



EXCHANGE IN MELBOURNE

Deakin University

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Period of study: 01/07 – 1/11 2017

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Why?

There are many reasons to do an exchange. My main reasons were to create an international network. To get out of the Danish bubble and of course to improve my English. I also wanted to have experience in a foreign education system, so I had something to compare to the Danish system. I always wanted to work in a foreign country and doing an exchange is a great step towards doing so. I did not expect a big culture shock since I was going to Australia, a westernized country. I quickly realized that, that was not the case. The main reason I Choose Australia was because I wanted to surf and experience that Vibe. I had lofty expectations regarding this and was hoping to find some same minded mates.

Deakin University

Campus

Of course, doing an exchange also involves the academic part and going from Lygten 37 to Deakin campus is a momentous change. Deakin has several campuses. I had my units in the main campus. This Campus is huge. It is located in Burwood, Melbourne. It is a very safe area, but also very boring. The campus and a Hungry Jacks is pretty much it. It does though have some nice parks and it is just a 50 min tram ride to CBD, Melbourne center. Burwood Campus is the biggest and the closes campus to CBD. So, if you want to experience Melbourne; the night life, food markets, urban bars, hidden bars, thrift shopping, standup comedy, St Kilda beach and so on this is the campus to choose.

Geelong Campus, is in Geelong. A smaller city 1,5-hour drive from Melbourne. I do not know much about the city life, but it will be nothing compared to Melbourne. Geelong is though much closer to Torquay, the closes break to Melbourne. A surfing beach. I Personally loved Torquay. Here you really get the surfing vibe, and you can see the original Rip Curl store. If

that is in your interest. So, if surfing is your thing and you are not planning to buy a car, this campus is your choice.

Which campus you can go to all depends on your education and the units you are having.

Arrival

Campus compass, is an application Deakin created to help you find your way around campus. I really recommend using this to start with, or else you are going to be late on your first day. People are very nice, so you can of course also ask for direction.

They will also go through this and other information on the welcome meetings.

The 4th of July was the start of the beach welcome. You will be taken on a 3-hour drive on the Great Ocean Road to the city Lorne. This is your first tremendous opportunity to make friends, and I suggest that you better grab it. It is a fun 2-day trip with a lot of activities. So, if you are thinking if it is worth the 100 AUD, just stop thinking and do it. You will regret it if you don't.

Units / subjects

You must choose your units during the online application process back home. But when you arrive in Melbourne you will have approximately 15 days to change units. Just make sure to write to KEA and get the units approved first. You can choose 3-4 units. I choose 3 to have more time to enjoy the city and the beaches in the weekend, but with my units, it would still have been possible with a unit more.

I had following units

Android programming – SIT 207

As the unit name indicate. This unit is about creating android applications. You will be writing in Java which was very nice because it is what we are using in the computer science education at KEA. You work independently and will be given 3 assignments to do through the trimester. Furthermore, you have smaller assignments to do every week, which you will have to implement in the Portfolio which you also you must add to every week. The unit is divided in lectures and practical hours. Obviously, you use some of what you learned during

the lecture, in the practical hours. There are no group assignments, which I found a bit sad. It is possible to work together during the practical hours, but your work must not be identical.

This unit has no exam. The full Portfolio is used instead.

I very much enjoyed this unit.

Web development – SIT 104

In web development, you will be learning HTML, CSS, JavaScript, PHP and a bit of SQL because you must fetch data from a database, that Deakin provides you. You will be creating your own webpage from scratch in 3 steps. HTML and CSS part. Form validation with JavaScript and making the webpage dynamic with PHP.

Like SIT 207 it is divided in lectures and practical hours. There is no portfolio in this unit, but a 1-hour multiple choice exam. It was easy in my opinion.

Again this unit has no group work.

I enjoyed this unit to.

Information Technology and Professional Skills – SIT 223

This unit is about creating your resume, analyzing ethical situations and communication skills. This was not a suitable unit for me, I felt I was not learning anything. It was too easy and most of what we were to learn I had already learned in primary school and gymnasium. The unit was basically preparing you for your first job and I can't count the amount I have had on one hand. I was really surprised that I was the only one who had had a job and been to a job interview.

