



THE Study Abroad Guide: Sydney, Australia

G'day mate!! I'm so excited that you're heading down under! Sydney is one of the greatest places on earth, and I know you'll LOVE it! If you use any of these recommendations, please let me know, and send me a message or tag me on Insta! I want to live vicariously through you...oh, and check out my blog post about my tips for having an amazing abroad experience (less about logistics, more about *emotions*)!

A little bit about my particular abroad situation...

I studied at UNSW in Kensington. I lived on campus, as was required by my home uni (get used to this word!). Some of my friends lived in places like Coogee, Bondi Beach, and Bondi Junction. They had great setups but had to commute to campus for class...just something to think about.

Now for some basics...

School:

Most Australians live at home; the people living on campus are almost all international. Your classes will most likely meet once a week for lecture and once a week for tutorial (discussion section). MOST lectures don't take attendance, while tutorials are very strict about the number of sessions you can miss before **failing**. Stack your schedule to have class on the least number of days if possible. I had class on Tuesdays and Thursdays, which was fabulous for traveling.

The grading system is super bizarre. This is the breakdown...

85%-100% - High Distinction: This is like an A+. Very hard to get.

75%-85% - Distinction: Most Australians are thrilled to receive this grade range.

This is equivalent to an A in America.

65%-75% - Credit: This is passing.

50-65% - Pass

0-50% - Fail

Even if your classes are easy, it will probably be difficult to get a grade much higher than an 85%. Don't freak out.

Your classes will be the best place to meet Australians! Since you may not be living with them, it can be hard to make aussie friends. Make an effort with your project group-mates in class.

Phone:

You will either keep your American number (a lot of people switch to T-Mobile to do this) or get a new Vodafone SIM card. I got a new SIM card – you can go to any store, and they will set it up for you. I got a plan with 9 GB per month and still occasionally went over when I was travelling. Use WiFi whenever you can and use FaceTime video and audio for calls.

Housing:

You can buy everything you need to furnish your space at Kmart. Target is okay too. They have both in the mall at Bondi Junction.

Money:

Check with your bank about international fees for charging your card. Most people don't open a bank account. If you want to withdraw cash, you will be charged an international fee at the ATM, so make sure you take out enough to make it worth it. Use Venmo and SplitWise.

Transportation:

The bus system is GREAT! Get an Opal card as soon as you get there (at 7/11 or other convenience stores) and load money onto it in stores or via the app. Use Google Maps to find your routes. The train is also great and convenient. There is Uber and Ola but no Lyft. Taxis are the most expensive.

Weather:

Summer is hot (80's) and winter gets down to the 60's. It also can rain a good amount. Go to the beach as much as possible while the weather is beautiful!

Packing:

Obviously try not to over-pack...I felt like I over-packed some stuff and under-packed others. Specifically, bring enough t-shirts and casual clothes. There is almost no need for dresses, skirts, or heels. You don't need as many shoes as you think. I walked everywhere so I practically lived in my running shoes.

And now for the *FUN* stuff!!!

Neighborhoods

CBD: central business district, downtown

The Rocks: touristy part of CBD

Coogee: closest beach to UNSW (2 mile walk)

Randwick/Kensington: UNSW

Bondi Junction: halfway between Randwick and Bondi Beach, huge Westfield mall

Bondi Beach: beach, restaurants, shopping

Paddington/Darlinghurst: artsy, awesome gay pride

Surry Hills: cafes, art galleries, vintage shopping

Newtown: vintage shopping (near USyd)

Food

General Notes:

- × No need to tip!
- × Most places will not split the bill for you.
- × Lots of cafes will serve you and then have you pay your bill up at the counter.
- × Cafes usually close around 4 or 5 pm so we rarely ate dinner out – breakfast is worth it!
- × You will find banana bread and energy balls everywhere.

