



Study Abroad Helpful Hints

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Can students contact you with questions about the program? Yes

PREPARING TO GO

What do wish you had brought with you? More money. Seriously, this is a unique opportunity to be over ten thousand miles from anybody that has ever met you in person. The unfortunate reality of the world we live in says that you need money to go do fun things. That being said, you can still take trips on the cheap, but having a safety net of money is a really good idea.

What general packing advice do you have? Get your basic clothes/toiletries/room deco that you absolutely MUST have from home and pack those, but use your best judgement for anything more. Remember you will be over ten thousand miles from your room in the US so don't forget things to remind you of home every once in a while! Oh and make sure you've got an extra pair of socks and underwear, neck pillow, and a sweater in your bag, that international flight is LONG and it can be CHILLY, you are 40,000 feet in the air after all.

Were linens, towels, dishes, pots and pans, cutlery, etc., included? Yes, if you stay with UniCentral they provide most of your kitchen supplies for you (they're a part of the apartment, so they are used by prev. tenants.) There is an optional linens kit (there are new and used options) this gives you all of your bedding supplies plus various towels. It may be cheaper to buy them separately at the shops, but keep in mind that either one you choose, there are NO LINENS WHEN YOU ARRIVE.

Did someone from the university meet you at the airport? (For Brisbane Airport) No. You have 2 options of getting to UniCentral from the airport (~1hr away). The easiest is to schedule a shuttle to take you to UniCentral, this is done when you apply for accommodations at UniCentral. They'll ask you for your flight info and your arrival time. You will see a kiosk for "Con-x-ion" bus transfers just outside the doors where arrivals and baggage claim are in Brisbane airport. This is where you go and ask when and where the con-x-ion bus will pick you up there at the airport. Alternatively, if your flight arrives in the daytime you can get acquainted with public transportation right away and catch the train to Landsborough, and from there catch the 615 bus to USC. It's up to you, but the train is quite fun if you're up to the challenge right off the plane!

COMMUNICATION

Where to find cell phone providers/buy minutes: If you have the energy when you land, you can pick up your aussie sim card from the airport at virtually any newsstand kiosk. Though if you wait until your settled, you can grab em at the local Coles (grocery store) or the Sunshine Plaza (Mall in Maroochydoore).

Is internet available in your accommodation? Yes, but keep in mind Aussie internet infrastructure is far behind that of the USA. I guarantee you will have outages every once in a while, and the speeds are lackluster. That being said, the internet is ok for most needs, including skype/facetime. You can always walk down to the campus if you need faster/more reliable internet.

Do you have to pay for internet? How much? Yes, there are different packages of internet service. The first two packages are metered (meaning there is a data cap). Go for the \$70AUD/Unlimited package. They will try and tell you need to purchase internet for each person in the apt, this is NOT true. Talk to your housemates (if you can) and try to get only 1 router per 2 rooms so that you and another bloke can split that 70AUD and have unlimited data. The UniCentral office will also tell you that you can only have 2 devices connected to the router at a time. In most cases this is also untrue, as it's a router and its sole purpose is to route internet to as many devices as you connect. However the more people that share 1 router, the slower the speeds. We found that the ideal combo is to have 2 routers for each house (4 people in a house) with the data and cost split between each pair of roommates.

GETTING AROUND

How accessible is public transportation (and what kind)? Public transportation is everywhere down the east coast of Australia, so as long as you're comfortable with the system they have down there you'll be absolutely fine. TransLink (the name of the gov't funded transportation system) has a RFID card that you tap to get on and off the bus/train. You can buy one of these cards from the USC bookstore on campus, or you can buy individual tickets per trip.

What are the hours of public transit? The bus stop on the USC campus starts running pretty early in the morning, until around 8-10PM. It IS possible to miss the last bus.

Do you tip taxi drivers? No, there is no tipping customs in Australia, unless you honestly received superb service you can keep that fiver.

What is the cheapest and/or most efficient way to travel outside of the city (e.g. student rail passes, discount airlines, etc.): Public transportation is really the best bet in the Brisbane/Mooloolaba area, Uber does exist over there, but it is MUCH more expensive than in the US. Just a short 20 min trip could cost around \$100AUD. If you do take the TransLink routes, and you are there for at least 1 FULL YEAR you can take advantage of their concession fares that make bus rides ~\$1AUD one way.