The unit did though give me the opportunity to think about my strengths and create a good résumé.

The unit has no exam, but a reflective portfolio.

Books

No physical books were needed in my units, only recommended. We used webpages, slides and online books. It was all provided by Deakin. So, I had no expenses here.

Socializing and culture

Culture differences

You will experience some culture differences, more than you probably expect, but they are all easy to handle. There is no language barrier, which makes communication very easy. In fact, the biggest negative culture difference, which I never got used to. It is the night life and alcohol policy. Most bars close at 3am and there is no drinking on the streets. There is of course only one thing to do. Embrace the difference, start drinking earlier and hide your beer when passing the police. Do not drink alcohol in the line to a club, you will not get in if they see it. Same apply if you seem just a little bit too drunk.

The most positive difference is the people. In Melbourne, the people are very diverse and you will get inputs from a lot of diverse cultures.

You will be walking down aisle 6 to get some ginger beer while suddenly the person next to you start chatting. Same goes in bars and clubs.

Especially when visiting rural areas, you will meet a lot of nice and welcoming people.

Friends

As mentioned earlier. Participate in the beach welcome trip! First step to find new friends. Here you will have the opportunity to join DISAC, which is the international association. They will be posting events, where you can get to know your fellow international students. Make sure to become a member of the international Facebook page. Events will also be posted here.

If you want to meet Aussies I suggest that you sign up for one of Deakins study associations. If you choose to live on campus, you will meet Aussies there too. There are also events on campus. If you do not live on campus make sure to get a friend living there, who can update you.

Back home in Denmark we tend to be shy to take the first step when meeting new people. I can only urge you to forget everything you are used to. Stop thinking about if what peoples intentions are. Basically, just don't give a f**k about what others are thinking and greet everybody. Don't stop doing so, just because you get your first little group. You might find

even more interesting people. So, go create a network. It gave me the opportunity to do my internship in Santiago de Chile.

If you really want to socialize. Buy an 8-seater van. Fill it up new people every weekend and go surfing in Torquey. The guys in the rental are very nice and will give you a discount because you bring people. I even got to use their wetsuits for free. We took a small prize for people joining us. It just made it go around and we could go surfing for free every weekend. If you want to know about the process of buying a car, send me an email.

I am not to judge people, but it quickly became very clear to me that people from same nations grouped up. I can see the safety in socializing with people from your own culture. But what is the point then. You don't experience other cultures and you don't practice your English. What is the point of meeting Danes in Australia, there is 5,5 million back home. I did live with two other Danes, but we spoke only English and the rest of the Danes I kind of avoided, because they wanted to speak Danish all the time. Believe me there is a lot of Danes.

What to do?

Buying the van was the best thing I did. I bought it with a French guy I lived with. Not only did it make it possible for us to go surf every weekend and make new friends, but it gave us the freedom to do everything. Furthermore, it was an investment to be used to travel 5000km of east coast after the trimester.

On the westside of Melbourne you have the Great ocean road and the Grampians, which is a must do. It is amazing. Kangaroos are everywhere. We saw our first next to the gas station and don't even get me started on the view. Make sure to see the sunset in the Grampians. On the eastside, you have Phillip Island. Here you can see the world's smallest penguins coming back from a day at sea, and a lot of beautiful nature.

Going to the hidden bars of Melbourne is a fun activity. Look them up. There is bunch of them. Berliner bar was my favorite. You must go in the week days or Sunday if you want to experience them being hidden. Which means that you must go through a fridge or find a specific door and ring the bell.

If you want to enjoy the urban vibe of Melbourne, Chapel Street is the place.

Practical

Getting there

I choose to buy a one-way ticket to Melbourne, because I was going to travel after the trimester but had not decided when and where to.

An exchange is not only part of your academic education, but also an education in culture and life. You should have at least a month to travel after the trimester.

Deakin provides a free pick up from the airport. Make sure to sign up for that. You will get the guide how to do so by email from Deakin.

Accommodation

This part of the exchange brings memories.

