

# NEW YORK CITY

4 INDESCRIBABLE MONTHS.  
BUT I'LL GIVE IT A SHOT.

BY AMALIE AMTOFT-JENSEN    SPRING 2024



# HI, LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF.



My name is Amalie, and I hold an Academy Profession Degree from KEA in Design, Technology & Business, specializing in Marketing & Communication Design. Currently, I am pursuing a bachelor's degree in Design & Business with a focus on Creative Branding at KEA.

I had the great privilege of studying at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York during the spring of 2024 as part of my sixth semester.

As I sit in my bed in New York, having just completed my semester,

it's hard to believe that my four months here are almost over, with only seven days left of my stay.

I'm going to start from the beginning and share the good, the bad, and everything in between, in the hopes of helping you decide if an exchange program is right for you.

**Enjoy!**



# WHY NEW YORK? AND THE PROCESS OF COMING HERE.

I was initially very uncertain about going on exchange because it felt like a long time to be away. I have an apartment, a boyfriend, friends, and family that I didn't want to leave behind. However, the idea of going on exchange always sounded like an amazing opportunity and a super cool adventure to look back on. So, despite my uncertainties, I decided to apply. I chose New York, Toronto, and Paris, and was thrilled to get my first choice, New York. Having lived in New York for four months before, I knew I could thrive there, so even though I was moving to a different continent on my own, I had some certainty it would be okay.

I wish I could tell you that my doubts disappeared after applying, but they didn't. They lingered, especially as I saw classmates "chicken out" for various reasons, which made me even

more nervous. However, I pushed myself through the process of applying for the visa, scholarships, and the million other things I had to do, knowing that in the back of my mind, it would be pretty cool.

The application process was **hard, draining, and extremely time-consuming**. You need to balance school and work while applying for a different school and getting permission to move to a different country—a country that is not easy to get into. I was exhausted and questioned if it was worth it multiple times. Now, I can say **it was worth it**, even though it didn't feel like it at the time.

I have received two scholarships so far: one from Erasmus and one from Det Reiersenske Fond. And I still received SU. Just apply



to as many scholarships as possible. Some scholarships won't respond immediately and might only answer after you return home, so there is a chance of getting money afterwards (fingers crossed), but don't count on it. Even though it took forever, make sure you spend time on your applications. New York is expensive, but more about that later.

The visa application process was challenging. You have to invest a lot of time and money, and only then will you be invited to an interview at the American Embassy to find out if you will be granted a visa. They are very strict, so take it seriously and you'll get your visa.

FIT's platform for getting accepted into the system was frustrating. There is a lot to keep track of. Do yourself a favor and make lists of what you need to complete and the various deadlines. Otherwise, your head will explode.

Despite all the frustration and hard work, it will eventually be fun (something

I definitely needed to hear myself).

Here is a little checklist of my best advice for this process:

1. Breathe; it's going to be okay, I promise.
2. Make yourself those damn checklists; they WILL help.
3. Set aside a lot of time to focus on this process; you're going to need it.
4. Remember to check all the platforms where you're supposed to submit documents.
4. Don't miss a deadline; it will make your life harder.
5. Keep track of all your documents. Folders will help.
6. Reach out to people if you have questions or need support, whether from your family, KEA, or FIT. It's a lot to go through on your own.





WHY NEW YORK? AND THE  
PROCESS OF COMING HERE

# **FIT** FIGURING A NEW SCHOOL AND CLASSES OUT

FIT did their best to support me before I left. I was assigned a contact person who was in charge of all the exchange students from Denmark, which was great. She was very helpful with my questions. I was also assigned a current exchange student who contacted me before I left to welcome me and let me know I could reach out to her with any questions.

Before I left for New York, FIT had me complete several small assignments to help me understand the campus and FIT better. They did a great job of preparing me before I arrived. Another somewhat frustrating process was signing up for classes before I got there. It was hard because

I had no idea what the classes would be like, and I had to hurry because the classes were filling up quickly. Some classes were already full, so I couldn't sign up for them. Keep in mind that it's normal to take night classes in college in the States. You can design your own schedule, but you'll probably have to take some classes at night. I didn't mind, but it does take some getting used to.

After dropping a class when I got there and changing it to a different class due to relevance, I ended up with these classes, all of which taught marketing from different perspectives. Some focused more on social media, while others focused



on direct marketing, but they were all more or less integrated:

**Internet Marketing:**

Monday 6:30 PM - 9:20 PM

**Social Media Integrated**

**Marketing Communications:**

Tuesday 9:10 AM - 12:00 PM

**Workshop in Direct Marketing:**

Wednesday 11:10 AM - 2:00 PM

**Creative Strategies:**

Thursday 6:30 PM - 9:20 PM

My recommendation for anyone interested in these classes would be to take Social Media Integrated Marketing Communications and Workshop in Direct Marketing. Both classes were super interesting. Overall, I liked all my professors.

Some colleges care a lot about class attendance and participation, and FIT is definitely one of those colleges. So be outgoing and participate in

the discussions; they will grade you on it. One advantage I had as an exchange student was that they found it interesting to have someone from Denmark in their class. They noticed me and made an effort to learn my name, which was good for my grades.

Overall, I felt that a lot of the material they taught me I was already familiar with from my time at KEA. The amount of new knowledge was not overwhelming, which I took as a good thing because it gave me more time to “enjoy the ride.” However, I found the American perspective on the industry fascinating and very interesting.





