

# University of Technology, Australia 2009

## Introduction

One memorable experience I had in Australia is when I met my first few friends. They showed me around Sydney and told me what to do and what I shouldn't do. My friends were different from my typical friends in America. They were Indonesian Chinese and much older than the friends I had in America. I met them when I walked around Sydney's Townhall shopping square, looking for a cellular phone and I met my first friend who was a sales representative for a phone company. We got along well and she introduced me to her other friends who then also became my friends. I had so much fun making these friends because they knew a lot about Sydney and helped settle me in.

## Before You Leave

I suggest reading the Experience reports of students who have been in the country you are going to. It helps a lot to know what to do when you get there, instead of running around, thinking you can handle everything once you get there. It helps a lot because it doesn't take up precious time and allows you to go to the right people for help. I hadn't given myself the time to read them because school became hectic for me but I realize since coming back from Sydney that I wasted loads of my time running around, going to the wrong people. It really helps a lot to have knowledge beforehand so you don't waste time and energy. I should have read this report before I came to Sydney.

## Climate

The weather is like San Francisco's but less cold in the winter and hotter in the summer. It has two seasons like San Francisco's. One is winter and other is summer. You should bring jackets and tee-shirts with you for tops. I didn't bring enough with me because I thought it was going to be really warm when I got there in their spring program. I should have brought a few jackets with me because it rained and was colder than I had expected. I had enough tee-shirts but not enough long sleeve tops to wear. It gets a little rainy, so bring an umbrella or buy one for the spring program. If you are going there in the Fall/Autumn, you should expect it to be hot in the beginning. I came home early for medical reasons, but people tell me it gets very hot in late November and December (around 100F).

## Packing

Bring an umbrella, but you can always buy one when you get there. It isn't an expensive item, usually costing about 5 Aus \$ or more for an umbrella. The currency exchange rate is a little less than the US dollar but almost the same value. It doesn't snow in Sydney so you don't have to bring snow boots unless you want to go snowboarding when it gets cold there. Some people bring their surfboards with them to Sydney to surf but you can always buy one there. I'm not too sure if it's a wise idea to bring one with you overseas because you will have to worry about the limit on how much you can bring on the plane to Sydney.

## **Flight Information**

You should let the school know when you are coming to Sydney so they can send you information on how to get to your accommodation. I was confused when I landed in Sydney about who would take me to the hostel I was going to stay at, but I remembered what to do because of the package the school sent me that I printed out. Please print out the forms the school sends you and keep it with you as it will help you through the beginning of your stay. The accommodation was a hostel and they already had pick up bus services. I gave them a ring from the airport and they picked me and some people up who were going to other hostels. It was a free service as long as you were staying at a hostel.

I did not have to pay extra baggage pricing, but I could only bring two check-in and one carry-on luggage, and they were not allowed to be more than 50 kg each and the carry-on luggage did not exceed the size of the airplane compartment. It's wise to read the information on what not to bring to Australia because they are very strict on this matter. Do not bring food such as vegetables and fruits and camp items that have not been washed since the Australian government is very concerned with protecting their crops and such from being destroyed.

## **Arrival**

You will have help on arrival details. There will be a form online that they send to you by email. It helped me get prepared. However, you should call your airline service for more details as well because they can help you get there without hassle. Students will need to attend the comprehensive orientation. More information about this orientation is provided in a printout form that the school will send you. The orientation covers location, tours and special information on studies and programs. If you miss out on the orientation you will miss out on a lot of valuable information about your new school. The school will also need to obtain some documents from you during orientation.

## **Banking**

If you are planning to make purchases by credit card in Sydney, you should get a bank account. If you are making purchases by cash, you can withdraw money from HSBS bank. The fee is very low and you do not have to wire money from western union if you have money in your bank already. I found that I didn't have to open a bank account because I paid by cash so there was no problem.

## **Phones**

I went with a pre-paid cell phone. It was the best option for me since my stay was a semester long. They call credit minutes; 'recharge' or 'top up' and they call cell phones, 'mobiles.' If you need to make a long distance phone call you have two options. The first one is payphone: you buy a phone card and pay 50 cent at the pay phone to connect with long distance friends and family. The Second one is PC to PC phone calls: those are free. You will need internet access for this. The services I know are AIM, Skype, Yahoo, and/or MSN that provide free service for pc to pc phone calls.

