Experience Report University of New South Wales – Sydney Australia

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My exchange to Australia has been a truly amazing experience. It already started way before I even got there. Because I wanted to go all the way to Australia, there are a lot of extra things that needed to be arranged before I could actually leave. For instance you need to arrange your visa, meet the language requirements etc. Fortunately the UNSW has a very good online application program which serves like a sort of checklist. This made it a lot easier to fulfill all the requirements. You also receive a lot of information about the accommodation the University offers. I chose to live on campus, in the UNSW Hall. This is a dorm with private rooms and breakfast and dinner is included. It is a bit more expensive then off campus housing, but I am so glad I made the decision to live on campus. It is so much more convenient to live close to the University, and a great opportunity to meet new people from all over the world. Also on campus housing has to be arranged before you arrive in Australia, which saves you a lot of extra stress.

The University's location is perfect. It is close to the airport, so there is a direct bus to the University. Still the University offers a pick-up service for arriving international students. This is the perfect option when you are dragging a heavy suitcase with you. The pick-up can be booked in advance as soon as you have your arrival details.

Apart from being close to the airport, the University is also close to the city center. There are several direct busses into the city center. It will take you about 20 minutes to get to the Opera House form the University! Sydney is a huge lively city, with lots and lots of things to do. You will never get bored when living in Sydney. The city center is very big, with the main shopping street, George Street. You can visit the Rocks, the oldest part of Sydney, of course see the Opera House and Harbour Bridge in Circular Key, Take a stroll through the Botanic Gardens, Check out Hyde Park, go see Darling Harbour etc. If the city center is too big for your liking, then pay a visit to Bondi Junction, and of course the famous Bondi Beach. I would highly recommend to make a trip to the Blue Mountains when you are staying in Sydney. It is absolutely worth it! A little tip for the blue mountains trip, do it on a Sunday. On Sunday’s you can travel all day long for only 2,50 dollars, which is so much cheaper than if you would make that trip an another day.

Sydney has so many nice restaurants, bars, and food courts. You can pretty much eat in every single street you walk through, and you can make it just as expensive as you want. If your budget is not too big, like mine was, the food courts are an absolute must go. And then there is, of course, the Sydney nightlife, which is an absolute blast! Sydney has an enormous amount of bars and clubs where you can go for drinks and dancing. The only problem is that going out in Sydney is very expensive. Most places have and entrance fee, and buying drinks in clubs and bars is very expensive. A beer costs around 9 dollars. But the creative students will find their way around this, and after all it is Sydney we are talking about here. I would recommend you to go to the Ivy Club on a Thursday night at least once. This is a very fancy club in Sydney, and on Thursdays the entrance is free. When I say fancy, I mean really fancy. It is has five different floors, a couple of cocktail bars, and a pool! Also keep an eye out for parties organized by the University, or societies. Normally you only pay a small compensation for an awesome night out.

The University is also very close to Coogee beach. It is about a 20 minute walk to Coogee beach, my personal favorite of all the beaches I have been to in Sydney. The perfect location
for lazy afternoons in the sun when your classes are finished for the day. Coogee also has some very nice restaurants and bars for dinner and drinks. Oh and let’s not forget the Randwick Race Course, which is right next to the University. It is definitely worth it to go see a horse race there, and once you are there already take a lucky bet on a horse. I have had so much fun there.

During my stay some studying had to be done as well. I took two bachelor courses: Cyberspace Law and Introduction into the Australian Legal System, and two master courses, Doping in Sport: The Global Issue, and Law of Armed Conflicts. I chose these courses because they are all not offered in Tilburg (apart from Law of Armed Conflicts, which is briefly touched upon in International Law). It was a good contribution to my legal education to see the different legal system, and laws, they have in Australia. I would recommend every Law student to go on exchange and see a different legal system, especially to a country which has the Common Law system like Australia. If you are not used to studying in English, this can be a challenge for you in the beginning. But once you have picked-up all the legal names and terms in English it will be much easier to follow. This will take you a few weeks, but then you will be fine. The master courses if followed were very intensive. I only had 4 days of lectures, but these were full days from 9 to 5, which was very challenging. Also I had to write very lengthy essays for both of them, around 6000 words each. However, they were very interesting, which makes the writing and studying better doable. The bachelor courses were less challenging than the master courses. Not too much work, but still very interesting.

I liked the campus of UNSW a lot! It is about three times the size of Tilburg University campus, so very big. You will definitely get lost the first few weeks, but it is such a beautiful campus. One thing is for sure, you will get super fit during your stay at UNSW. Why? Because their campus is built against quite a steep hill, and they have lots of stairs!

