

Law school at Karl-Franzens University, Graz

Summer term 2014 at Macquarie University, Sydney Joint

Study

“Life starts where the comfort zone ends! “

I cannot think of another slogan which would describe my incredible study abroad experiences in Australia in a better way. In those six months, I had unforgettable moments in the most amazing country. I got to know Uni life far away from home, I had the pleasure to become friends with marvelous people from all over the world and I did a lot of travelling in Australia, New Zealand and Thailand. Every day was a challenge but an adventure at the same time.

Arrival in Down Under & Accommodation

I arrived several weeks before the semester started in Sydney, my new home for the next months. As I have family in Australia who picked me up from the airport, I did not use the shuttle service offered by University.

In terms of accommodation, I could stay at my uncle's house for almost 2 months. Afterwards, I moved in a shared house in Eastwood, about 20 minutes walk from University. You need to be aware that there is another sense of distances in Australia. The Macquarie Campus is located in North Ryde, a suburb northwest of Sydney. It takes about 40 minutes on train to get to the city centre. If you want to live really close to Uni, the student accommodation on campus, called the “Macquarie University Village“ might be the best option. Otherwise, districts like North Sydney or Eastwood are convenient. I found my accommodation via the Macquarie private accommodation website. When it comes to the rent, you should keep in mind the expensive rates, approximately between \$ 170-300 a week.

My units

As I am doing a law degree in Austria, I was enrolled for three units, which were all related to politics and law.

- Lex101- Law, Human rights and Global Governance

This unit is about examining the international law system focusing on human rights. The unit aims to develop an understanding of law, rights and institutions in relation to socio- political and economic issues. Topics such as free speech, self-determination, indigenous rights,

refugee law and international economic institutions are part of the schedule. Throughout the semester, I had to do several quizzes but the main project was a reform submission. This reform submission, which was done in teams, dealt with different challenges that human rights face in various parts of the world. I can absolutely recommend this unit because it presents the international human rights situation and related legal instruments in a lively way with the help of multimedia. I found it good that students are required to establish their own opinions as the reform task makes them think about issues where the law needs to be improved to meet human rights standards.

- LAW115-Foundation of Law

This unit is for first year law students in Australia and helps them to learn approaches of legal problem solving. It helps students to attain key legal skills, such as legal writing, reasoning, applying precedent and statutory interpretation. It is inevitable for law students as the Australian Legal Citation Code is taught from its roots. Furthermore this unit deals with foundational legal knowledge about the Australian law system which is a prerequisite for other subjects. The assessment is made up of several quizzes, short written papers which are due almost every second week and a collaborative group project at the end. This project requires applying the learned skills to examine a legal issue which students can choose by themselves.

As this unit is focused on Australian law, I would not recommend it to exchange students. The specific skills I have learned do not relate to my home study. Even though, the critical approach to certain legal issues, which was promoted in the group project, was quite interesting.

- POL108- Introduction to Global Politics

This unit introduces students to key issues, institutions, ideas and structures that are shaping world politics. The unit discusses the definition of global politics as well as its historical and contemporary setting. Essential events, such as the terror attack 9/11, are mentioned to attain an understanding how those events shape the world order. In terms of assessment, the unit is set up by a short exam-essay, an annotated bibliography, a major essay and an exam which is worth 30 %. I can strongly recommend this unit to exchange students, even if you are not doing a major in politics. This unit offers a great opportunity to learn more about important political events and to gain foundational knowledge about factors that shape the world we live in.

Insurance

During my stay in Australia, I was covered by the general OHSC (Overseas Student Health Cover) insurance which is valid from the beginning of the semester. All international students are required to obtain OHSC for the entire duration of their studies. It includes cover for visits

to the doctor, some hospital treatment, ambulance cover and limited pharmaceuticals medicines. During my stay I had to see the doctor once but it worked out without any complications. There is even a hospital on campus. Due to my early arrival before the semester start, I also obtained the travel insurance option of "Grazer Wechselseitige" until the OHSC insurance started.

Life in Australia and useful hints

In general, you need to be aware that Australia is an expensive country. But there is also some stuff that is less expensive than in Austria. When it comes to domestic flights, for instance, Australian airlines, such as Jetstar or Tiger Air, have a good range of decent offers. Especially flights to main cities like Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane are affordable. Talking about money issues, I also want to mention that it is helpful to have an Australian bank account for the time you are there. I opened a free student bank account at the Commonwealth bank which helped me to eliminate any transfer fees.

The public transport system is not the best in Sydney. Many busses are delayed or do not even come at all. At the beginning it was challenging for me to find out when I need to get off the bus because there are no screens which show you the current position. The good thing is that you easily find a friendly bus driver who helps you out. Personally, I recommend downloading transport applications for the smartphone, such as "transport info". It will make your stay a lot easier.

Sydney has a wide range of restaurants with international food. I went out for dinner with my friends at least once a week to try all kind of cuisines. The webpage Trip Advisor might help you to find the best restaurant in a certain area. Supermarkets have a great choice of exotic fruits and vegetables for decent prices as well. To note, there are just two common supermarkets: Coles and Woolworth's.

Another hint: Whenever you are looking for something (bicycles, rooms, travel mates etc.) "Gum tree" is a useful platform where people can advertise all kind of stuff.

My final and perhaps most important point to say is that Australians are so laid back which automatically rubs off on you when you are surrounded by such good vibes and happy feelings. My favorite Aussie phrase, I picked up is "no worries"-actually I can't think of a better way to describe the Australian attitude. Spending 6 months in Australia completely erased my habit of complaining about everything from my system and helps me feel more satisfied and happy every single day.

With this in mind, I can totally recommend doing an exchange semester in Australia. Those past six months will always be remembered as part of the most wonderful moments in my life. I am deeply grateful for getting the chance to make this experience and I am sure that I will come back to this beautiful country one day.