## **Housing**

Housing is affordable if you look in the right places. There is a link for housing that UTS will provide you in their forms package. You will need to find your own housing, but you can get one on campus by following the link on UTS's website and forms they send you by email. Obviously, it's cheaper to room with people because you can split the costs. Most people live in apartments because they are newer than the houses, but some people don't mind since they are cheaper and/or closer to the city. For me, I liked living in a house because it was more room than apartments. It had a kitchen, living-room and even a back yard. However, they are generally run-down and less clean than apartments, but we fixed ours up, and continued to maintain it. I found my place by gumtree.com. I stayed at a hostel in the beginning because the school told us it was wise not to look for housing when you're in America due to scams. It's best to rent a room in a hostel or some other temporary place, and once you arrive, start looking for housing. It is also wise to purchase a one week train pass so that you don't have to pay more for each day you use it.

## **Academics**

Students should follow instructions very carefully at their host university. It gets very confusing when you have not done tours prior to when school starts. UT is the best school in Australia as they say, and there will be a larger workload if you are going to study in Fashion Design. I'm not sure about other majors, but for Fashion Design, the workload is more than it is at SFSU. Expect to act like professionals when going to this school, and realize that you will need to attend class everyday as well as turn all assignments in on time.

## **Campus Life**

The campus is located in the city. It has taller buildings than SFSU, and it is a very nice campus with lots of decoration. I was mostly intrigue with the design of the buildings. SFSU looks less plain than UTS, and the buildings are shorter, but take up more space. Computers are available on almost every floor of UTS and food generally is located in cafes on the first floors of each building.

## **Social Life**

First off, start making friends early. Once you get on the plane, talk to people who live in Australia and they will show you how to understand the city and people. I sat next to an Australian and on my way there, he taught me how to use slang words and it helped me a lot once I began roaming Sydney. I also met friends quickly when I was wandering Sydney. When I first came to Sydney, I'd always walk into people, but after close observation, I realized that people here drive and walk in different directions than Americans. It's a good idea to observe the people and city so you don't get into accidents. The one thing I would avoid is standing on the right side when taking the escalator. People walk on this side when taking the escalator. Always look before you cross a street or road because drivers will suddenly drive out. You should always look to the right before crossing a street because drivers in Sydney are very aggressive and less alert.

## **Religion**

I'm a Buddhist and I find that most Indonesians are Buddhists. Most of my friends were Indonesians and I got along well with them. I'm not sure how religious they were, but some Buddhists attend temple weekly, especially on weekends for chanting ceremonies. I'm not actually sure about the people's views on Buddhism and other religions in Sydney, but it seems to be accepted, and my counselor from UTS mentioned that they have a section on religion where I could get information on Buddhism. I found my service on the web, and I found it to be comforting to know that I could get Buddhist services when I was overseas.

## **Leisure and Travel**

There are a lot of fun things to do at the Darling Harbor. It's a park where every weekend there are events such as games, food and drinks for you to enjoy. When I was there, there were fireworks every Saturday or Sunday night. There are also many bars and clubs to go to every weekend. Anyone can walk along Darling Harbor and find a bar suited for them. There are some in the city that are fun as well such as Star Bar. Events that occur at the University of Technology are parties for exchange students to get to know the school and other students better. They occur throughout the year so students can keep in contact with their peers while studying.

## **Shopping**

There are a couple of shops you can go for shopping. If you need to grocery shop, go to Broadway Shopping mall or Paddy's Market. There is also a place that is further out of the city, which is called Fish Market. Paddy's Market and Fish Market are like flea markets. Broadway Shopping mall includes Kmart, Cole's, Bi-lo, Target and other stores. Bi-lo is a cheap place to buy meat, processed foods, and dairy products. Cole's is like Woolworth's, which is located on George Street, in the city. Meat and vegetables are more expensive there than it is at Paddy's and Fish Market. If you want good vegetables go to Fish Market. If price is important buy your vegetables at Paddy's. It is the cheapest place I could think of for vegetables and fruits.

Clothes items are generally more expensive in Sydney than it is in the US. For clothe shopping, go to Townhall or Broadway shopping mall. If you want to buy high quality brand names go to QVB shopping square. For more discounted items you should browse other shopping squares that are in Townhall. Sizing is the same in the host country as U.S. Shoe sizes may in European sizing.

## **Travel**

Students should ask friends about how to save money and stay safe while traveling. Once you make friends, things get less hectic. Catch the train with the weekly pass or get a concession pass from school that cut the fares. Hostels will also provide coupons you can use. Lastly, you can use your international student ID to get discounts. Great places to visit are the Opera House, Blue Mountains, Manly Beach and Bondi Beach. For entertainment, you should go to the events held every week at Darling Harbor. Always avoid going places alone because it can be dangerous for you.

**In Closing**

Sydney is a beautiful place and respected for its many cultures and customs. Sydney is a multi-cultural place like San Francisco, and you will find people from different parts of the world. Now that I am home, I miss Sydney's the laid-back lifestyle the most. People seem to live life at a slower pace there than they do in American cities and that was quite a relief for me. Students who are planning to go to school in Australia should learn to respect the lifestyles of the Australians.