The first week of your stay at UNSW will be an introduction week called O-Week. There are a lot of activities during that week, including an information fair. Here, all the societies and clubs will present themselves to you. There are sports clubs, study clubs, but also thing we would never have like a thee drinking society! This is a great opportunity for you to pick out clubs to join, if you like to. Living on campus has some extra advantages as well. The UNSW Hall, where I stayed, organized a lot of social activities like sports games, movie nights, parties etc. In the Hall there were living about 230 people in total. You will get to meet so many people from all over the world, also a lot of Australians. I have made some very good friends which I have had so much fun with over the semester.

One thing I would highly recommend you to do is travel! Visit as many places as you can, and your budget allows you to. Australia is a huge and very diverse country with so many things to see. Fly up to Cairns to dive at the great barrier reef, go to the rainforest, visit Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Surfers Paradise, Melbourne, the capital Canberra of course, and one of my personal favorites: go to The Outback!

Like I have mentioned before, Sydney is a pretty expensive city to live in. However, you can make it as expensive as you like. I chose to live on campus. This is a bit more expensive, but the benefit is that you do not have to worry about breakfast and dinner anymore for the rest of the semester, which I found a lot easier financially. I received a study abroad allowance form Tilburg University, and my normal student grant from the Duo (along with a loan from the Duo as well). The rest of my exchange I funded with my savings. I did a lot of saving starting from the moment I heard that I was accepted to go to Australia. The most expensive for me was my housing, this was about 4500 euro. And of course all of the traveling I have done was quite expensive as well, but definitely worth it! I was lucky that I only had to buy one textbook for my courses there. Most of the materials were online. A tip I would like to give you is to try to sell your books to the second hand
bookstore on campus. The textbooks are quite expensive, and it is always convenient to get money back on them.

One of the things I liked a lot about Australia was the easy going mentality of the people. Even though Sydney is a city of millions of people, everyone was very relaxed and easy going. The people are open and friendly. When you need help, you will always find someone prepared to help you. The Australian culture is very western, similar to what we have in Europe, only a lot less stressful. I did not really experience a culture shock during my exchange. Of course the Australians have some different habits, for instance everyone calls you ‘love’ and the standard way of saying Hi is ‘Hey, how’s it going’ even though they really don’t want to know how you’re doing, but apart from these minor things the Australian culture is pretty similar to how we know it here. It is just really laid back: ‘She’ll be right!’ (Is their standard way of saying, no worries man you’ll be fine).

One of the best experiences this exchange has brought me was that I got to meet so many people and make so many new friends from all over the world. It makes your horizon so much broader when you meet people from different nationalities, with different cultures and different norms and values. It really opened my eyes to a lot of things which I never even thought about.

My exchange has been an amazing time. If I would get the opportunity to do it all over again, I would definitely do it without changing anything. I have learned so much about myself during this exchange. I learned to be independent, to live on my own (even though I still didn’t have to cook or clean), I got a lot better at spending my money wisely, and over all I have got a whole different look on life and how I want to live it.

One of the worst experiences I have had during my exchange was the realization that I was actually on my own on the other side of the world. The first weeks went by like a dream, but at some point this realization just hits you. But as hard as this realization was at some point, it really did make me stronger as a person.

A friend of mine in Australia once quoted an exchange in the best way, in my opinion, as possible. She called it: “Not a few months in a life time, but a life time in a few months”. This is exactly what my exchange was. I would recommend everybody to go on exchange. It is a life forming experience in which you will learn so much about yourself and the world.

I would definitely recommend law students to go to the University of New South Wales. It is very good university, with very interesting law courses. Also the UNSW is based on the best location you could wish for in Sydney. I would also recommend Australia in general for an exchange. They have the common law legal system, which is very interesting to learn about. But besides from that, Australia is an amazing country. You can spend months there, and never get tired of it. There is so much to do, so much to see. I absolutely fell in love with Australia.

A few tips if you chose to go to the UNSW. Bring a coat! I thought Australia was the land of the endless summers, well it isn’t. It does actually get cold during winter time, so definitely bring a coat! Also bring a back-pack. If you want to travel around, a back-pack is the best way to do it in Australia. I would recommend you to try to arrange your housing before you leave the Netherlands, it just saves you a lot of extra stress.

Further one there is just one thing you have to do: Enjoy yourself!! Make sure you live Australia to the max, and have an amazing time like I did!