Communications and Environmental Studies

Country: Australia       Program: Immersion       Term & Year Abroad: Fall 2010

Instructors

- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
  They were all international. Some were Australian, two were American, one English. They were also more formal and professional.

- Could you call them by their first names?
  It varied, some said you could and others didn’t. In general they seemed to be more serious so I felt more comfortable about not calling them by their first names.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
  Yes, it definitely was. All the professors wore business suits and didn’t seem as approachable as UCSB professors who wear flip-flops and shorts to class and are more laid back.

- Were they available for help during office hours?
  Yes they were, and were moderately accommodating when I attended office hours. A few seemed to be a bit biased against exchange students.

Courses

- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
  No, they were about the same difficulty, but since it was a semester system the pace was slower, allowing weeks for relaxing and travel, and other weeks of straight studying and work.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
  I usually do very well on my papers at UCSB, however I got slightly lower grades on my papers abroad.

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
  Three of my classes were just midterm and final papers with no assignments and very little weight placed on attendance and participation. However one of my science classes had a final exam that wasn’t too heavily weighted, and then six smaller assignments. It varies with subject matter, but for the English based classes there were primarily papers, and science ones more assignments.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
  I had a majority take home, written exams, no oral ones, and one in class written one.

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
  It was very inflexible and much more serious than at UCSB. It was a month long, with an entire week off prior. The exams are in a separate building with many proctors, assigned seats, no backpacks or purses, you must be escorted to restrooms, an announcer telling students when to start, a designated reading period of the prompt etc. It was very intimidating and formal, compared to the masses crammed into Campbell hall and back-to-back finals here.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
  I didn’t receive any academic support.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
No, it was about the same as is expected at UCSB. It was difficult to figure some things out at first about their library system, but once I got the hang of it I caught on quickly.

- **Was classroom participation expected?**
  Yes, absolutely. All of my classes, which were upper division, had mandatory tutorials with attendance hurdle requirements and strictly class discussion for an hour. Even some lectures, which were smaller than UCSB, relied on class discussion occasionally.

- **How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?**
  They met less often, some only once per week, they were smaller, all had mandatory tutorials, and had more papers than I was used to.

- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?**
  No, they were very sporadic throughout the week. Most were pretty long, two hours, and only met once a week.

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?**
  Everyone dresses up more for class, wears jeans and nice shirts, not sweats and flip-flops. Some people ate and drank in class; it was acceptable but not common. It was the same view on punctuality as UCSB, with the majority of students coming a little early, and a few trickling in a bit late.

**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?**
  They were all offered in English

- **What language did you take your courses in?**
  English

- **If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.**

**Host University**

- **How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building?**
  It was a pretty large university, with many campuses, but the main campus that I was at was about the same size as UCSB, maybe a little smaller. It was very east looking, with brick buildings and lovely architecture. There were many medium sized separate buildings for each of the majors and faculties.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?**
  The majority live at home and commute to campus. It is uncommon to travel far to go to university.

- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?**
    It is very close to the city center, about a 10-minute walk
  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?**
    You could take a cab, most expensive, about the same cost as a cab here, maybe 10$ to city center. Or a tram, which is the cheapest, 2.50$ per ride. There was also a train nearby that
you could take if you wanted to go out of the city, it was pretty cheap but depended on the length of ride, no more than about 5.00$ each way.

- Could students take cabs -cost?
  Yes, they were about the same as cabs cost here, very cheap if travelling within the city.

- How long would it take to get to the city center?
  Less than 10 minutes no matter which mode of transport.

- Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?
  Yes, I joined MUSEX, which was for exchange students. It was a ton of fun. They organized events like balls, wine tours, footie games etc.

- Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?
  Yes, I only had one book and the rest readers, I got everything there. They were kind of expensive.

- Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?
  I would definitely bring a laptop, and the library has computers for student use as well though.

- What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)
  Everything, heaps of cafes and restaurants in the student union area, there was a bar on campus; a little off campus there is a neighborhood, a park, other restaurants and shops.

**Housing**

- What types of accommodations are available to UC students?
  Dorms on campus or renting a house off campus.

- How close are they to campus?
  Dorms are on the edge of campus, a 5-10 minute walk to main class areas. If you rent a house elsewhere it could range from a 30-minute tram ride to a 5-minute walk depending on how far away you choose to live.

- How did you find your housing?
  I asked a friend that went there a few years ago where she lived.

- Where did you live and with whom?
  RMIT Village with about 500 other students, half Australian and half international.

