



Johnson  
Cornell  
SC Johnson College of Business



Coller School  
of Management  
Tel Aviv University

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### **Ithaca, NY**

Cornell University is located in Ithaca, a small town in up-state New York. It's about 4 hours drive to New York City and 3.5 hours from Toronto. It's a true university town where the vast majority of the residence are Cornell students and faculty. Ithaca is a real beauty, surrounded by many waterfalls, gorges and lots of nature. It's very small and cozy, but in a comfortable driving distance (in terms of the US) to large cities like NYC, Toronto, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington DC, etc.

The weather changes dramatically over the seasons in Ithaca and if you are there during the fall semester you get to experience 3 seasons; a warm summer, gets to 25-30 C, where you can enjoy (and even swim in) the falls and lakes, fall – amazing foliage colors around, cooler days and some rain, and winter – gets very cold, below zero, with lots of snow. If you're lucky you'll even have a snow day- when there's a blizzard classes are cancelled, and everyone come with sleds to school and sliding the main hill (called Lib slope). It's a very fun Cornellian tradition. When I was there snow only started around mid-November, and the coldest temperature we had by the time I left in mid-December was -9 C (which was considered a very light winter).



*Ithaca falls summer – fall – winter*

### **Cornell University & Johnson Business School**

Cornell is an Ivy League school with lots of heritage, pride and school spirit. Johnson business school was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> this year in the Forbes ranking. It is one of the most beautiful campuses in the US, mid-evil style buildings, amazing libraries and nice view of the Cayuga lake (one of the finger lakes). There are gorges crossing the campus and you can hike in the trails along them. There's a big lake in the middle of the campus, on sunny Sundays you can rent a canoe or puddle board there.



*Bebe lake in Cornell Campus, summer 2019*



*Sage Hall Cornell campus winter 2019*

Johnson takes pride in being a very small and family-like school. There are only 200 MBA students per year so it's likely that by the end of the semester you'll get to recognize most of your classmates (2<sup>nd</sup> year students) by face. The professors take the time to get to know their students and usually have a chat with each student at least once outside of the classroom to learn more about you and your expectation from the class. There are many social events inside and outside the campus for the school community – student, faculty and families. Every Thursday there's a happy hour (called "Sage Social") for the entire school which is lots of fun and a great opportunity for informal mingling. Exchange students in Johnson are being treated exactly like full time students and you'll be able (and encouraged) to join every activity that the school offer.

There are many students' clubs in Johnson and most students are active in more than one club. Some clubs are professional and meant to help you learn more and create contacts to enhance your career path, and some are just for fun. It's a big part of the Johnson culture and I really recommend trying at least one club. the clubs I joined were:

- SGE (Sustainable Global Enterprise) club – we met once a week to discuss different sides of sustainability in business; met with speakers from corporates that has strong sustainability strategy/ sustainability related technologies, learned about impact investments, etc. At the end of the semester there was a track to San Francisco where the club members met with different relevant companies.
- Wine club – club meetings were once in two weeks after Sage Social. It's probably the most popular club in Johnson... during the meetings you learn about different wine types, taste them and mingle with friends, all in a big

lecture room inside school. The club also offer “educational” tasting sessions with winemakers from the area and day trips to local wineries.



### **Courses and professors**

Johnson College of Business includes also the hotel administration school and Dyson applied economics school, which opens lots of options for different elective classes you can take as an MBA student. I recommend enrolling to many classes (there’s no limitation to the number of classes you sign up to), trying them out in the first week and then drop your least favorite ones. Registration is based on first come first served so be on time when your registration is opened. Many people enter the classes from waitlist so don’t lose hope if you didn’t get the classes you want.

Here are the classes I took:

- **Design thinking:** this is a class given in the amazing Cornell Tech campus in Roosevelt Island, Manhattan. There are 3 dedicated weekends where electives are given on Fridays and Saturdays and are open to Ithaca students as well. Besides the fact that you get to spend 3 weekends in the city with all your classmates which is lots of fun, this class is a very unique experience. It’s based on the design thinking method for new products development, developed in the d-school in Stanford University. It’s thought as a workshop, meaning there’re no lectures and everything is based on group work inside and outside the classroom. It’s very different from any other class I ever took, and my favorite one in Cornell.
- **Managerial writing:** this is part of the managerial communication skills classes that are giving in Cornell and are known to be great hands on classes (others are managerial presentations and interpersonal communication). Very useful to improve your business writing.
- **Special topics in marketing:** the class is comprised of guest speakers that present a case study on a unique marketing niche from different industries

(entrepreneurial marketing, non for profit marketing, peer-to-peer marketing, etc.). All speakers were from top tier companies (Google, GE, etc.) and the case studies were very interesting. You'll have to present 2 case studies as part of a team, and get a feedback from the speaker. I learned a lot from this class.