MOVING HERE



# MOVING

## AND GETTING STARTED

Finding a place to stay was actually not hard. I was just unsure what was the right move for me personally. I like my privacy and need to be alone after a long day spent with people around me. FIT allows exchange students to apply for dorms with the rest of the “normal students,” for which I initially signed up. The problem was that I was likely to get 1-3 roommates, depending on which room they assigned me. I could apply for specific kinds of rooms, but unless I wanted to spend a million gazillion bajillion dollars on a single dorm, I would have roommates who I would be sleeping in the same room with. That sounds fun for a little while, but it was not for me for four months. So, I chose to look for an alternative.

Another student from KEA who had

studied at FIT told me that she and her friends stayed in an apartment from a company called Alohause, where they rented out rooms. The price range was more or less the same, because let me tell you a not-so-secret secret:

**EVERYTHING IN NEW YORK IS SO F\*CKING EXPENSIVE. UNLESS YOU'RE A SECRET MILLIONARE YOU WILL BE BROKE IN NO TIME.**

The price to stay in the FIT dorms included a meal card valid for their cafeteria, but I like to cook and be in charge of my own meals, so it was okay to miss out on that. I took a chance and moved into an apartment



with four roommates, one living room, two bathrooms, and a small kitchen with no windows. But I had my own room with a door I could close after a long day. Hallelujah.

Alohause only lets people live there who are at a similar stage in life, so I actually met some really cool people. Some of them became super good friends, and I hope to continue being friends with them for a long time.

The price varies from room to room. One of my roommates lived in what I called “Harry Potter’s closet,” and she paid way less than I did. I paid \$2000 per month, which is insane, but it was just a little bit more than the average price of the dorms. Let’s just say I did have a budget but I went way way over.

teams, which created small groups for us to start getting to know each other. There were many faculty members and staff present who got on stage and presented various topics so we not only got familiar with the school but also got a sense of what it would be like to actually attend.

They provided the schedule beforehand, so I knew what my week would look like. Additionally, all the exchange students had our own meetings, dinners, and other events to attend. This allowed me to meet the other exchange students as well as the FIT officials I had been in contact with before coming to New York. Overall, they made sure we were well taken care of.

## THE FIRST WEEK AT FIT

The introduction week at FIT was actually really well-organized. They divided all the new students, both exchange and non-exchange, into



THE VIEW FROM MY  
WINDOW IN MY ROOM



MOVING HERE

THE FIRST DAY OF INTRO



# BONUSES

## AND OPPORTUNITIES

It's standard practice to pay for health insurance provided by the school. They won't allow you to opt out, which can be a bit frustrating since it's not cheap. However, it does come with some perks! All students have the right to sign up for massages and acupuncture. I managed to get appointments for both, and they were great. I even went for semi-intensive acupuncture treatments because I'm prone to migraines. They really take good care of you, but you have to be quick because the time slots fill up fast.

The Health Service Office is a literal office with doctors, nurses, and a reception area. This setup meant I didn't have to worry about navigating the complicated American healthcare system, as I was already covered by the school's health

insurance, which turned out to be a great deal (not that I had any choice).

FIT also has excellent amenities for fitness. They offer a large variety of different classes throughout the week, a big gym where you can sign up to be part of a team, and they have a fully equipped fitness center.





# CHALLENGES

## AND THE TOUGH TIMES

One of the coolest things about being on exchange is the opportunity to explore a different country and city far away. However, sometimes the distance feels even greater, especially when you're in a long-distance relationship. I have a boyfriend with whom I agreed to do long distance. We're used to being apart a lot back home in Denmark (Copenhagen-Aarhus), but a 4-month long-distance relationship is a whole different ball game, let me tell you that. I'm so grateful that I chose to go on exchange anyway. I believe it was something wonderful that I did for myself. And if this long distance were to break us up in the end, then it was probably not meant to be. But I won't sugarcoat it—it's hard work, trust me.

He came to visit me, and for that, I am so grateful. Being able to share my life in New York with him and showing him my everyday experiences was, I believe, a great investment in our long-distance relationship. So if you're planning on doing long distance, please get your significant other to visit you. I promise you, it's worth the money.

There were also times when I experienced the lovely feeling of FOMO. For example, seeing my family celebrate Easter with the traditional lunch and celebrating my mom's birthday. These were all times where it felt weird just sitting in my bed, eating a bagel, and finishing up an assignment for class.



**ANNIVERSARY / VALENTINES DAY  
SURPRISE FLOWERS**





# THE THINGS THAT MADE IT WORTH IT

The first thing that comes to mind when I think about why I'm grateful is the people. I've been fortunate enough to meet so many wonderful individuals from all over the world who have made my time in New York even more special. I've learned a lot about different cultures from them, which has been incredibly enriching and fun!

Exploring the city both on my own and with friends has allowed me to see it in a more local and intimate light than I would have experienced if I were just here on vacation. However, saying goodbye to these amazing people really sucks. That's definitely a downside to an otherwise amazing experience.

## SO HOW DO YOU KNOW IF NEW YORK IS FOR YOU?

Well, let me tell you, if you hate smelly streets, rats, constant noise from emergency vehicles, crazy people, a fast-paced environment, and being woken up at 4 am by someone singing Lady Gaga's "Born This Way" from beginning to end right outside your window (trust me, I was on the verge of becoming a real New Yorker by opening my window and yelling, "SHUT UP!!"), then New York is probably not the city for you.

But if you love towering, beautiful buildings, incredible diversity, delicious food, meeting interesting people (some crazy, some not), and the bustling noise that signifies the city's constant energy, then this city is for you. Plus, being in New York means the possibilities and things to do are endless. I mean, "come onnn" \*in a New York accent.\*