You have two options. Live on campus or not. There is a lot of share houses in Melbourne.

On Campus

Living on campus is by far the easiest choice. You finish the online application back home.

Get appointed to a room. Get picked up in the airport and that is it.

Living on campus means that you live a bit far from the city. There is no café to go to nearby. Except for the one on campus.

There is a lot of life, people around you, events, sports and so on, but you are a bit cut off from the actual city. So, if you want to live the city life, you should find a share house in the city. This also means that you must be more dedicated in making friends and joining events on campus.

Living on campus is expensive. The cheapest option is 300AUD / 1500DKK a week.

Share house

Melbourne is full of share houses and it is a great option. It is possible to live where you want to and for a cheaper price. In specific locations, the price will be the same as campus.

Melbourne is not a cheap city.

It is also possible to find a share house close to campus, there is a lot around. The share houses around Deakin is often occupied by Asians. No offence, but from experience the ones attending classes at Deakin, kept to them self. I found it very hard to socialize with them.

You can find share houses online. Deakin has its own page called HouseMe, buy using this

one you can insure that the renter is legitimate.

There is also Flatemates and Easyroommate. Do not pay anything before you have seen the house.

If you choose to find a share house I recommended going to Melbourne a week or two earlier.

My mistake

That is exactly the mistake I made. I went directly from Roskilde Festival. I had fortunately made myself a complete time schedule, to my nonfunctional brain. It meant that I only had two days in Melbourne before the beach welcome started.

Before going I wrote a message on the Facebook page, asking if anybody would like to become roommates. I got answers and grouped up with two Danish girls and a Frenchman.

I found a house on Easyroommate with room for all of us and everything appeared fine.

We arrived at the house and it was so smelly, no heaters and no isolation.

We had to buy a heater and cuddle up on two mattresses in the living room. It was a bunding night.

Next morning, we chose to leave the house. We did some couch surfing for a day. Then went to the beach welcome. When we came back we started searching for houses. It took a lot of time, but we finally found the perfect house and added a wonderful Chilean girl to the family. The house was right next to campus and we paid 220AUD / 1100DKK a week. It was an amazing house. 3 bathrooms, big outside area washing machine, dish washer, cleaning every week and room for the van.

I would not do it differently today, but you sure can avoid a lot of stress by arriving in Melbourne earlier.

Burwood

Groceries

4 tram stops from Deakin you have Aldi, Coles and Kmart which is all you need to do groceries. Make sure to get the concession card for your Myki card. It will give you half price on every tram ride.

Gym

I chose a Gym called Training Day Gym. I can really recommend it. It is close to campus and it has everything. The price is 60AUD per month. If you talk a little bit with staff you can get the subscription for free. I did. They are very sweet.

There is also a gym on campus. It is around same price, but it was too small for me.

Prices

Melbourne is not cheap. Most things are the same price as in Denmark, but a lot of stuff is much more expensive. Beer and cigarettes is probably the best example. A 6 pack is around 17AUD. Go to Aldi here you find the cheapest slap of beers. Around 26AUD. Or do as we did stick to the goon. 9AUD for 4 liters of shitty wine, but it gets you there.

Conclusion

This has been one of the best experiences in my life.

Doing an exchange is more than just an academic education. It evolves you as person. It teaches you acceptance and diversity. Of course, it is still what you make of it, everything does not just come to you. You must seek your experiences and it can feel like demanding work. You will get so many new impressions positive and negative that together creates amazing experiences.

The options of what to do and see are endless, so I urge you to create a bucket list and just take it step by step.

My expectations and reasons to do an exchange was fully met. My English improved and I realized how good our living and educational situation are and not at least how much I love Denmark.

I was though really surprised about how people grouped up with their own nationalities. I can't tell you enough. Don't do it. You are there to embrace new cultures. So, break down your barriers and go learn. Try to understand why people do things differently and not to judge them and you will feel more educated than ever.

I wanted to work abroad and now I am sitting in Santiago de Chile in 30 degrees, skipping the Danish winter and trying to learn Spanish. Thanks to being open minded

Good luck and have fun.