

Introduction

Partner university: University of Wollongong

Country: Australia

Major/faculty: Economics

Dates/term(s) of exchange: Feb-June 2013 (Australian autumn semester)

Preparation for exchange

* **Information you would have found valuable when planning your exchange**

The application process outlined everything I had to do when applying which made it very easy.

* **Packing, what to bring**

Some warm clothing (it gets colder in the winter and not all of the residences have heating), backpack for traveling, a raincoat, and a camera.

* **Travel and transportation**

Once you are in Australia getting around was very easy. There is a free bus in Wollongong, and the train goes right into Sydney and to the Sydney airport. Cell phone plans were a good deal there, so having a phone with data was very handy to figure out public transit in new cities.

* **Financial details (i.e. cash/credit card based society, cost of living as compared to Victoria)**

Australia is generally more expensive, although a few things there are cheaper than here (ex. cell phone plans, domestic flights, wine, soft serve ice cream at McDonalds). Wages are much higher there, you are not expected to tip at restaurants, and prices always include tax.

During Exchange

* **Arrival and orientation**

UOW has a free pickup service for exchange students that will take you from the airport in Sydney to your residence/wherever you are staying in Wollongong. For orientation, there is a mandatory orientation day for exchange students that will tell you everything you need to know for the semester. All of the residences also have their own orientation week activities, and there are a bunch of booths with free stuff set up on campus.

* **Accommodation and living**

Accommodation was quite expensive in Australia with the cheapest residence option being existing Kooloobong (which had no meal plan). You could find cheaper options outside of residence although I didn't look into that. I stayed in the existing Kooloobong residence, which was right on campus, and I loved it. Each unit had five rooms with a shared kitchen and living room, and the residence was a mix of all years of students. There also is a free bus that takes you from campus to the beach and to downtown (where the grocery store is). The campus is a similar size to UVic, and Wollongong is a similar size to Victoria. The other residences were scattered throughout town.

* **Academic details (lecture format, schedules, grading, etc.)**

At UOW a fulltime course load was only four courses, and I chose to take three. Most classes also had less lecture time per week than at UVic. Tutorials were usually mandatory, and videos of lectures were posted online for most large size classes. I only took electives while I was there so my courses seemed very easy compared to UVic, although they do mark hard on any type of written assignment.

* **Country information (culture, weather, places to visit, etc.)**

Similar to Canada! I met so many nice people; Canadians seem to have a good reputation there. Some differences were no drip coffee anywhere, and the amount of slang Australians have. Weather was very hot at the beginning of the term, although it definitely gets colder in southern Australia going into winter. The UOW campus is only about a ten-minute bus to beautiful North Wollongong Beach (definitely a highlight of going to school in Wollongong), and there are some amazing beaches just south and north of Wollongong. There is also a train that takes about an hour and a half to get into Sydney (that is quite cheap), so it's very easy to do lots of trips into Sydney. Domestic flights in Australia are also a good deal (Jetstar and Tiger Airlines being the cheapest)! I was able to do several trips on the East Coast and traveled to Melbourne twice during the term.

*** Social and extra-curricular activities.**

I met the most people through my residence, where it was really easy to meet both exchange students and Australians. The classes I was in were also mainly exchange students (Australia 101 and a Happiness course were both very popular for exchange students). UOW has a few options of trips specifically tailored for exchange students at the start of the term – I did the surf camp one that was a lot of fun. Wednesday and Thursday are the most popular nights for students to go out on.

Reflection After Exchange

*** What you've learned and the challenges you faced**

It was initially intimidating going to Australia when I knew no one there, although I ended up having the time of my life. I met lots of amazing people and definitely want to back to Australia sometime soon. Going to school in a different country was an awesome experience, and it makes you want to travel the world.

*** What you wish you knew before you left**

Take a lot of pictures.