- **Decision making:** this class is given by prof. J Rosso which also teach the class above (special topics in marketing). You'll learn about different methods and approaches to improve the decision making processes in organizations. I recommend this class because Prof. J Rosso, who is a great professor and it's a great opportunity to bond with him and learn from his experience. He's always happy to help with everything (including weekend trips recommendations). There're lots of discussions in the class and it's a good way to learn more about your classmates' experience.
- **Impact evaluation in developing countries:** this is a class I took in Dyson. The best part of it was the opportunity to meet people outside of the MBA program. Most of the students were MPA students with background in the developing world which was very cool. I wouldn't recommend it to anyone who doesn't have a specific interest in learning evaluation methods, because it's a very specific class and it was pretty demanding in terms of homework.
- **The business idea factory:** this is one of many entrepreneurship classes given at Cornell. This class gave me the opportunity to learn about entrepreneurship activities around the campus and in Ithaca.

### **Accommodation**

There're no dorms for business grad student (as far as I know). I recommend staying in Collegetown or downtown Ithaca. It's not easy to find a place so start looking as soon as you can, through facebook/ Craglist/ etc.. You'll get a useful guide for apartment search from the university (prepared by MBA students). If you can't find a place ahead of time don't panic – many people in my year took an Airbnb or hotel for the first week or two. Searching for a place while you're in Ithaca will be much easier, and the home owners are more flexible by than...

### **Visa**

Students in the US must have a J1/F1 visa. You'll have to send some documents to Cornell to show you're currently enrolled in TAU, that you have enough money for the exchange period, etc (you'll get a very detailed email about it). Try to complete it ASAP because only afterward they'll send you the I20 form, which is required for

your visa application in Israel. The I20 is shipped by mail (you need the original hard copy) so it might take a while.

### **Transportation**

The best way to get to Ithaca is by a flight to NYC and then a bus. There's a domestic airport in Ithaca but there're only few flights from there (non to NYC). Cornell operates a bus line from NYC to Ithaca called C2C (<https://fcs.cornell.edu/departments/transportation-delivery-services/campus-campus-bus-service>). It's more expensive than other buses but also more spacious and has less luggage limitations. I usually used Ourbus (<https://www.ourbus.com/>) or rented a car to travel outside of Ithaca. Inside Ithaca there's a free bus service for Cornell students. There're also Lime electrical bikes for rent, and Uber/Lyft.

### **Insurance and Health Services**

Exchange students must use the Cornell health insurance. I know some other exchange students in my year were able to wave it and use their own insurance, but in general they're very strict.

The insurance cover everything you need including medical care when you're traveling outside the campus (and outside of the US). Luckily I never used it 😊

### **Living expenses**

My basic expenses were rent: \$670/ month (in a 5 roommates house, excluding bills), and health insurance: 1295 \$. Life isn't cheap in Ithaca but how much you spend depends on how often you eat out, go out, where and how you travel, etc.

### **Night life**

Ithaca is a small college town so there isn't a huge night life scene. There are couple of bars and one club where you usually find the MBA students. You'll find out about them shortly after you get to campus... Also, there are many house parties (just like in American college movies 😊).

## Tips

- If you have the option – go on the fall semester; the weather is better, there's usually a bigger group of exchange students and it's easier to fit in because you'll be starting with many other new students (one year MBA and first year students).
- Take advantage of every minute, the semester goes by faster than you would think! There are so many events, conferences, workshops, meetings and different activities in Ithaca and NYC you can join while you're in Cornell – check the Johnson calendar every week and try to attend some events that are outside of your classes schedule.
- Travel as much as you can! There're so many beautiful places in driving distance... Don't forget to also enjoy Ithaca and its beautiful surrounding! There are many waterfalls to see, local wineries to visit etc. Make sure you visit the farmers market, it's the biggest in NY and really pretty.
- Use the resources you have (career center, writing assistant for international students, etc) to improve your CV while you're in Johnson, even if you're not currently looking for a job. They offer great help and you never know when you'll need it.
- Inside the Cornell campus you can find a beautiful botanical garden, art museum, rock-climbing wall, bowling lanes, clock tower with daily chimes concerts, dairy farm (where they make their own milk and ice cream...), and so much more... explore and enjoy it as much as you can!

## General experience

My time in Johnson was amazing, a real eye-opening experience. I truly recommend it to everyone! Feel free to contact me if you have additional questions.



