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Melbourne Australia

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Reciprocal Exchange: Australian Catholic University (Melbourne Campus)

Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi! I've heard that too many times just strolling around the city and especially at an AFL game you'll hear the people go crazy! Australian's are very proud of their country and I was happy to have shared in their culture. I can't fully express how amazing this opportunity was for me. I learned many things about the country, about myself, and also confirmed some things about who I am and what I like. I've met many people and made a lot of friends (including kangaroos). Melbourne as a city reminds me a little of Boston because of the old and modern buildings, but truly it's a smaller New York. You can have a quiet night out or find dance parties and festivals all year long. If you're bored you can always stroll hidden alleyways and find the neatest bars. Melbourne, although the second largest city in Australia is the melting-pot of it all. I've always felt safe in Melbourne, even at night. I also made some friends from ACU, both Australian and international. While it was harder to hang out with the Australians' because most are commuters from towns further away from Melbourne, the internationals (some from Canada, Mexico, Europe, and other places from the states) and I found things to do and places to seek. One of my first weekends we made plans to go cliff jumping all together! Another great experience I had with these friends was a class we took as an elective which was called Aquatics in the Outdoor Environment. It was honestly one of the best decisions we made! This class took us snorkeling twice, sailing three times, and sea kayaking (we saw many dolphins'!) with an overnight camping trip!

I knew coming to Australia was going to be a very large expense, I was happy I planned ahead for it because I was able to travel a lot! I did a lot of traveling in Melbourne including the Great Ocean Road and Philip Island, went to Tasmania, Sydney, Gold Coast, Brisbane, Cairns (saw the Great Barrier Reef), Fiji, and Thailand! I have over 2,000 pictures throughout my entire semester and memories to last me a lifetime! While I knew money would be an issue for me, I saw my study abroad experience as a personal investment for the rest of my life. Culturally I found that many of the foods are the same from back home with some exceptions including their love for pumpkin and salmon for breakfast. There's no tipping here, because they don't service the table you sit at; you have to get up and pay for your food at the counter at every restaurant you go to). Lastly, their English slang is far from the English language. When I first arrived I had to have many people repeat what they were saying to me because they shorten almost every word and I couldn't understand the lingo.

As far as my educational experience, I wasn't very fond of their grading system. Compared to the friends I've made here, I found myself struggling the most. At home I pride myself in being a very good student with strong A's and some B's, but in Australia, it was impossible for me to ever get a distinction, forget a high distinction. It's taken me a long time to understand their grading policies because a passing is a score of 50 so when I was getting credits I really took it hard. Classes here only give two assessments for a total grade which also put me in a difficult position, at least back home the workload is larger but you have multiple opportunities to make up for a weaker grade. The upside of the two assessments for a class was that it was really independent, therefore I was able to travel around Australia comfortably

knowing I wasn't going to miss out on daily activities. I put in a lot of effort for my classes and am probably more disappointed than I should be. I'm just glad that I passed my classes and they won't affect my GPA. I took four classes, intro to drawing, intro to psychology, exercise physiology, and the aquatics in the outdoor environment as mentioned before. My art class was fun when in class, but I'm a science major and didn't expect to have a lot of homework and the professor also required a lot of drawing materials that was a waste of my money. It was still a good class to have while abroad. Intro to psych wasn't too difficult thankfully, but the final exam is worrisome because there's a lot of material to cover and the overall grade is basically dependent on the final. Lastly, my exercise physiology course was difficult, as expected. I took this course to stay on track and it was definitely the class I put the most effort in. My aquatics course did require an extra charge of \$325 for rental equipment, but it was worth it because of all the activities we got to do!

Overall, my experience was grand! I'll always remember Federation Square as my favorite spot in Melbourne, but truly I've enjoyed every part of the city as well as the outdoor activities that every city and town has had to offer. Everyone from home is a little jealous about my time here and all the traveling I've been doing. It's not very common to travel to Australia so I'm happy to be the one that said I made it and loved every second of it! Studying Abroad is truly an experience of a lifetime, and I would recommend anyone with the opportunity to do so! I was challenged out of my comfort zone, learned to be more patient, and overall always tried to be the best person I could be.