

Exchange Report

I went on exchange to Monash University in Australia in Spring 2014. Preparing for exchange was a long and detail-filled process. Monash confirmed my exchange in November 2013, 2 months before my planned departure. In that time I had to book flights, obtain a visa, and plan my trip to New Zealand, which I was doing on my way over. It was hectic, but it was all worth it. My packing strategy was very different than most. Because I backpacked for a month before my exchange and two months after, I only brought a backpack with me. I had to buy a jacket once the weather cooled down and borrow things from friends once in a while, but this wasn't really a problem. I flew to Auckland, New Zealand in January, and was transported around the country by bus on the Kiwi Experience tour. It was an amazing experience. The cost of living was fairly similar to Vancouver. A few things were more expensive, like certain food items, club cover charge, and rent. But cell phone plans were much cheaper. I signed up with Commonwealth Bank and they served me well. Cash or credit are fine everywhere.

Fortunately, I met with someone who had gone on exchange to Monash a year earlier before I left. She gave me great advice so there wasn't much I was unprepared for. I learned Optus is the best phone company, commonwealth bank is the best bank, to unlock and bring my iPhone rather than buying a phone there, and the best places to visit. I lived in halls on campus.

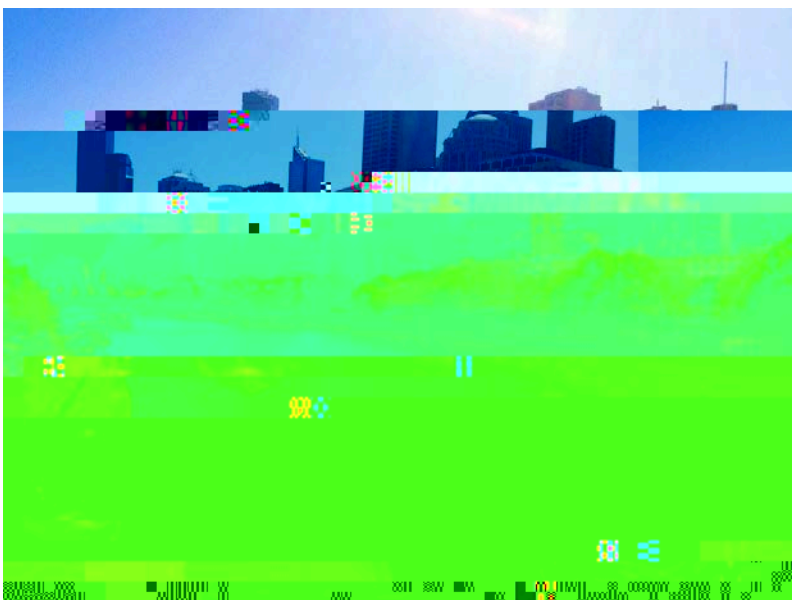
When I arrived in Melbourne, a driver took me to campus. I was greeted warmly, given a quick tour and taken to my room to settle in. A few hours later, all

the new arrivals had dinner together and played ice breakers. We got to know each other through orientation all weekend. We also had free breakfast and dinner for two weeks. It was nice to not worry about grocery shopping yet, and it was great to get to know people over a meal. The campus is in Clayton, which I would say is similar to the Burnaby of Vancouver. It's about an hour from the city and beach, but still a great community. Halls was a great experience. I made so many friends and wonderful memories. There is a great support system there. The orientation is great as well. I feel it would have been a lot more intimidating to go on exchange in a share house. The room is fairly small and plain, but there is a great study area, common room, and party room, with lots of events. The room comes furnished, and the RAs even took us shopping to buy kitchen tools and bedding. Each wing/floor has its own kitchen and bathroom. I lived in Deakin Hall. The lectures were very similar to at SFU. One thing I liked about the lectures is that they were all recorded and posted with the slides in time, so if you preferred to learn at a slower-pace, you could watch the recording from home and not miss out. Also, there are less assignments and things are most heavily weighted. For example all my exams were worth 50% and there were no quizzes. The exams were cumulative, which was a bit difficult. They graded harder at Monash, but the marking brackets were easier. You only needed 80% to get the highest mark. Melbourne has a cool, cultural vibe to it. There are lots of events and festivals. The weather was good, but it does cool down in May and June. I would definitely recommend going to the city to party, but also during the day to explore. It is a beautiful place with lots to take in. There is a museum, botanical gardens, and lots of cool cafes and art. I traveled the whole East

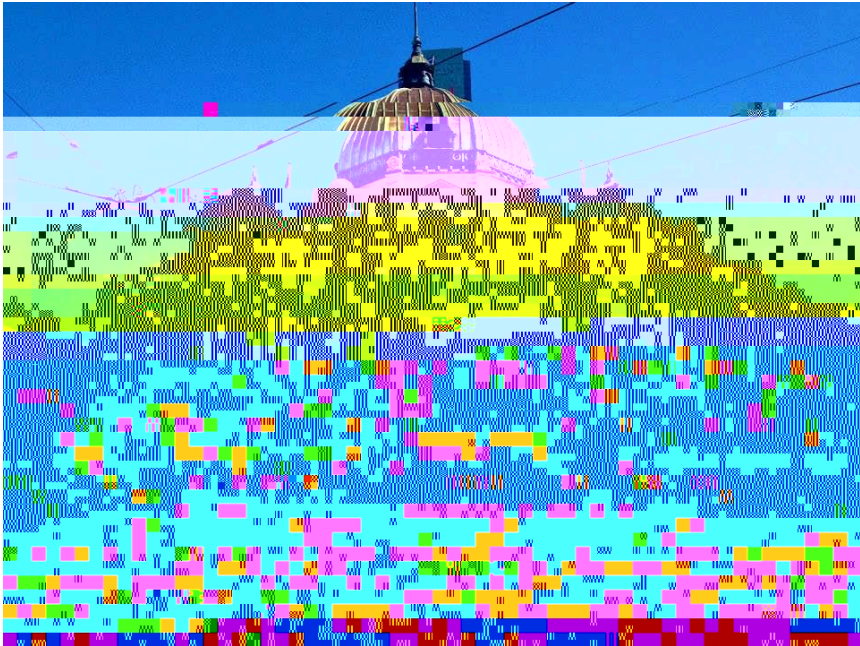
Coast and it is hard to recommend any one place. I would say some of my favourites were Byron Bay, the Great Ocean Road, Sydney, Fraser Island, Cairns, and the Whitsundays. I joined the Monash Boardriders on exchange and met an incredible group of people. I went on surf camp and made great friends. There were lots of social events as well. They were so welcoming.

On exchange I learned how to be independent. It was my first time not living at home, and I grew a lot as a person. I wish I had done my exchange earlier in my degree, as I could only be abroad for one semester instead of two. I miss Deakin hall and Monash, and wish I could've been there longer. I've developed great confidence and social skills from traveling alone. It was challenging balancing travel, a social life, and academics while here, because there is always something going on. It is important to learn how to find a balance. For anyone considering going on exchange, I would say do it. You won't regret it. It was an incredible, fun, crazy, growing experience. Get involved in everything, take every opportunity, save up a lot so that you can travel without concern while you're there and take full advantage of your time there. It was the journey of a lifetime, and I plan on returning to Australia soon.

Cityscape



Flinders Station



Taking in Melbourne's graffiti



Sunset at the beach



Road trip from Brisbane to Noosa

