Study Abroad report

By Simonas Snarskas

Simo686x@stud.kea.dk

Host institution: Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia

Host institution Contact Person: study@deakin.edu.au

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Introduction

One of my dreams was always to go overseas outside Europe to experience different culture. I chose to go to Australia, because I wanted to experience the study culture over there, perhaps even work culture too. Study on exchange seemed like perfect opportunity for me to have not only tourist-like experience, but also to get to make friends, study and work. It was a perfect opportunity that I couldn't miss. Since Deakin is an actual university, I also expected it to be more challenging with more daily assignments.

Experiences of the host university

When applying at Deakin university, I had to choose units I wanted to study. After doing some research, I've chosen 4 units: (Algorithms and Computing Systems, n.d.), (Embedded Systems Development, n.d.), (Professional Practice in Information Technology, n.d.) and (Object-Oriented Development, n.d.).

Algorithms and Computing systems were focused on understanding most common algorithms that are being used widely in computing world today. We had some programming included in the unit, but it wasn't the main focus. While studying this unit, I had to also study some math and functions to really understand some concepts taught. So, it was kind of theoretical unit, but I was enjoying it.

Embedded Systems Development was about using hardware and software together. We worked with particle photon devices and raspberry Pi. Internet of things was one of the subjects we have learnt, so it was about connecting multiple hardware devices together. The unit was very similar to what IT Technology Electronics program was about, although better structured and up to date with most technologies.

Professional Practice in Information Technology was purely about soft skills. We learnt SCRUM, Agile and whole bunch of other things including ethical programming. Most of the things I learnt to me was common sense. It's wasn't a very exciting unit.

Object Oriented Development. This was so far my favorite unit. It was also the most challenging. But it was so focused on programming and solving real life issues, that it made the process much more fun. We didn't need to write reports, all we needed to do was just code applications according to the tasks. The teachers were also probably the best there, they very warm and helpful, had great social skills and experience.

Overall, Deakin university gave me a pretty positive impression. I had much more work to do (3-4 assignments a week), but I also picked to study something what I wanted, so it made it much easier for me to focus on studying. Some of the teachers were great, others not so much. So, when it came to teaching, I had mixed feelings.

The beach opening program was a great experience – that's where I've got to make lots of new friends and that's where we were surfing – like true Australians. It's easy to see why surfing is so addictive. If you go there, make sure you register to beach opening program, it's an amazing experience and the price really pays when you see how many activities you get and free food too.

Social and cultural experiences

In Melbourne, the social life is great. I'd say local people are much more friendly than in Copenhagen, It's easier to find friends and hang out with them. On top of that, Deakin has many social groups, like international students group, music groups, engineering, arts groups. There is a lot of activities in the university itself, so you will never have time to get bored.

The Australian culture is much more straight forward and less politically correct. Which is a great thing, if you want to hang out with someone, just say so, you don't need to wait until you get to know that person better. I definitely felt more freedom to be myself over there. When I was working, I always went to the café in the morning to get some coffee, and the staff recognizes me after going there for 3 times. They know my name, they know what coffee I drink, and on the last day of work they gave me free pastry, even though I don't work there. It's normal to have conversations about your day with the staff too. I've found people are just much warmer in Australia. That's probably the best thing about this country, apart from weather too. While people complain that Melbourne's weather is bad, it's nowhere near as in Copenhagen. It got colder only in the very end of May. 27C degrees or more with the sunlight is usual.

In the city, there's a lot of nice museums, pubs and most importantly food places. There are so many Asian places, and the food there is just amazing. There is even a Chinatown over there with a lot of interesting food and markets there.

The best tip I can give you is be free in Melbourne, if you want friends, just start conversations with people and people will respond. Society is very versatile and open minded.

Practical experiences

I've flew with Emirates to Melbourne. While it is slightly more expensive, you stop only once – in Dubai. One of the tips I can give you is not to take Deakin's dorm option, it is way overpriced and you don't get a lot of freedom, e.g. you can't bring friends to your room after 10pm. Also, the fire alarm systems are very sensitive, and if you burn a toast, the smoke can easily trigger the alarm and the firetruck will arrive. There is no way to cancel the triggering system, and in the end, you will have to pay 2000 Australian Dollars. This is just ridiculous. Try to find a room near to the University yourself, it's going to be much cheaper and you will get much more freedom. Or register on Deakin's housing website, private landlords post their ads there.

I personally lived in a shared house with 4 other roommates and it was great. We all were social and friendly people and occasionally held small parties together.

When it comes to food, there prices are on par/slightly more expensive than in Denmark. Eating out costs pretty much the same.

I have also found a part time web developer job in Melbourne. The job was really good, and it was great to get some extra money rather than to spend your savings. The problem though, was that I had very little free time and I only had weekends to relax.

Make sure to dedicate some time for travelling, Australia is huge and there is a lot to explore.

Conclusion

I can rank my Australian experience 10/10. I have completely met all my expectations there, made lots of great new friends, experienced completely different work/study culture and had lots of fun. If I would have the chance to come back here, I definitely would. If you can afford the opportunity to go there – please do, you don't need a lot of savings, because you can find a job over there and sustain yourself. It's always healthy to get out of comfort zone and start living adventurous life. While I was busier studying/working in Australia than I was in Denmark, at the same time I felt much more joyful and alive that it wasn't challenging at all. Go to Australia and you will have no regrets!

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