

Australia – A Travel Report

by Patrick Klich

Spending 10 months in Australia as a student at the Australian National University may be one of the best things you are ever going to do. Great adventures are waiting. For me it was a time of studying hard, socializing a lot and meeting many people from different cultures (hey – I got a Chinese name: Xiongxiang, which means something like “Little bear”), doing a lot of sports and thus losing weight (running, running and more running – hint: IB), learning about the country and learning more about myself.

First I am going to explain why I wanted to study at the ANU. Second I am going to say something about Australia, Canberra, the Australian National University and the Australian culture. Then I am going to say something about getting ready for Australia. I will include some useful hints about “living in Canberra”.

I felt the need to go somewhere far away for a long time in order to try something new, something different, something challenging before attending the course “Australian Culture”. Since Australia is so far away and I almost did not know anything about the continent, I was ready and eager to learn more about Australia. At some point, Ms. McIlwaine mentioned that one student will get the opportunity to study at the Australian National University in Canberra. Improving and perfecting my English, studying at a foreign “elite” University, meeting new people, learning about the Australian Culture were some of the goals I wanted to accomplish.

Australia

Australia has beautiful landscapes, unique animals, a superb climate, tasty food and much more. It's the country of long distances. Canberra is located 3 hours away from Sydney and 8 hours from Melbourne. Australians are used to travelling long distances. Do not worry about the Australian English accent. Most Australians speak “Standard Australian” which is pretty close to the American accent. Of course there are differences and they pronounce words a bit differently but you should have no trouble understanding them. Australia has a lot to offer e.g. beaches (Gold Coast), museums (The Victorian Arts Gallery in Melbourne), the Great Barrier Reef and more. Aboriginal culture is another point which makes Australia unique. Aborigines have lived in Australia for 40000-50000 years and learning something about their history is something a student should do.

Canberra

Canberra may also be called “Bush Capital”, for it has only roughly 300 000 inhabitants. In Canberra one will mainly find government buildings, universities and a lot of nature e.g. Black Mountain, Lake Burley Griffin. Also, there are of course, some interesting suburbs e.g. Fyshwick, where you can find the fresh / farmer markets. Although Melbourne and Sydney might be considered as “more impressive”, Canberra has its charm. The ANU campus life is amazing, you will enjoy the nature around Canberra (and see Kangaroos!) and you can definitely enjoy visiting the museums and government buildings.

The Australian Culture/Cultures

Australians like to say “no worries” and they do like to live according to this principle too. No matter how difficult an exam or a problem is, they will stay relaxed. Australians do not like to panic about. My Senior Resident answered most of my questions pretty easily and after I thanked him, he just said “no worries” or “no biggie”. I enjoy talking to Australians because they are funny, calm, do not take things unnecessarily serious and most importantly they do not behave as “stressed” or “hectic” as some Germans may do. I am not sure anymore but I think you actually call professors by their first name sometimes. Living at Burton and Garran Hall this “life style” was mixed with many, many cultures e.g. Chinese, Indian and so you could observe how different cultures would work together.

The University

The Australian National University is ranked among the top universities in the world. Studying at the Australian National University will be your chance to experience your subject in a new way. The ANU has many famous lecturers e.g. Avery Andrews for Morphology or Paul Chen for Microeconomics. Having passed one course at the BUW does not mean you may not learn something from attending the same course at the ANU. I didn't do this for credit points, but to find out how Microeconomics is structured at the ANU.

Campus

Living on campus will make you feel like a real student. You can meet new people on campus basically anytime and exploring the campus itself is a nice adventure. The campus is really large, there is nature everywhere i.e. many trees, meadows and a small river, it has many shops and there are hundreds of international students everywhere! On the campus there even is a cinema (at Coombs) and you become a member of the ANU film club for one year just for 60 Australia dollars! I really recommend doing this because you will be able to see many new movies, meet friends and have fun and relaxing evenings. On campus there are also many events e.g. the German Oktoberfest is celebrated in a bar on campus. On campus you will even find a pharmacy, some doctors and many large fields on which you can e.g. throw your boomerang.

Sports on campus

The ANU has a huge sports program e.g. going caving, martial arts, tennis, mountaineering etc.

Market day is the a day on which you can go to the sports hall, have a look at what kinds of sports are being offered and you can get cheap memberships on that. I recommend going!

