

My Exchange Semester in Murdoch University- Perth, WA

Hello! My name is Beatrice B. I am a 4th year undergraduate student studying Communications in SFU. In the past 4 years, I was focused on school, my Co-op jobs, work, volunteering, and spending time with family and friends. As much as I was enjoying life, I wanted a change of scenery and I wanted to experience living independently. Also, it has always been a dream of mine (ever since I was around 11-12 years old) to visit Australia. I have read about Australia and saw many beautiful pictures so I have always wanted to go there. Doing an exchange semester in Perth, Australia would definitely allow me to experience a change of pace, independence and a chance to explore one of my favourite countries in the world.

Travel and Visas

Obtaining an Australian student visa through the online application was fairly simple. Since I moved from the Philippines to Canada in less than 5 years ago, I had to get a medical examination done by an Australian Government approved doctor. They sent the results straight to the Australian Immigration office. After about 3-4 weeks, I checked online and my visa was approved. I went to Travel Cuts on campus to get my flight ticket. They were very helpful and were able to book a flight that allowed me to arrive within campus hours so that resident assistants were around. Travelling around Australia was easy to do. I think that Australia really ry. There are hostels in almost every town and renting a car/campervan was very easy and quite cheap (if you travelled with your friends). Also, sometimes there are specials on air fare around the country so keep your eye out for that! Jetstar and Virgin Blue are 2 airlines I would recommend that were affordable and flew to many cities in Australia.

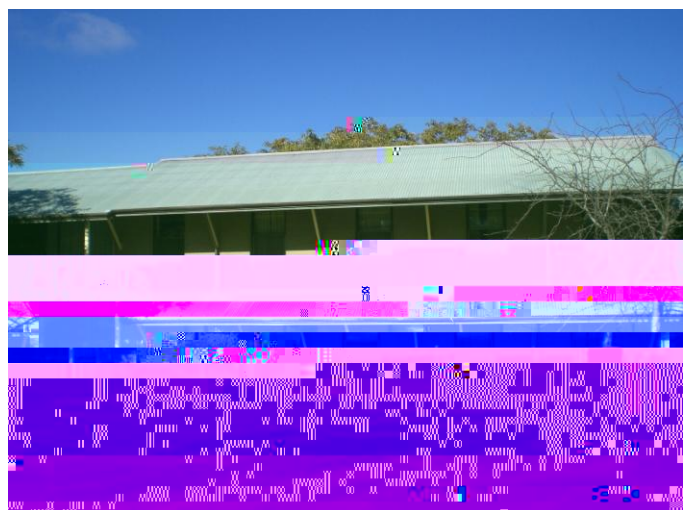
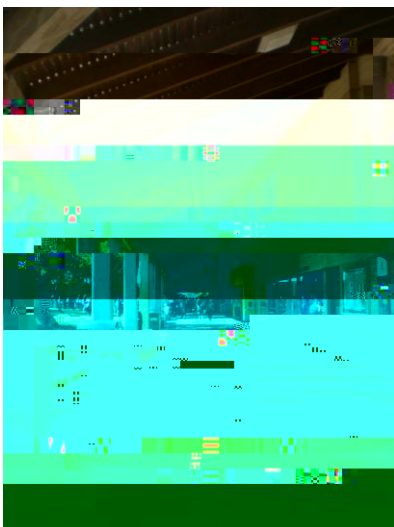
Financial Details

To finance my exchange, I saved up money from my 2 part-time jobs and had some help kely spend more than you planned out to spend. I paid around \$1800 for my plane ticket. I also paid around \$160 for a flight change because I had to change the date of my flight back home. Although the ticket from Travel Cuts was fairly cheap, it meant that I already had to buy a round trip ticket and changes to the ticket would cost around \$200. Residences were \$130 per week-

around \$200 (depending on what units you plan to take). Food/groceries/going out were about \$400- \$500 a month.

Arrival, accommodation, and orientation

Although I arranged for a shuttle service to pick me up, I did not find anyone in the airport representing Murdoch University. So, I took a cab to the residences and had to pay \$55, which was eventually reimbursed by the Murdoch International Office. I arrived mid afternoon and the Administration and the RA office were open so they helped me find my room and set things up. Orientation was a week-long event wherein you are required to attend at least 2 of the events but I tried to attend all of them. I really encourage you to attend a lot of events because this is where you will meet a lot of exchange students and learn more about the campus, your courses, and Perth. I lived on-campus and chose to live in the old village because it was cheaper. Living in the village was good because it was only a 10 minute walk to campus. I also had some friends who lived off-campus and it was pretty easy for them to get to Uni (by walking, biking, or public transit). The only problem with living on campus was that some of my flatmates were not very responsible and were very untidy. Oh well; it definitely taught me to be patient!



Academic Details

Many of my exchange friends and I found the courses in Murdoch to be much more relaxed than our home universities. Class sizes are smaller and lecture and tutorial times usually last 1-2 hours. However, there were many similarities between Murdoch and SFU such as having both a lecture and tutorial, using webct for classes (they call it LMS), and lecturers having had 3 week-long study breaks, one each in March, April and May. These weeks gave us more time to study (and explore Australia!).

