes move much too slowly since the student do not know English as well as they should. This makes some aspects of the classes a little too easy, especially for someone coming from Tech. The computer classes were on par with Tech, both challenging and informative.



These comments do not reflect the views of GT's Office of International Education. They are based on students' personal opinions and are, therefore, not necessarily reflective of all student experiences.





Communication

- Dialpad minutes (www.dialpad.com) offers very cheap monthly plans to use your computer to call a land-line back in the US. It is cheaper to call from Turkey to the US than vice-versa. The average price for a call was 3-4 cents a minute. Headphones with an attached microphone made the calls easier.
- I used computer-to-computer communication for free through Skype. Skype worked very well and I highly recommend it.

Cultural Differences

- Be relaxed, don't get stressed out, and overall be flexible. Turks always are.
- It's hard to get used to the toilets, language, and food poisoning.

Finances

- Look into the National Security Education Program Scholarship!
- I used my ATM/credit card in Turkey, but I did incur expenses every time I used the ATM machine. Also after living in Turkey for 9 months and two weeks before I left Turkey, my bank decided to lock down my card from being used internationally.
- ATM card and credit card handled everything. Do not bring travelers checks since they are difficult and expensive to get cashed. It is easy and cheap to just withdraw money from your American account in large chunks to reduce ATM fees.

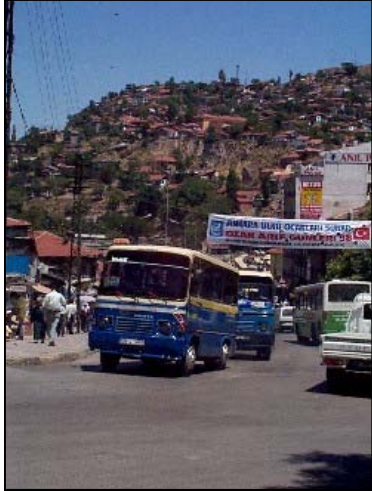
Lifestyle

- Bilkent has an active student life with many of the clubs and organizations offered at Tech. Sometimes, I would participate in the movie club. There was also an international group with both international and Turkish students who organized many outings. I tried to take fencing, but this became difficult and funny because the teacher only spoke Turkish and French.
- Student life is a little more open and friendly than Tech's however METU University seems to have a more classic college feel. I participated in the Cinema club activities and spent a lot of time with the international club.
- I spent most of my time with international students and a handful of Turkish students, including my roommate and Turkish host students.
- I spent the most time with other international students, which included Californians and several western Europeans. I also spent time with several Turks.
- The Turkish students can be quite shy especially about speaking English. A Turkish roommate helps out significantly in introducing you to other people.
- The main difficulty with meeting Turks was the language barrier. While all students on campus speak English to some degree, they are shy about their language skills and often are not willing to speak until you get them more comfortable.
- Mango Outlet: is in the Kizilay area of Ankara where there is lots of shopping and restaurants. The store has the BEST sales ever. Extremely cheap dress pants.



Transportation & Travel

- I traveled extensively throughout Turkey as well as to most of the surrounding countries. I would not recommend the trains in Turkey. Buses are wonderful and there are a large variety at the main bus station, ranging both in price and comfort. I would always suggest taking a medium priced bus as they are safe as well as clean. Bargaining is always an option in Turkey. Hostels in Istanbul are very cheap. When trying to get a student discount, first try your Bilkent ID, then your residence permit if they won't give you the discount Turkish price. Be sure to get an ISIC card. It is the only one accepted in Jordan as well as in Egypt for discount prices. Always carry hand sanitizer and tissues or toilet paper as those things aren't widely found on the road or even at restaurants. Travel guides are always a plus.



- I traveled a lot in Turkey and in the region. The bus system is excellent in Turkey and you can fly domestically for a good price. Travel was very easy and there are so many places to go and see that it is silly not to travel most weekends. Get an international student id card if you travel outside of Turkey for some good discounts, but in Turkey things are so cheap that you don't really need student discounts.
- Uludag is highly recommended. There are a couple in Ankara and some in Istanbul. Just ask any taxi or Turk and they can tell you all about it.

- Bilkent Center has good restaurants, good entertainment, and good shopping and it is just down the street from campus, so that is a good spot.



Food

- The meal situation at times could be difficult. There is no general dining hall on campus. There are kitchens on every floor of the dorms, which everyone shares, however food was often stolen from the fridge. The university had a plethora of restaurants on campus, but these were often more expensive than the restaurants downtown.



- There was a grocery store very close and food can be bought at reasonable prices, but don't expect the grocery bill to be overall cheaper than it would be at home. Also, one should be careful about eating at restaurants while it is hot outside. Parasites and Salmonella were rampant amongst the international students. I would suggest cooking for oneself when it's hot and then eating downtown when it gets colder, as the cost is about the same.
- Meals all come from restaurants either on or off campus. There are plenty of options at every price level, so food was never a problem.
- Marmara: cheap, cheap food during the afternoons on campus. Doesn't taste great, but is fast and inexpensive.
- Coffee Break: on campus, really great carrot cake muffins and olive muffins
- Özsut: various places around Ankara, good dessert place, good chocolate soufflé.



Participant Profiles

Please see information of contributing students below. If a blog or website is listed, feel free to take a look! Also, if an e-mail address is listed, you may contact that student if you have any questions about their study abroad experience.

CS, Spring 2005
IAML, Spring 2005