Inward bound

Once a year, all living halls will take part in a running competition called Inward Bound. The idea is that each team gets driven to a starting point in the Bush. During the bus drive they are blindfolded. After being dropped at the some point in the Bush they have to find out where they are, using maps only and then they need to run to the final goal. The distance they have to run depends on the division and ranges between 20 and 100 KM.

Studying at the ANU

Usually one takes four courses per semester. Here is a list of the courses I was enrolled in:

1st Semester:

- English: Australian Literature
- Economics: Statistical Techniques, Public Finance

2nd Semester:

- English: Introduction to the Novel, Film Genres, 19th Century US Literature, Morphology

ANU courses may be tougher than BUW courses. Although Australian Literature is a first year course, you may end up reading one novel a week for the course. Statistical Techniques had three one hour lectures and a one hour tutorial. However, you had to take a mid term exam, hand in 2 assignments and pass a three hour final exam in order to finally pass the course. At the BUW, as far as I know, you don't have to do midterms or assignments and the final exam is shorter for Economics exams.

Morphology was kind of an adventure. Lecturer Avery Andrews knows really really much about linguistics, but the lectures may sometimes get difficult. I did not know how to begin solving some assignments in the beginning e.g. analyzing morphemes, but luckily he gave me and another student a private lesson and thus I was able to somehow finish the course with a relatively good grade. Because he is a native American English speaker, I was taught who declares English sentences to be "grammatical" and unlike in Germany, where we have the "Duden" there actually may not be an organization for English. It is rather the native speakers in each English speaking country which individually may or may not deem English sentences and expressions grammatical. The linguistic views I learned because of Professor Andrews are actually quite different from the ones Dr. Goebbel or Prof. Breul taught me.

The important websites for you as an ANU student will be:

Horus / Isis

- <https://isis.anu.edu.au/psp/sscsprod/?cmd=login&languageCd=ENG&>

Wattle

- <https://wattle.anu.edu.au/>
- <http://timetable.anu.edu.au/>

Getting Around in Australia/Transportation

Plane: Tiger, Virgin, Quantas

Bus: Murrays, Greyhound

Train: I have not used the train myself, but there is a train station in Canberra.

Flying in Australia is pretty cheap. Since the distances are really large, Australians are used to flying a lot. Whenever I could, I took the plane instead of the bus.

Travelling

- *Brisbane – Lonepine Koala Sanctuary*
Be prepared to meet 130 cute Koalas, actually hug a Koala and get your Koala picture taken
- *Sydney*
Sydney Opera, Toranga Zoo
- *Frazer Island*
- *Alice Springs*
Ayers Rocks, Alice Springs National Park
- *Western Australia*
Perth is a really beautiful city which has many attractions e.g. King's park or Perth Zoo
- *Darwin*
- *Great Bareer Reef*
- *Gold Coast*
Batemans Baylf you use Murrays, this place is a three hour drive away from Canberra. It is a beach close to Canberra.
- *Great Ocean Road*

There are many very attractive places in Australia and hundreds of strategies and tactics to visit them. Basically I decided where I wanted to go, had a look at the Virgin Airways website, had a look at hostelworld.com and then found out the cheapest possibility of getting there. Lonely planet is a very popular guide which might help you and give you more ideas.

Living in Canberra

Australia is pretty expensive. A pack of cigarettes costs between 10 and 20 Australian dollars, bananas once cost 16 dollars per kilogramme. However, there are some places where you can get food and clothes relatively cheaply.

- Shops: Aldi, Superbarn (located inside the Canberra Centre)
- Fyshwick (suburb of Canberra)
- DFO (Direct Factory Outlet) – shopping centre where you can get clothes, pots and pans, sleeping equipment cheaply
- Pottery: pots and pans sale at Burton And Garran Hall. At your living hall you can get your cooking equipment for budget prices. (3 dollars for a plate, a pot, knives, forks, spoons and some other stuff)

Here is an estimation how much it might cost you to live in Australia.

Excluding tuition fees, we estimate you will need per person as a minimum.

Accommodation:	\$161 per week+
Food:	\$120 per week*
Photocopying, textbooks, stationery:	\$20 per week*
Transport:	\$20 per week**
Entertainment (not incl clothes)	\$28 per week*
Phone, internet (not incl mobile phone)	\$15 per week*
Incidentals	\$20 per week
Health Cover	\$7.30 per week***
TOTAL:	A\$20.347 per year (52 weeks)

Preparation

There is a lot of stuff you need to prepare before going to Australia. Don't be afraid tough, most of the stuff is easy – it simply needs to be done.

