

## THE BASICS

Your first name: Sara Van Dongen

Your email address: sarav@uvic.ca

Your partner university: University of Adelaide

Your UVic major during the exchange: Linguistics and Greek and Latin Language and Literature

UVic session(s) during which you did your exchange: Spring 2009

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## GENERAL EVALUATION

Please rate your overall exchange experience on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 5

Comments: This exchange was the best experience I have ever had. The people I was able to meet and the things I saw and accomplished will stay with me for the rest of my life. While attending classes at Adelaide Uni was fun and instructive in and of itself, it was the experiences outside of school and the life lessons I learned that taught me most while abroad.

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## ARRIVAL

How satisfied were you with your experience of arriving in your host country or city? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 5

Comments: Adelaide Uni arranges to pick you up from the airport and drop you off at your accommodation. If you don't already have somewhere to live, they arrange a week's accommodation so you can get settled into the city and orient yourself. It was very helpful and free!

What assistance, if any, did you receive when you arrived at your exchange destination?

I was picked up from the airport and dropped off at my accommodation.

How difficult was it for you to obtain your travel documents (visa, etc.)?

The visa application was really simple and completed online. I got a response only a few weeks later. The major downside was the cost of a student visa.

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## ORIENTATION AND ASSISTANCE

How satisfied were you with the orientation and assistance available to students at your partner university? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 4

Comments: There were two weeks of exchange student orientation offered at Adelaide Uni. I was under the impression it was mandatory to attend these, but they were mostly optional social events. The orientation program did cover most of the information I needed for attending classes and exchange need-to-know as well as a campus tour. It also allowed me to make some great friends with exchange students from other countries.

How easy was it to find information you needed to know right away?

Very easy. There was a mandatory informational session I attended and the exchange office was very helpful.

What help did you receive from the international staff or office?

Information on how many courses I needed to enroll in, how to get a student card, transferring credit, etc.

What was your impression of the international staff or office?

They were very nice and helpful. I didn't use the office too much, but they were there if I needed to.

What was the orientation like at your partner university, if there was one, and how well did it suit your needs?

There was lots of orientation possibilities offered for a wide array of topics. It was well organized and some of it was very enjoyable. Being a very independent person, I only attended a few events, but I had it accomplished the goals I had of getting to know the university and meeting new people.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site and were there people you could talk to about what you were experiencing?

I didn't get much culture shock, but I definitely had friends who did. We were able to talk to each other about it and sort things out. The staff at the residence building I was staying at were also very accommodating for homesick students.

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## HOUSING

How satisfied were you with the housing available to students? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 4

Comments

I lived in a Uni Housing complex called the Village. I rented a townhouse with 4 other people. It was very nice and a good location, but they had very strict rules concerning guests. Also approximately 80% of the 400 students housed there were international students from Asia, which made it difficult to find Australian friends, especially when they weren't allowed to visit.

How early could students move in to housing at the beginning of term?

You have to rent housing for 6 month periods, so you could move in up to 2 months before term started.

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities?

I rented a townhouse complete with a full kitchen. There were no meal plans.

How satisfied were you with the food?

N/A

How close are the residences to the university?

It was a 20 min walk or 10 min bus ride.

Could students stay in the residences during major holidays?

Yes, the residence is open all year long.

Which residence would you recommend to UVic students?

The Village townhouses and apartments are located very centrally, but they have very strict rules about guests. I would recommend off-campus housing.

If you lived in off-campus housing, how easy was it to find?

n/a

What should future UVic exchange students know about living off-campus?

n/a

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## COURSE REGISTRATION

How satisfied were you with the registration process at your partner university? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 4  
Comments:

Please describe the registration process at your partner university.  
You apply for courses online. It was quite straight forward.

What kind of help was available?  
You could go to an academic counselor, an exchange advisor, or the head of your department for help.

How successful were you in registering for classes you wanted?  
I got into every class that I wanted.

What advice would you offer to next year's exchange students about registration at your partner university?  
It's pretty similar to UVic's.

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**ACADEMICS**

How satisfied were you with the academic program at your partner university? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 4  
Comments:

How did the style of teaching at your partner university compare with that at UVic?  
Very similar. Mostly lecture material with some assignments throughout the year. The majority of grades were collected through exams.

How did the workload compare to what you would expect at UVic?  
My academic course had an extremely heavy work load. It was much more than the equivalent courses at UVic, but I am getting double credit for it.

How many courses did you take in your first term abroad?  
3 courses.