- If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?
  Researching was a bit difficult at first, but when I asked friends it narrowed it down and was useful.

- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?
  Not as nice as UCSB dorms (I was in Manzanita though), but nicer than the majority of IV housing.

- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?
  It was about the same as living in IV, the typical rent was 800$ per month.

- How/who did you pay for housing?
  My parents paid the apartment complex owners for the housing.
**Food**
- **What was the food like?**
The food was not healthy. There were no salads; everything was served with chips (French fries) and beer. Lamb, chicken parmas, hamburgers were very common. Sushi was not good but very inexpensive. I missed Mexican food the most because there is none there. There are a lot of Italian restaurants.

- **Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?**
I cooked most of my meals in my kitchen. I bought mostly fruits and vegetables from the Queen Victoria Market that was a 5-minute walk from my apartment. If I ate out I would go to nearby restaurants.

- **How much was an average meal?**
If I ate in very inexpensive, less than 5$. If I ate out more expensive, no less than 10$ and maybe as much as 20$.

- **What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?**
About the same time as at home, around noon for lunch and six or seven pm for dinner.

- **Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?**
Not at all. Just don’t expect salads, but there are a lot of vegetables and other raw ingredients you could buy.

**Travel/Safety**
- **If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?**
  There was amazing public transportation, trains, trams and busses that were all easy and nearby.

- **Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?**
  Yes, I felt very safe in the city. It was hectic living in the city at first and learning how to jay walk and which way to look when I crossed the street, but after that I thrived there.

- **Describe the public transportation in your host country?**
  Very common, easy to use and relatively inexpensive.

- **Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?**
  Pretty easy. Flights were moderately priced (around 200-400 $ roundtrip) and the Sydney and Melbourne airports fly to pretty much every destination.

**Host City/Country**
- **What was the weather like?**
The winter was veryyyy cold and unpredictable. The morning could be rainy and windy, by lunch sunny and then freezing again an hour later. The summer was very hot and dry.

- **Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?**
I don't know San Francisco very well, but its similar to what I imagine SF to be like- cold, big buildings, crowded. It was very clean though and environmentally friendly, as I would imagine
Washington DC to be like. It was very easy to navigate around it and find my way to everything. It was adorable and the best city ever!

- **What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?**
I saw the parliament house, went to night markets, went on runs around it, went to the zoo, went to the top of the Eureka sky deck (tallest point in southern hemisphere), shopped at the Queen Victoria Marketplace, walked around cafes and shops by the beach, saw fairy penguins by the beach, went on a bar and laneway tour….seriously the best city ever.

- **How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?**
It wasn’t very touristy, which is why I loved it and really preferred it to Sydney. The predominant race other than Caucasian was Asian. There were not many other races at all. There were some international businesses, such as McDonalds, but the majority were Australian.

**Culture**

- **Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.**
  - **Time & punctuality**
    About the same as here, arrive about the time something starts, maybe a little late or early.
  - **Eye contact & staring**
    Same as home, it is rude to stare and polite to hold eye contact.
  - **Relationships**
    I was surprised when I would meet guys or girls out at night and we would trade numbers and they would offer to meet up the next day to show me around since I was American, and they actually called me! People were extremely friendly there. The guys loved American girls and were very eager to start relationships with us 😊
  - **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
    Yes, more formal dress for school (which they call uni). You must wear actual clothes, not frat tank tops and pajamas.
  - **Alcohol consumption**
    Is very prevalent and common. Casual drinking is very common. Students drank between classes at the university bar, or just from BBQs on campus hosted by student clubs and organizations. It was common to drink at school functions. Beer is the most common drink. Hard alcohol is insanely expensive. They don’t drink as excessively as IV tends to, but more frequently.

- **What culture shock did you go through?**
I didn’t experience any culture shock.

- **Other?**
  BEST 6 MONTHS OF MY LIFE!

**Banking**

- **Were credit cards widely accepted?**
Yes, and there were heaps of ATMs in the city as well.

- **Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?**
I am with Bank of America, which has a sister bank there so it was free to withdraw from it. Some friends opened a local bank account and I think it was relatively easy though.

- **If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM?**
Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?
Westpac was the bank I used that had the alliance with Bank of America. It was very common and free to withdraw. Commonwealth was also very common. I think if you weren’t with those banks there was about a 5$ ATM fee to withdraw.

- **Were there ATMs on campus?**
  There were some, but not a Westpac one. There was Commonwealth though and a few others I’m pretty sure.