*** Words of wisdom for other students**

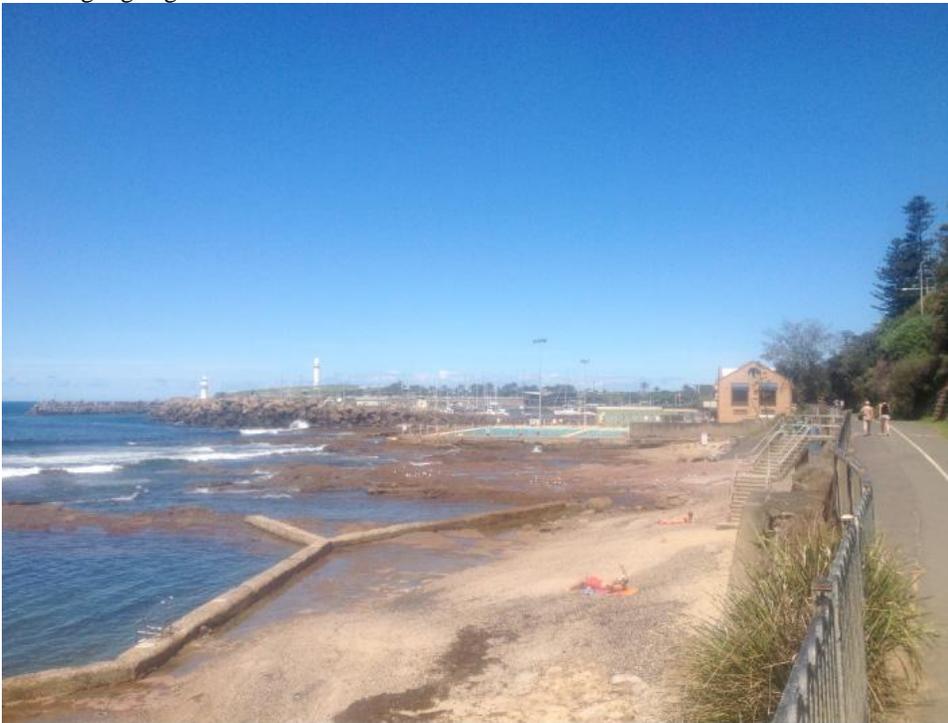
To go on an exchange, and take the opportunity to travel when you're in a different country! You don't know when you'll have an opportunity to go back, and one semester goes by too quick!

Photos

North Wollongong Beach



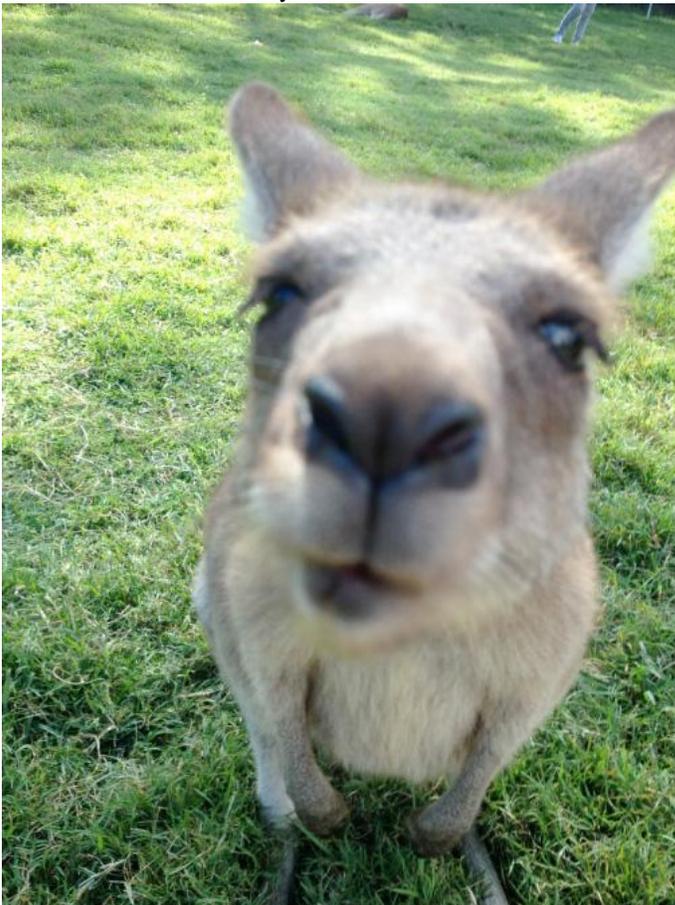
Wollongong Lighthouse



On Campus



Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary in Brisbane



View of Wollongong from Mt Keira (which is right behind campus)



Kiama, just south of Wollongong