Your second term?  
n/a

What would you recommend as an appropriate course load for other UVic students visiting your partner university?  
4 courses is a full course load for a semester. I recommend taking one less than that so that you can enjoy the country you are in, rather than worry too much about academics.

What specific courses would you recommend to visiting UVic students?  
I took History of Modern Popular Music and it was fantastic. They also have very good viticulture classes.

Why?  
. The music course was fun and very interesting. Adelaide is in the biggest wine region in Australia, so the viticulture class is a once in a life time experience to learn about wine making.

If you studied in a non-English speaking country, what was the availability of courses offered in English?  
n/a

What advice would you give UVic students about succeeding academically at your partner university?  
Just attend classes and keep up on the readings.

What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, and internet access at your partner university?

Students are only given 1 gigabyte of internet usage per semester. If you do anything more than research and check emails on that internet account, it will quickly run out. The computer facilities are more sparse than at UVic, but you can still find them. Also you have to have your laptop checked before you are allowed to use it on campus.

What electronic devices would you recommend a UVic student bring (laptop, PDA, etc.)?

A laptop is a necessity. It is your biggest link to back home and the easiest way to keep in touch with people. Then you will also need it for your academics like writing papers, finding readings online and completing online assignments.

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## **COSTS**

Please indicate currency: **Canadian**

Books - per term: **\$200**

Accommodation - per month: **\$700**

Meals - per month: **\$400**

Local transportation - per month: **\$50**

Health insurance - per term: **\$550**

Personal spending - per term: **\$2000**

Communications (phone, etc.) - per term: **\$500**

Other university related fees - per term: **\$300**

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## **EXTRA-CURRICULAR/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

How satisfied were you with the out-of-class opportunities at your exchange site? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: **4**

Comments:

What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to students?

There were heaps of clubs and sports you could join with a week long club fair in which you could learn about them.

What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

I recommend taking part in as many as possible to see as much of Australia as you can. I particularly enjoyed the surfing and sailing clubs.

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays?

Travel. Travel as much as possible.

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus?

I found it extremely difficult to find a job. There is a career office, but they help more with post-graduate work. It was difficult to find job postings and even more difficult to get hired.

Off-campus?

Same

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

There are lots of opportunities to volunteer with the exchange office and at exchange fairs and such. You just have to look for them.

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## SAFETY AND HEALTH

How safe did you feel at your exchange site? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 5

Comments

What are the biggest safety concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site?

The same as in Canada. Just keep an eye on things when alone at night.

What are the biggest health concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site?

I didn't have any real health concerns.

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## PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends?

I am quite an outgoing person, and so find making friends easily. It was more difficult, however, to befriend Australians than international students.

How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students?

I didn't make many friends with local students. I didn't socialize with them much in class and it was difficult to find reasons to see them outside of class.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site?

I didn't get culture shock at all, but I would miss Canadian culture sometimes. Australia and Canada are very similar.

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging?

Australians are very open, and casual. They are easy to get along with.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I liked the laid-back way of life.

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students?

Everyone was very nice. They really seemed to like Canadians. I would occasionally get someone who had difficulty understanding me, but almost everyone treated the same as they would anyone else.

As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university?

There were disability access things everywhere. I think it would be fairly easy for a disabled student to attend Adelaide Uni.

For students who are visible minorities in your host country?

There were plenty of visible minorities on campus. There were lots of clubs celebrating specific minorities and they integrated well into all of my classes.

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## TAKING STOCK

What are the three most important things for students to take with them when they go to your host country or region?

An ipod, a swimsuit and a good pair of sandals.

What are the three most important things you would tell a UVic student who is going to your partner university on exchange?

Take every possible opportunity to travel. Those will be your most rewarding experiences.

Open yourself to different cultures and experiences. Don't let your fear inhibit you.

Try to make friends with Australians. It's easy to meet other international students, but you will want to know people from your host country.

Is there any other information that you think might prove useful to UVic exchange students attending your host university?

If you are ever feeling lonely or homesick, just remind yourself of what an amazing opportunity you have to experience another culture and live in another country.

What was the most rewarding part of your exchange experience?

Travelling and everything that encompasses. Meeting new people, seeing amazing things and learning so much about myself.

What was your greatest challenge on the exchange?

Teaching myself to live with optimism and a sense of adventure. I learned that every in life is enjoyable if you just bring the right perspective to it.

How has your perspective changed as a result of the exchange?

I have learned so much about myself and that has helped me take everything that happens in stride. If I am okay, everything else is superficial.

What else do you want to say about your exchange experience?

I has been the single most rewarding experience of my life.