

2011

# Studying Abroad at San Francisco State University

By Per Sand

Student Perspective From:  
Danish School of Journalism, Denmark



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**How difficult/easy was it to obtain a US visa?**

I had to fill out different forms for the US Embassy in Denmark, pay the fees, and bring everything to the embassy personally. You have to make sure you do everything correct, and it takes some time to figure it all out, but you can find all information on the embassy's webpage, though I did give them a call or two to make sure that I had got it right. Start out early applying for the visa then I am sure you will manage.

**Where and how did you find temporary housing when you first arrived? How much did it cost? Describe your experience.**

I stayed at Adelaide Hostel in downtown San Francisco. It is a very fine hostel with nice people, and a \$ 5 dinner every night. There is really nice breakfast and a common area where you can actually study if needed. It is around \$25 a night.

**Where and how did you find permanent housing? How much rent do you pay? Are you happy with where you live? Describe your experience.**

I found a room in Pacific Heights at Clay and Broderick Street. I paid \$800 plus utilities (around \$70). Yesterday, I wrote this description of my first meeting with the house and three of the six other people who live there:



*Richard owns the house in which I lived in San Francisco. I remember the first day visiting in the middle of January 2011 to see the room that he was renting out. It had become dark as I walked up the stairs.*

*The stairs were an experience themselves. First, there were concrete stairs, and then came the wooden stairs that made a softer and more welcoming sound when you walked on them. Green herbs grew in the front garden and they had a natural smell that I would later associate with marijuana. The house had two floors and a basement. White paint cracked on the outside. I rang the doorbell and a small man with grey hair and a slightly curved back opened the door.*

*"Per is here," Richard called out down the hallway.*

*Tatiana came. She has dark, curly hair that falls to her shoulders, a kind voice, and persistent eyes that look beyond the surface of the people around her; she wants to understand.*

*I was astonished when I entered the house: a shiny black piano stood in the living room and old carpets with red patterns covered the dark wooden floor; there was space. It was as if my breast released some tension when entering this house that would be my home. These walls had been blessed with great music, and tunes of love and happiness have been composed in the basement underneath this floor.*

*Tatiana did most of the talking. She had already told me in an email that a lot of musicians had lived in this house. She was a play writer, she told me, and because I was a writer too, she had responded to my post on craigslist, which is a web page, where many people find housing (and bikes and love and everything).*

*We went in to the kitchen. Huge windows curved under the ceiling. A big oak table sat in front of them. Tatiana talked about spirituality. She had a calm way of talking, some would maybe get impatient, but she talked, and looked, and talked and felt her way through sentences. While standing there I adapted my soul—kind of tuned it down a little until our frequencies were aligned.*

*Richard stood beside us. He did not talk much. He was just there observing and listening. I would later know how he will clean up for you if he can see that you need it, how he cares for the deaf cat, Lars, that lives in the house as well and for his plants and the bumble bees in the garden. He is one of the coolest a kindest people I have ever known.*

*I had to meet Jordan before they could give me the room, because I would share the bathroom with him, so a couple of days later I was back. I sat in the orange sofa in the living room. I was early, and Tatiana was a bit surprised, that I had come. She had just sent me an email and asked if we could move the appointment. But I had not seen it, and now I was there. Jordan was out finding some food, as he had just come home from a trip. I grabbed the guitar*

*next to the sofa while talking to Richard. I don't recall what we talked about, but I remember that talking to him was nice. I felt lucky that he wanted to talk to me. When I asked him a question he would be still for a while thinking. Then he would say what he thought or make some kind of joke or share a general observation of life.*

*Jordan dumped in to one of the brown leather chairs that Richard and his partner Charles bought many years ago; Charles died in 2000. Jordan had sunken all the way down in the chair, the backrest pushed his head forward and his hands gripped the armrests. He looked a bit like a child at a parent-teacher conference. He looked at Richard and then at me. Jordan is 41 years old and he has been living in the house for 16 years. He is a musician and works as a DJ. He seemed very kind like the others I had met.*

*Shortly after, Tatiana wrote me an email to tell me that the house was mine.*



**How difficult/easy is it to get around? What mode of transport do you use primarily (public transport, bicycle, car, walk)?**

I used the bus (Muni) a lot. At the end, I got a bike. If you are used to biking a lot, it is cool to bike in San Francisco. If you are not, it might be a difficult place to start.

**How do you access your money? Did you open an American bank account? If so, was it worthwhile?**

I got an American bank account, but I didn't use it. I only used my Danish Visa and Mastercard.

**Did you obtain a California driver's license? If so, was it worthwhile?**

No. My European driver's license was just fine.

**Did you find San Franciscans to be helpful if you were in need?**

I don't have any examples, but I generally find San Franciscans helpful and nice.

**Where did you obtain furniture for your room?**

My apartment was pre-furnished.

**Primarily, do you buy groceries or do you eat out? Where and why?**

I bought groceries at Trader Joes close to the school (at Stonestown Galleria), but I found myself buying many burritos at the school and eating out at all kinds of places – taco places in the Mission, etc.

**How difficult/easy was it to make friends? Describe your experience.**

The introduction week is very helpful for putting people together. I quickly started to talk to a group of people, and I made sure to go to the Thursday Night Socialites events. It is a really good way to get together and maybe have a drink or two. I find it is all about going out as much as possible and having fun. I can truly say that I have never been more social in my life than during this past semester, and it has been wonderful making many friends from all over the world.

**What IEEC commitment did you choose (flyering, tabling, language exchange, country ambassador, IEEC officer, special contribution)? Describe your experience.**

I was part of the PR committee as an **officer**. I made the flyer for the Spring 2011 Lake Tahoe trip. It was fine, but unfortunately I had class, when the weekly meeting was scheduled, and it made it harder for me to follow all the work in the committee.

**Were you able to enroll in the classes you wanted?**

Yes. In one class, I was on the waiting list, but the last day on which we could add classes my teacher told me that I could stay in this class. Therefore, I dropped another class that I wanted less. If you really want a class, be persistent—the teachers like motivated students.

### **How do your classes at SFSU compare to your classes at home?**

There was less group work than in Denmark. A lot of it was lecturing, but in all my classes the teachers urged the students to discuss the topics, which I find really cool.