Social and extra-curricular activities

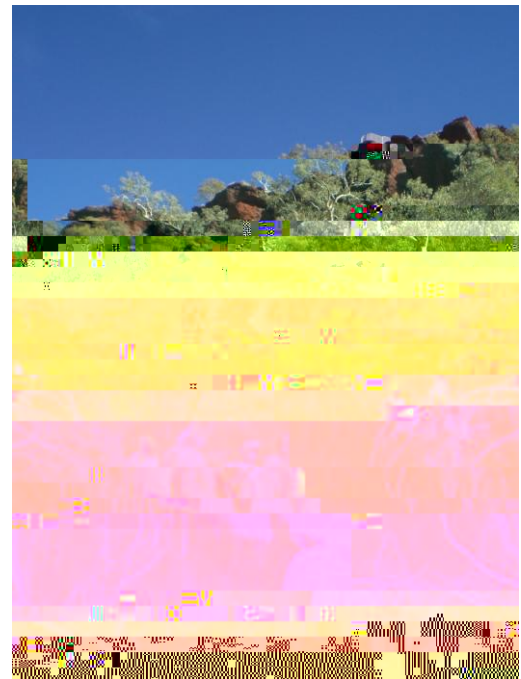
Some good places that you might want to visit around Perth are Fremantle (everyone loves Freo since it has a lot of cool indie and mainstream stores, delicious restaurants and the Freo markets which are open on Fri-Sun), downtown Perth (which is similar to Vancouver as well, with Northbridge being the clubbing area), Cottesloe beach and Scarborough beach. The Village and the Orientation team also offer activities such as a visit to Caversham Wildlife Park.



Travelling around Australia

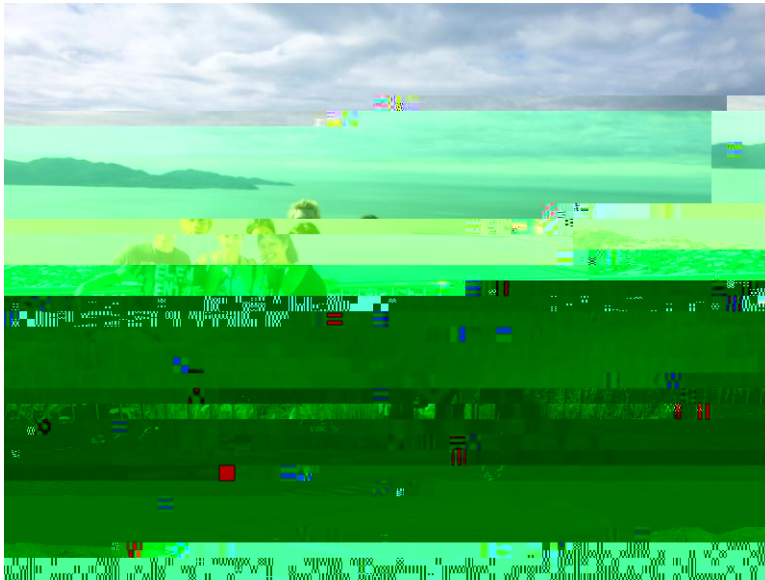
Perth was quite similar to Vancouver in that people were very friendly and helpful. There is more of a beach culture in Perth as well because it is sunny over there most of the time. Their fall season is like a good summer day in Vancouver!

In Murdoch, they offer exchange students the chance to travel to the Northwest of Western Australia for a 10 day camping trip . I went during March/the first study break, together with 45 other exchange students. It was honestly **the** best experience semester. We saw so many beautiful places and interesting animals, had fun camping out under the stars, made new friends, and had many crazy adventures. You can do so many things in this trip, such as dive, snorkel, ride on quad bikes, hike, and swim in beaches. It was amazing and I highly recommend it.



During the second study break, 4 of my friends and I rented a car and drove to the Wave Rock, the town of Albany, and Margaret River. The Southern part of WA is absolutely gorgeous. Again, we saw so many beautiful places, explored a cave, visited a winery, and much more. And during my last few weeks in Australia, my 2 friends and I travelled along the East coast via a campervan. We went from Cairns to Brisbane and I travelled by myself to Sydney. The East coast is just as beautiful as the West coast. And I utterly fell in love with Sydney, as I love big cities. There is just so much to see and do in Sydney. You cannot go to Australia without passing by Sydney!

I wish I knew just how many flies lived in Australia. I hate flies! This way, I would have brought more insect repellent to my camping trips. I wish I knew that Australian food is a bit more expensive than food here in Vancouver. I would have rationed my grocery shopping expenses a little better! And lastly, I wish I knew just how amazing Australia would be. I would have saved up more money in order to stay a little bit longer and explore the rest of the country!



Words of Wisdom

I think nothing could have prepared me for this semester. I was able to frequently face my fears, go out of my comfort zone, live independently, make new friends from across the globe, explore many amazing and gorgeous places, and have a positively life-changing experience. So then, my advice for you would be to be open to new people, new cultures, new experiences and adventure! Going on an exchange semester, especially to a beautiful country such as Australia, will be an unforgettable experience so just soak in every moment you have down under.