

Australian Year Abroad

A report by Felix Moller

I completed a year abroad at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia for the 2018/19 academic year. I hope this report will help others who are thinking about doing the same.

Applying

The partnership between Warwick and Monash makes the application process relatively straightforward. I was guided through the heap of forms by friendly, helpful people on either side of the globe. Once these were completed and I was approved for enough modules (all of which I was able to change up to three weeks into semester), all I needed was a decent 2:1 grade and I was good to go.

Accommodation

During the application process, I was also directed to the campus accommodation website. I applied and was quickly granted a place at Farrer Hall in the Clayton Residential Village. As far as I know this is not guaranteed, but I don't know of anyone (that applied on time) that failed to get a place this way. Living on campus at Monash is, of course, not compulsory, and is definitely expensive, but I found it to be an easy way to meet some people in similar positions to me, as well as Aussie students and long-term international students. The halls themselves are much like halls at Warwick in terms of facilities.

For my second semester, I decided to move off campus. This was mainly to keep down costs (more on that later), but also because I wanted a different experience and easier access to the city. Clayton Campus, where the majority of Monash Faculties are based, is not ideally located for those who want to spend lots of their free time in Melbourne city. It takes a 10-15 minute walk to the campus bus interchange, followed by a bus to the nearest train station, and finally a half hour or so train ride to the city.

Finding a house was difficult, with few landlords offering a 6 month lease. Though it was quite stressful at the time, I can now say it was definitely worthwhile. We ended up with a partly furnished house (the few beds we needed we easily found for free or cheap on Gumtree) within walking distance of both the campus and a train station with services running regularly to the city.

Finance

Australia is not cheap. For campus accommodation I paid around 1050 AUD (approx. £580) per month, and my second semester house was around 750 AUD (£414). On top of this, I found groceries to be slightly costlier than in England. These costs alone are certainly manageable, but for most students spending a year down under (myself included) travelling around and exploring Australia as well as nearby countries is a top priority. My experience would have been lessened were it not for monetary support by my parents, as well as money saved from student loans over the previous two years.

Minimum wage in Australia is around 19 AUD, so finding a job can ease the load massively. Many of my friends did this, and were able to fund trips around the country.

Study

I took 7 units over the two semesters I spent at Monash. Of these, 4 were Maths units. The teaching methods were fairly similar to my experience at Warwick, though there were more tutor-led classes with discussed problem sheets. My workload was fairly light but this was mostly by my choice. I was disappointed not to be approved for one Maths units I chose for my second semester, but I probably would have been able to get approval had I been more determined.

My other 3 units were Contemporary Australia, Fundamentals of C++, and Introduction to Japanese.

Contemporary Australia is an essay-based unit recommended by Monash to all arriving international exchange students. It deals with issues in Modern Australian life, focussing on a different topic (e.g. environmental issues, sport, racism) every week. It includes a couple of mandatory field trips to the city. I found this to be an extremely enriching unit and I would recommend it to everyone.

I took Japanese because I was planning a trip to Japan for the summer after my studies. This worked exactly as I had hoped and I arrived in Tokyo with some understanding of the culture and the ability to read some signs and greet the locals in their language.

In Australia, almost all units last for one semester, with the exam (if there is one) taking place at the end of that semester.

Life in Australia

Settling into life on campus, and indeed life in Australia, was not easy for me at first, but I was helped by Monash staff and Resident Advisors (students trained to provide support in their halls) and most of all by other students experiencing the same challenge. Monash Residential Services (MRS) put on countless induction events, as did each of the halls individually.

Student life at Monash is much the same as at Warwick. There are a few student bars on or near campus, many clubs and sports teams to get involved with, and an endless list of events on campus and in the city.

Melbourne is a beautiful, lively city. I will treasure the time I spent there for the rest of my life. It is also a well-connected city and I found it easy (but expensive) to travel to the most amazing places, whether by bus, train or plane.

Overview

My time at Monash University has been the most exciting and fulfilling year of my life. There were challenges, but this only made for a more rewarding experience. It has provided me with new perspectives on all areas of my life, interesting avenues for my studies which may not have been possible otherwise, and several lifelong friends. All this, and it has only left me wanting more. In short, I would recommend it to all but the worst of my enemies.