- The flight
- Visum
- Student Hall
- Abmeldung in Germany
- Toefl Test
- Learning Agreement
- Finance (BAFÖG, Promos)
- Impfung
- Australian German Power Plug
- Banking Account
- Camera

The Flight/Visa

I bought my plane ticket at a STA travel agency in Cologne. As far as I know you can also book the ticket online. I recommend taking STA because they are cheap and have some experience organizing student journeys e.g. you can ask them about how to get a visa, what kind of visa your visiting friends need (for visitors, the visa is actually free or very very cheap – 20 dollars?). Of course, the earlier you book the cheaper it gets and of course you can use other travel agencies. A return ticket will roughly cost you between 1000 and 1500 Euros if you book via STA. There are many possible routes e.g. Frankfurt – Abu Dhabi – Sydney -Canberra or Frankfurt - ShangHai – Sydney - Canberra. If you decide to travel via plane, you can either travel to Sydney only and then use Murrays or Greyhound i.e. the bus to reach your final destination or you may decide to directly fly to Canberra Airport. What is the best decision? It depends. If you book early enough, it may not cost you much more to fly to Canberra directly. If you use Murrays and book early a one way ticket may only cost you 30 dollars. Taking the plane may cost you 100-200 dollars more, you will have to use the STA website a bit to find out the actual prices. What I did was take the train (ICE) from Cologne to Frankfurt (the train ticket was included in the price of the flight ticket), fly from Frankfurt to Abu Dhabi, fly from Abu Dhabi to Sydney and fly from Sydney to Canberra. The ANU organizes a free shuttle service i.e. they will pick you up from Canberra Airport for free if you book this service. On my way back I took Murrays to get from Canberra to Sydney and took the same flight route.

What is also important is the weight of the books. Different airlines allow different weight limits. I think Emirates allows you to take a 30KG luggage item and 7KG hand luggage and Etihad allows you to take 23KG checked in luggage and 7KG hand luggage. A suitcase – if it has the right dimensions – also counts as suitcase. Your laptop, if you take it with you as hand luggage will not be counted. So you can actually carry pretty much with you. Hint: If you need to take more baggage, try to put it into your hand luggage. I was able to pack my backpack with 15 KG of stuff on my way back to Germany and they did not check the weight of my backpack.

Student Visa will (as far as I remember) cost you 540 Australian Dollars. This sounds ridiculous but it is actually true and you cannot avoid this. The visa allows you to work part time too.

The flights are long. You will get some food and as many drinks as you like. Take some good books with you to make the journey as comfortable as possible.

Finance

I recommend you to apply for Auslandsbafög and a scholarship such as Promos. Finding a job is another solution. I heard you will get paid 15-20 dollars per hour even for simple jobs, such as working at McDonalds or working at a bakery. Even if you do not fulfill the criteria to get “Inlandsbafög” you might still fulfill the criteria to get “Auslandsbafög”.

I had to roughly pay 500 Euros per month for one room in Burton and Garran Hall. In addition to that came about 200 Euros per month for food. I was able to finance the expenses using Auslandsbafög, Kindergeld, Halbwaisenrente and a Promos Scholarship.

Accommodation

The big question is whether one wants to live on campus (and in which student hall) or off campus. Both options have advantages and disadvantages. I've heard of a German girl living off campus, spending a long time travelling to and from the University. Apparently she has made some “real” friends in Canberra to whom she still has contact. Real in the sense that these people had contact with her “voluntarily” and she was able to see Australia from another perspective. I feel I many made many friends by having lived on campus and I would recommend staying on campus. You will spare time, enjoy the benefits of living on campus e.g. O-week, quick access to lecture halls and you can take part in the competitions between different student halls e.g. a movie making competition, running competitions, IB etc.

Life in Burton and Garran Hall was a great experience. In my room, I was able to study, relax, check my email business and when going to center block I basically always met somebody. I was constantly talking to a large amount of people from many different cultures. It feels good to be a part of a large community. Besides that, playing pool or table tennis was possible at any time of the day! Beat that!

You will have to tell your registration office that you are going to leave Germany for a year in order not to pay a fine.

