Exchange Report

Introduction

I went on exchange to Australia to study at Monash University for Business. I went for their first term which runs from March until the end of June.

Preparation for exchange

Some important things to establish before you leave are how you are going to pay for things in Australia. I would recommend setting up a bank account with an Australian bank, I used Commonwealth and had no complaints.

Next is where you will be living during the semester. I would recommend on campus because it is simple and lets you meet a lot of people really quickly including domestic students who can have helpful knowledge. If you do live off campus book at least a couple of days at a hotel or other accommodation to stay at before you leave while you look for housing.

Book your flight early and booking return will be cheaper so it pays to know when exams end, if you do want to travel after exams just remember that you will have to take all of your stuff with you and this can be a large hindrance. Monash offers to drive students from the international terminal in Melbourne to halls, you will get a private driver and this is something you should definitely take advantage of as a cab will cost you $100.

Make sure you unlock your cell phone before you leave. Pay as you go cell plans are easy to set up and are good value, you can use any of their major carriers I used Optus and had no issues. In Australia it is hard to find a place that will unlock your phone.

Living cost in Australia are higher than Vancouver, everything from housing to food and entertainment and clothing will be more expensive so researching how much things cost and budgeting accordingly before you go is important.

Looking at places you want to travel to is also something you should do before you go. The more solid plans and knowledge you have about where you want to go, when you want to go and how to get there the more likely it is that your travel plans will work out.

During Exchange

Getting your concession myki is something that should be a priority, it will save you a ton of money. Learning and using PTV (Public Transit Victoria) is essential if you want to get around.
Try and spend a day or two, especially during orientation to wander around campus(es) and find all your classes and explore.

Make some local friends, they can really help you out if you have questions or need some help finding places.

Some minor cultural differences in Australia include some slang and a very different coffee culture, say goodbye to Starbucks and hello to expensive independent coffee shops. Also if you walk in and order a “coffee” prepare to be ignored because you will need to be more specific than that.

Monash has a huge amount of clubs of every type. You will find something you like so take your time during clubs week, also they give away lots of free stuff including food and beer so why not go. Clubs week runs the week before school starts which is great as it lets you jump right into the club and make friends right off the bat. You will want to sign up for MOVE which runs programs especially for exchange and foreign students and MSA which is the student society and membership to them will give you discounts to all other clubs and to MSA events, which are the largest on campus.

Weather is Melbourne is warmer than Vancouver. You can expect lots of hot days 30+ degrees when you arrive in February. Another thing you can count on is a lot of sun, even during the fall and winter. Temperatures may cool but the sun should stay out. Another constant is wind, stronger than you are used to and for large parts of the day. One thing to be aware of is that the weather changes quickly and often in Melbourne, sun, rain, clouds and then sun can all happen while you sit in tutorial, so be prepared. Winter while I was in Melbourne looked like 10 degrees and sunny most days for a high and maybe 5 degrees when the sun set at 5 o’clock. So as far as packing goes you don’t need to bring any big winter gear. A couple of hoodie’s or, as the Australians call them, jumpers will be enough.

Most lectures at Monash are recorded and as a result almost no one will attend lectures. This can be very helpful if you are traveling and think you may miss some classes, as it is easy to catch up
when the lectures are all online.

During the semester you will be given a week break at Easter and a week break after lectures end and before exams start. If you are looking to travel these are excellent opportunities to do just that.

Some places that I would recommend traveling to while you are in Australia include Sydney, Brisbane, Gold Coast, basically anywhere along the east coast even as far north as Cairns.

More local things to do include the Great Ocean Road (go while the weather is nice), catching an AFL game (look up what that is), Philip Island, Wilson’s prom and Healesville Sanctuary.

I would also recommend keeping a journal of things you do on exchange, write as frequently as you like but try and keep up often enough that you don’t forget things between entries. It’s really nice to look back at the stuff you’ve done and it helps you to remember all the awesome stuff you did and things you learned while you were gone. It will help you when you have to write this report.

**Reflection after exchange**

I think one of the biggest things I learned was how to navigate a new city and how to cook and make food for myself. There are definitely things that I will miss about Australia like the weather and the laid back culture.

It’s somewhere that I would very much like to return to one day, but with others so I can ‘show them the ropes’. Overall my exchange was an amazing experience and the friends I made mean I have connections all over the world.

I hope you enjoy your exchange as much as I did!