**Murdoch University – Spring 2016**

If you are looking to escape the busy city life of Vancouver and are up for adventure, I highly recommend studying in Perth, Australia at Murdoch University. Perth is the capital of Western Australia with several suburbs around it – Murdoch being one of them. Compared to Vancouver, Perth is a fairly quiet city – isolated from Australia’s other major cities, but it is absolutely beautiful and very laid back. If you love the beach and hot weather (most of the time), and are open to new experiences, Murdoch may be a great choice for your exchange.

**About Murdoch University/Academic Details**

Murdoch University has a great program available for exchange students in order for you to feel comfortable at the University. I went on exchange for the Spring 2016 semester from February to June, and traveled for the month of July. I am majoring in Communications and minoring in Business. While I was on exchange, I took two classes in their Communications and Media studies faculty and one class within their Public Relations faculty. One of the classes I took was 300 level (equivalent to our 400 level), and the other two were 200 level (equivalent to our 300 level). The class work consisted of research papers, projects with presentations, midterms and a final. The classes were relatively small between 20-30 people, and tutorials with about 10 people. A lot of students unfortunately do not attend lecture as they are recorded and put online with the lecture slides. However, the tutorials are mandatory where you usually hand in assignments (similar to SFU), and get a chance to meet other students. The professors mark difficult (comparable to SFU), but for the most part are fair and open to questions. All three of the professors that I had were very passionate about the course material and it was a great way to get a different perspective on global issues relevant in my topic of study. Below is a picture taken of the courtyard in the centre of campus where a lot of students eat lunch, study, and hangout.
Living on Campus/Social Activities

I lived on campus in the student village which was a 5-minute walk from the University and allowed me to meet a lot of other students very easily. I highly recommend living in the village as it is the easiest way to meet other students that are also on exchange. During the first week of orientation, the resident assistants in the village are a huge help by showing you how to get around and will answer pretty much any question you have! It takes about 35 minutes via public transportation to get to Perth City from Murdoch University. There is a mini shopping mall nearby the University (about a 20-minute walk or 5-minute bus ride), with a supermarket, post office, banks, liquor store and pharmacy. Fremantle is another suburb about a 20-minute bus ride from the University with beaches, coffee shops, restaurants, a movie theatre, and bars/night clubs; most students end up going to Fremantle a lot more than Perth city and I found myself spending a lot of time there. There are several beaches that you may get to via public transportation including: Cottesloe, Bathers beach, South beach, Scarborough, and Leighton
Before the first week of classes the village held events for all of the residents including a beach day, free lunches, a carnival, a party at the university pub, and other similar events where there was a lot of opportunity to meet other students. During the semester they also held events including a trip to the wildlife park, free dinners every Monday by-weekly, free breakfast every Friday, a wine tour, a casino night, free yoga classes/boot camp, and a night out at a local bar Newport (popular on Wednesdays for students). My biggest piece of advice while living in the village is to get involved in the beginning and to go to as many events as possible to meet new people! Below is a picture of the pool in the village that was open to all of the residents and Cottesloe beach, about 30 minutes via public transportation from the university.

(Village pool)

(Cottesloe Beach)
Preparing for Exchange/What I Wish I Knew

While preparing for my exchange, there was a lot of information that I wish I knew before I left home. One of the main points that a lot of people find hard to believe is that it does get cold in Australia- so pack for both temperatures! A lot of other fellow exchange students had the same problem and we all ended up buying some extra clothes for the winter. It was very warm when I first arrived there in February (up to 45 degrees), and then around mid April it began to get cooler (around 20 degrees during the day, and below 10 degrees at night). The second main piece of advice that I wish I listened to was to pack as light as possible. Western Australia is very close to Southeast Asia and it is fairly easy to find cheap air fair once you’re in Perth to go there. I travelled to Bali, Indonesia during the second study break with friends that I made while on exchange and Thailand in July. If you are a travel junkie like myself I highly recommend bringing a maximum of one suitcase as it is difficult to lug around afterwards. A lot of students like myself ended up sending one piece of luggage home through the post office in order to avoid extra charges while travelling.

The cost of living in Perth is very comparable to Vancouver but may be slightly more expensive; however, tipping is not expected there. I found myself cooking a lot which is something I do not normally do at home but saved me a lot of money from eating out. If you have a credit card it is not necessary to open a bank account in Australia; however, it may be easier if you want to take cash out from the bank machine (make sure you talk to your bank in Canada before you leave). The public transportation company in Perth, Transperth, is fairly decent to use and you may get a student rate once you arrive there through the university. Below is a picture of the sunrise hike up Mt. Batur my friends and I did in Bali.
Trips Through the Exchange Program

The exchange program through Murdoch university offers three optional trips for all exchange students to go on. I went on both the Northwest trip and the Southwest trip and had an amazing time! The Northwest trip (around $800) is a 10-day camping trip up north in the outback of Australia. We went to several national parks where we hiked, we went to several beaches, and stopped in Coral Bay where you may go on different snorkeling/ scuba diving excursions to see Ningaloo Reef. The Southwest trip was a three-day trip (in hostels), where you will see some incredible beaches in the wine regions (Margaret River), do a tree top walk, hike up a tree (Bicentennial Tree), and other similar activities. If you have to choose between the two I definitely recommend the Northwest trip (it is one of my fondest memories of being on exchange), and you will bond with fellow exchange students! They also offer an overnight trip to Rottnest Island which I did not go on but several of my friends really enjoyed it. I visited the Island later in the semester for the day and it was gorgeous! There is no driving on the Island so you have to rent a bike or do a hop on hop off tour. I recommend visiting the Island in February or March when it is still warmer so that you may swim in the ocean. Rottnest Island is also home to the popular Quokka’s, known for their cuteness!
(Karijini National Park)

(Surfers point, Margaret River)
Overall, going on exchange was the best decision I have made thus far in my academic career. Through my experience I not only learned in the classroom, but I have gained knowledge through the people I met and the places I travelled while abroad. Learning in a different country provides you with another perspective on your area of study that you may use to your advantage in other classes when you return home. I believe I have truly made lifelong friendships through my adventure and have a new understanding of what it means to be independent. Returning home was definitely the most difficult part of studying abroad and if you have the opportunity, go for it!

(Roatnest Island)
(View from Kings Park- similar to Stanley Park)

(Scarborough beach)