Your standard immunizations should be up to date and you do not need any special immunizations unless you decide to go to tropical areas. There is basically no need for any extra ones. In order to study at the ANU you must pass a language test e.g. TOEFL

with a score of at least 90. Decide yourself whether you are going to prepare for the test a little bit or not at all. However I did not prepare at all and scored a point too less. One of the important points is course selection. In Germany you may want to sign a so called learning agreement which guarantees that you will get credit for the courses you are going to attend at the ANU. However you will still have chances to change the courses before finally enrolling to the university. I made my final choices in Canberra and then sent emails to my lecturers from Wuppertal, asking them whether my choices were okay.

Australia can be really expensive but you can easily counter this problem.

Overall I have to say that living in an Australian student hall may be one of the funniest experiences in your life. I've heard of a senior resident getting drunk at her birthday, throwing eggs around herself and telling people "I am allowed to do so – I am your SR". There is always stuff going on at Burton and Garran Hall.

Burton and Garran Hall

Burton and Garran Hall is the largest student hall, offering space for 500 students. It consists of four blocks and a center block. In the center block, you will find the huge kitchen, study places, a bar area, a table tennis table, a pool table, a small library, a laundry place and music rooms. Each block has four floors and on each floor there is a so called Senior Resident, making 16 Senior Residents overall. They are responsible for keeping the floors "quiet" and students can go to them whenever they have a question or a problem. Unfortunately you have to live at B and G some time in order to become one and I think it was at least one complete year. At Burton and Garran Hall you can participate in many social events, such as

- O-week: 2 weeks of introducing you to Australia, the living hall and life as a student at the ANU. This was a really crazy time.
- Toga
- Drag and Diva
- Academic Dinner
- Holy

and much more e.g. theatre performances. Some of these events require you to wear a suit, so do not forget to take your suit!

If you have a Deutsch Bank bank account, you can simply go to a Westpac ATM and get your cash from there without having to pay any fees. You can also get a free Australian Bank account. I found having an Australian account too annoying and just walked 5 minutes off campus to get to the Westpac atm (there is a Commonwealth Bank ATM on the campus).

A German – Australian power plug will be very useful. In combination with a connection plug board you will be easily able to use all of your technical items.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AC_power_plugs_and_sockets#Australian_standard AS.2F_NZS_3112 .28Australasian_10.C2.A0A.2F240.C2.A0V.29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AC_power_plugs_and_sockets#Australian_standard_AS.2F_NZS_3112_.28Australasian_10.C2.A0A.2F240.C2.A0V.29)

And bring a good camera to Australia! There are actually people who go to Australia without taking a camera! Australia is expensive, so better buy a camera via <http://geizhals.at/de/> e.g. <http://geizhals.at/de/613747>.

Australia vs. Germany

- Using Australian Internet is fun. You will get different search results using YouTube or Google and the GEMA will not interfere with your viewing habits.
- Playing Quake Live (online ego shooter), you will notice the difference between Australians and European players:
European players quickly complain a lot, wanting “Teams” to be balanced (i.e. they really do not like imbalanced teams, insulting players quickly to leave the game, to make it “balanced”), whereas Australian players just enjoy the game.
- Food: Australian food tastes differently. You will have the chance to try eating Kangaroo.
- Weather: In Australia it is basically always warm. Sure, sometimes it rains in Canberra but still it gets so hot in summer and winter is very mild.
- Laws: You will have to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.

Departure

Before leaving Australia, I sent a package to Germany. I went to “Australia Post” and asked them to send the package via ship. This is the cheapest way. It will cost you roughly 100-150 Euros to send you a 20-30KG package to Germany and the package will need up to 6 months to arrive in Germany. This way you can actually send your books, holiday presents etc. safely back to Germany. Ask Australia Post to protect your package using a water resistant back!

My flight left around 11 am in the morning and I still went for a run around Black Mountain at 6 am in the morning with some friends. After running, they helped me get my stuff out of my room, we had breakfast and then they saw me take my cab. I was really really sad to leave. It was my last run in Australia and the last time I saw a kangaroo there.

If you have any questions I would be more than happy to answer them as good as I can. You can simply contact me via email: patrick.klich@gmx.de.

Australia: The Koala is waiting for you.

- <http://bandg.anu.edu.au/>
- www.virginaustralia.com/
- <http://www.hostelworld.com/>
- http://www.amazon.de/Lonely-Planet-Australia-Susie-Ashworth/dp/1740594479/ref=sr_1_4?ie=UTF8&qid=1336386258&sr=8-4
- <http://www.anu.edu.au/>
- <http://www.statravel.de/>
- <http://www.murrays.com.au/>









