

Exchange Report



I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to study in Australia at one of their reputed universities, Monash University in the city of Melbourne during the spring 2016 semester (February 2016 – June 2016). As a third year business student, going on exchange is my opportunity to expand my network globally and gain an international experience.

Preparation for exchange

After hearing the good news, I immediately knew that I had to take those extra shifts at work and save up for my semester abroad because the cost of living in Melbourne is a lot higher compared to Vancouver. I immediately

started my Visa application and my application for residence once I got the confirmation from my host university (which was around October). Doing all the required paper work did not take a long time, just follow the instructions they give you on their emails. Just a heads up, accommodation fills up really fast so apply ASAP.

I made sure to bring enough shorts and since it will be summer during my (February) and temperatures can range from high 20's to mid 30's. I also packed hoodies, jeans, sweats and one jacket as I will still be around during the winter and Melbourne is known to be very rainy just like Vancouver and temperature goes down to around 5 degrees. I also brought an adaptor because Australia has a different electrical outlet (also, be mindful of their voltage as it is around 230 volts). Other things I brought included two suitcases, a backpack, laptop, school supplies (ie:

When I got to Monash Residential Services, I was welcomed by the volunteers, they were kind enough to show me where my room was and they also gave me a quick tour around the dormitory and the campus. What I liked about living on campus is that there were orientation programs that they have for you which are two weeks long before the semester actually starts. This is a great way to meet new people and make friends. Our hall organized ice breaker events, games such as: scavenger hunt around the city, roller blading night, laser tag. Also, each hall has Residential Advisors who you can turn to when you have any general questions about school, enrolment, or directions to the nearest supermarket.



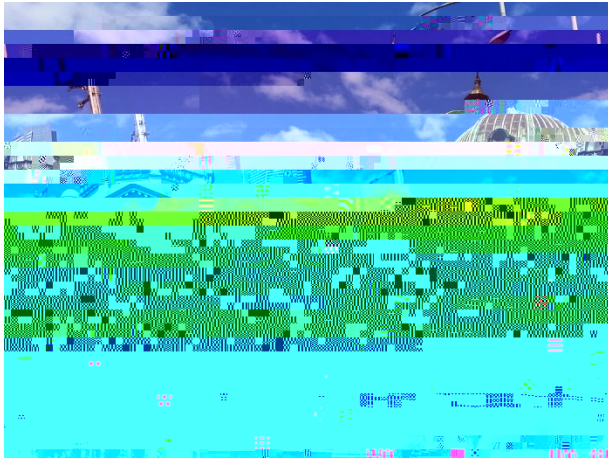
I stayed in Roberts hall during my time in Australia and accommodation was decent. My room was big enough to fit all my things. I had a single bed, a big closet, a desk, a mirror, and two chairs. The only downside was having to share washrooms and kitchen with your hall mates. I didn't mind picking this option because it was a lot cheaper than having your own. The hall is about a 10-minute walk to campus. It is close to a grocery store which is a 5-minute bus ride, or your hall mates can drive you there.

The lecture format is similar to SFU. It has 2-hour lectures and tutorials. Lectures were delivered through PowerPoint slides. They also have the lectures posted online. The lectures they post include a visual of the PowerPoint slides. Which means, while you are listening to the recording, you can also see the corresponding PowerPoint slide the lecturer is talking about. The online lectures are easy to follow. Grading is in much larger sections, for example High Distinction (HD) is the highest possible grade you can get and it is in the 80% range. Some courses also have hurdle requirements on their exams. Which means, you need to get a certain grade on the exam to pass, even though you're already doing so well in a class. For example, you could be doing 100% on all your assignments, quizzes, and midterms but can still fail the course if you don't pass the hurdle requirement for the final exam. Unlike SFU, Monash has a SwotVac break, they give you a week off between the last day of classes until the first day when final exam starts to study.

I opened a bank account in Australia, I was with Commonwealth Bank, there are also other banks you can choose from. I chose this one because they have a branch right in the campus centre but mainly because I was given the option to open my bank account a week before I arrived in Australia. I also had my money wired and transferred from Scotiabank to Commonwealth Bank. The wire transfer was an easy process.

I also had my phone unlocked before coming to Australia, which means I could get prepaid plans there and use my phone normally as how I would use it back home. Australia has cheap

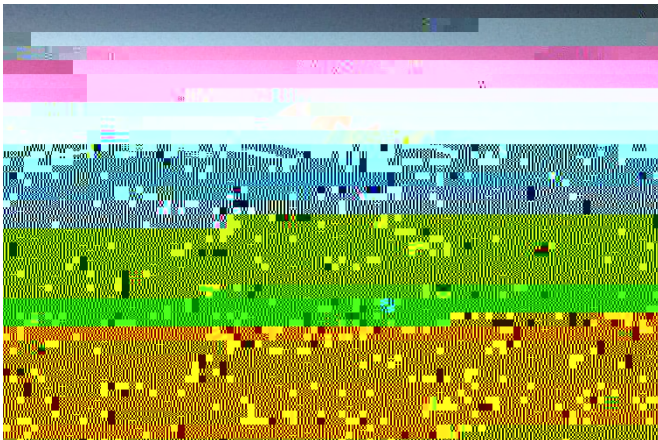
prepaid plans compared to Canada, and some of which gave a lot of data. I was with Optus. I paid \$30 per month and I had unlimited calling, texting all over Australia and I had 3GB of data.



Melbourne's transit system is great. Bus runs constantly and you pay in a similar way like the Compass Card. Trains run frequently and are 24 hours during the weekends. Melbourne also has UBER which is a cheaper alternative to taking a taxi on a night out. Make sure to download the Public Transport Victoria (PTV) app on your phone because it makes getting around the city easier. This app gives you directions on places that you want to go. It tells you bus and train times.



I mostly did my research online on the places to see in Melbourne. Melbourne has a lot of travel agencies that give a lot of travel packages and tips on where to travel. Monash has an STA travel right on campus, which sometimes gives package deals for students. Things to see in Melbourne include Flinders St station, Royal Botanic Gardens, and the Melbourne Cricket Ground.



Just be careful and not over pack because they charge crazy amounts for excess baggage. One thing great about Australia is that it is close to Asia, so I was able to make a trip to Thailand. I also travelled to New Zealand as it was close by.

Reflection After Exchange



I learned the importance of budgeting your money wisely when traveling. Even though I was able to maximize my time abroad, I'm not going to deny that there are things that I spent on impulse and it left me with very limited things to do in my last few weeks in Australia. Living in Australia is expensive, even though the dollar is almost at par, things cost three times more compared to Canada. Secondly, I learned the importance of cultural awareness and how it can bring a lot of people together. I learned to step out of my comfort zone and try new things.