ACADEMICS

How did academics differ from the US? They take university classes MUCH more seriously than in the US, and ESPECIALLY more than Fredonia. In Australia, uni is not as much a rite of passage as it is in the US, so the people that do go to uni are there because they WANT to be there, and the professors assume that you do too. Most classes have a mix of domestic and international students. Even a 100-level class can be more challenging than you'd expect. They grade based not on things you do in class (i.e. tests, attendance) but based on a few larger assignments. They won't bring the hammer down if you miss class (they even post class recordings online) but you WILL be behind if you frequently miss class.

DINING/GOING OUT

Where do you go for inexpensive "take out?" Our favorites were Raj Indian take out, just down the street in Chancellor Park. Cheap tasty curry!

What is the dining situation like in your living area? Mooloolaba, Sippy Downs and Budrim all have fantastic restaurants, just pull up google maps and you can find whatever you're hungry for in the area!

What are the cooking facilities like where you live? You get a stove, oven and microwave.

Where is the best place to buy groceries? Coles is the shortest walk. Woolies (Woolworths) is a good alternative but is farther away (there is a UniCentral shuttle for Woolies though on Tues/Thurs @ 6pm) Either place lets you push the cart back to UniCentral so you don't have to lug 100 bags of groceries home. Just leave the cart in UniCentral lot somewhere away from cars and somebody comes and picks them up. Convenient!

What were some of your favorite restaurants? Mr. McGehees Spaghetti House is pretty excellent pizza/pasta. And nearby Duchys Bakehouse has supreme Chai Lattes and baked goods (First place I went to!) Also, theres Fisheries on the Spit that does the perfect fish and chips, be sure to try it. Taps was one of the last places we frequented on our trip, they have great pour your own beer, try out Stone & Wood Pacific Ale. Finally theres Bettys Burgers in Noosa. You have to go there, no exceptions, it's just too good mate.

FINANCIAL

What is the easiest way to access money? There are ATMs on campus if you want to use cash, but damn near every single place that sells anything in Australia uses credit card readers so you don't really need cash so long as your debit/credit card doesn't have foreign transaction fees!

Did you set up an Australian bank account when abroad? No, I personally did not, and you really don't need to honestly, but to get your security deposit back on the apartment at UniCentral you will need to get it back. I just told them to use the security deposit to pay my last month's rent so I did not need to.

TRAVEL

Where did you travel outside of your host city? I visited several places while in Australia. Noosa was probably my favorite, little over an hour north of USC, and you can take a bus there. Beautiful beaches and a fantastic national park to walk along the coastal trail. There is a cheap hostel up on the hill not even 5 minutes to walk to the beach. The hostel is SUPER affordable, especially if you split cost with others. And they let you rent a surfboard/bodyboards for FREE! Also Byron Bay was a riot, a very hippie town but lots of shops and food here, and learned to surf with the dudes at Stoked Surf school, look for a dude named Hayden, they are loads of fun to go out for your first surf trip.

How did you plan your travel? Any advice? It's the kind of place where you can decide to go travel whenever you please. Public transport is CHEAP and can get you from Noosa to Brisbane, and for-hire busses can take you down to Byron. Don't look for swanky hotels, just do hostels and public busses/trains and you can get anywhere on the east coast for very little money.

OTHER ADVICE

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone planning to study on your program? Just do it. If you're this far into the process where your seriously considering it, and even if you have reservations about money, being away, etc... just do it. Especially if you aren't a senior. I went in my last semester of school, so I didn't get as much funding as I had hoped. Lets face it, as a college student there isn't a way out of being in debt. At the end you'll still have more money to pay back than you care to ever admit, so why not make that money go towards something truly EXTRAORDINARY, without spending that much more than if you stayed on-campus this year? Yes this means leaving friends, family, basically everything that you've become accustomed to, but I guarantee that you will come out the other side having learned some truly useful life skills/lessons about doing something challenging completely on your own.

(or with a friend, if your going with someone!) I cannot recommend study abroad enough. You can meet requirements for your major, knock out CCC's, and at the end of the day you can explore a whole new continent, where every direction you turn is something you literally have never seen before in your life. It's like traveling to another planet, without actually leaving!

Were there any major cultural differences that you had a hard time adjusting to? There aren't too many cultural differences. It did seem that folks in general wake up earlier and go to bed earlier than in the US. Most shops and bars close fairly early (8/10PM) so "going out" is gonna happen earlier than you'd expect. Also, most things are more expensive down in Australia, including alcohol. Unless you have a lot of funds to go down there with, drinking will be an expensive affair.