Exchange Report

Partner University: Monash University  
Country: Australia  
Major: Business  
Dates/Term(s): July 18th – November 18th (Second Semester)

Preparation for exchange

Pre-departure and preparing for my exchange semester seemed like endless paperwork and applications, but the feeling of completing everything and hearing back from the host university was well worth it. I received my acceptance on May 1st, for the July semester term. The first important things I had to get done was apply for a visa and accommodation as well as look at overseas health coverage. These processes were relatively quick and I found that I received my student visa in one day. I would highly suggest researching about the different accommodation options well in advance so that you have an idea of the environment you want to be living in as well as taking into account the costs to help you budget and prepare.

When it came to packing, I knew I wanted to pack light. I did not want to over pack and be carrying too many pieces of luggage. I also knew I would be able to buy materials once I landed in Australia so I didn’t feel the pressure to pack every single household item. However, since I was headed to Melbourne in July (their winter), I had to make sure I had warm clothing because the winters do get quite cold; I was not expecting it to be as cold as it was. An important note about Melbourne is that it’s weather is constantly changing throughout the day. It could be warm in the morning but by the afternoon it could be heavily raining. It would be smart to have an umbrella with you as well as any wind-breaker jacket because there usually tends to be a strong breeze. All in all, I packed one check-in bag and one carry-on.

It is a long flight to Australia from Vancouver. I took the flight that went from Vancouver to Sydney and then flew from Sydney to Melbourne. Monash also offers a service for newly-arriving students that is a free transportation from the airport to school.

With respect to financials, Melbourne is relatively expensive. However, as a student you can find ways to find some breaks in what you pay for with trips that are organized by on-campus clubs and even Facebook groups (“Newbies International”). I found that it was a society that was based more on cash payments so I always carried some on me, however opening a bank account is very simple. I opened a Commonwealth student bank account within the first few days of arriving. There are a few banks to choose from, each of which have good student options. Also, make sure your phone is unlocked before you go because it is very simple to get a sim card and use a prepaid plan when you arrive. I paid around $30 a month for a Vodafone phone plan that gave me 3.5gb of data.

During Exchange

Arriving in Melbourne was an exhilarating experience, I was so excited to finally be there and get on with my exchange semester. I decided to live on campus at the Clayton campus at the South East Flats (SEF). I found SEF to be a small community with great people who were always willing to help with any questions or problems you may have. I shared a flat with three
other roommates who I became very close with throughout the semester. We shared a common kitchen and I found that it didn’t take me too long to adjust to living in a shared environment. The accommodation itself was decent as individuals would come and clean the common area and washroom every two weeks. My room had a single-sized bed, a table, two chairs and a relatively big closet to store my things.

Orientation ran for two weeks. I arrived on July 9th and classes were set to begin on July 25th. Orientation was wonderful because there were so many activities and it’s the perfect time to meet new people. Moreover, almost all of the residency locations hold many events to get new students involved and accustomed to the new environment. I found that my Residential Advisors were very helpful in making sure I was comfortable and knew where to find the nearest supermarkets and the correct buses to take.

When classes finally began, I found the lectures, material and expectations to be similar to that of SFU’s. However, with grading and more I did not find the business courses to be as competitive as back home. Lectures are recorded for many of the classes, so it is great to refer back to when you prepare for exams. Grading is much different as there are High Distinction’s (HD), Distinctions (D), Credit (C), and Pass (P). Further, there are hurdle requirements for some courses which means the specific hurdle must be completed to ensure you pass the course. An example of this is receiving a grade of 50% or higher on the final, otherwise you will not pass the unit.

The transit system in Melbourne is great because there are always busses running and trains will run late. They have a system that is much like the Compass Card called the Myki. You simply swipe on and off. Make sure to get a concession Myki card that you can get from any service desk at the train station. All you have to do is print out a document from the Monash web system and take it to the service desk. This way you pay much less for your travelling because it is a student discount. You can also use UBER in Melbourne which is a life safer at times and much cheaper than a taxi.

Melbourne is very laid back and beautiful; places to visit include the Great Ocean Road, Brighton Beach, Melbourne Cricket Ground (catch a foooty match!) and honestly exploring all the inner city lanes the city has to offer. It is very easy to research online places to go in Melbourne and picking the places that are attractive to you the most. Melbourne’s nightlife is amazing if you want to go party the night away but it also stays classy during the day with its beautiful cafés and bars.

Australia’s east coast is filled with places to go. I was able to travel to Sydney and see the Opera House and its beautiful beaches as well as go to Brisbane and enjoy the beautiful hot weather in the middle of September. Australia is very close to New Zealand and Thailand as well and so there are ample opportunities to explore and see new things.

Reflection After Exchange

Going on exchange was one of the most valuable things I decided to do in my undergrad. The experience will forever stay close to my heart. I learned the importance of budgeting and sticking to it. It is so easy to want to do everything and spend a lot of money right when you arrive. I found that I was able to maximize the amount of things I did by saving a few extra bucks here and there. I learned about how easy it is to start a conversation with a stranger by

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simply saying hi; I was able to learn so much more by talking to locals. This experience made me realize I can handle tough situations and find solutions thinking on my feet.

I believe I made some life-long friendships and I think the biggest challenge I faced was saying goodbye to all the people I became close with. However, the exciting part is this opens avenues for travelling internationally and knowing someone in a different country!

I would tell anyone who is going on exchange to try new things and to go explore a new world. It is very easy to fall into a trap of watching Netflix in your room, but go out there and meet new people. The most exciting thing is learning about everyone’s culture and background and finding that common ground which relates us to one another.

Photos
South East Flats Residence

The Great Ocean Road – Twelve Apostles

Melbourne Cricket Grounds

Brighton Beach