Lingo:

- × Capsicum – bell pepper
- × Cos – iceberg/romaine lettuce
- × Rocket – arugula
- × Barramundi – sea bass
- × Kingfish – yellowtail
- × Chips – french fries
- × Crisps – chips
- × Lots of weird coffee lingo...I don't drink coffee but "flat white" is a pretty standard latte

Bondi

- Speedos: prettiest food, very famous (look on Instagram)
- Bills: famous for breakfast and dinner – a little fancier, *went for my birthday and everything was delicious (including drinks!)*
- Vida Surf Shop Café: classic aussie brunch
- Fish Bowl: awesome poke chain (lots of locations)
- Fruitologist: famous massive acai bowls
- Green Dream: like sweetgreen but better

Bondi Junction

- Earth to Table: stunning raw vegan food and incredible desserts
- Cha Cha's Ice Cream: vegan gelato made from cashews
- Nalinis's: beautiful vegetarian/middle-eastern food, *banana bread is a must*
- Nutrition Station: build you own protein/veggie plate

Surry Hills

- Bondi Wholefoods: another fave! *banana bread, veggie bowl, and paleo eggs benedict are my go-to's*
- Nomad: fancier dinner, sharing, *amazing cauliflower and eggplant*
- Organic Produce Café: build your own veggie bowls

Pymont

- The Local Mbassy: brunch, *shakshuka is amazing*
- Two Sis: more beautiful brunch food

Paddington

- Proteini: favorite restaurant of all time, *"Vegan with the Lot" is where it's at!*
- Ampersand: cutest bookstore/café, great study spot

Kensington/Randwick/Coogee/Maroubra

- Cali Press: good smoothies, bowls, oats
- Coco Bliss: smoothies, bowls, chia pudding, desserts
- It's Time for Thai: thai
- Blue Monkey: thai
- A Fish Called Coogee: choose your fish from a case and they cook it right there for you! super fresh
- Moo Burger: super good burgers and cheap, other locations too
- Lulu's: cute lunch spot
- Coogee Pavilion: kind of like Eatily with tons of different restaurant options (more on this in the nightlife section)
- Pool Café: super cute if you go to Maroubra Beach for the day

Newtown/Alexandria

- Gelato Blue: vegan gelato
- Grounds of Alexandria: a few amazing restaurants in one garden area

Manly

- Bare Naked Bowls: acai, smoothies (Bronte location too)

Darlington

- Gathered Kitchen: yummy veggie food

CBD

- Sake: fancy sushi
- Café Sydney: fancy dinner, unreal view of the city

Chippendale

- Concrete Jungle: pretty brunch

Other recommendations I didn't get to:

Little Jean (Double Bay)	Nelson Road Tuck Shop (Bondi Junction)
Anita Gelato (Darlington)	Bondi Hardware (Bondi)
Rockpool Bar and Grill (CBD)	Hooked on Poke (Bondi)
Egg of the Universe (CBD)	Preach Cafe (Bondi)
Hale and Hearty (Surry Hills)	Bucket List (Bondi)
Via Napoli (Surry Hills)	Bondi's Best on Hall St (Bondi)
The Winery (Surry Hills)	Raw Bar (Bondi)
Messina (Surry Hills)	Porch and Parlor (Bondi)
Kindness Café (Darlinghurst)	Mr. Perkins (Bondi)
Crust Gourmet Pizza (Clovelly)	The Health Emporium (Bondi)
Clean Treats Factory (Beaconsfield)	Acai Brothers (Bondi)
COOH (Alexandria)	Vue Bar (Bondi)
Crafty Cuts (CBD)	Bondi's Brown Sugar (Bondi)
Soyo (Darling Harbor)	SHUK (Bondi)
Kelly's (Bondi Junction)	Funky Pies (Bondi)
Ruby's Diner (Bondi Junction)	Sadhana Kitchen (Bondi)
	The Nine (Bondi)

Grocery Stores: Coles (like Kroger), Woolworth's (better than Coles), Maloney's (more like Whole Foods), Doctor Earth (some produce but mostly cool health products/supplements, sign up for the rewards program!), Naked Foods (bulk seeds/nuts/grains), About Life Market (like whole foods)

Night Life

General Notes:

- × Sydney has lock out laws meaning that you cannot enter a bar after 1am. That means that people GET to bars/clubs around 10:30 pm.
- × Liquor is extremely expensive because there is a 70% import tax. Drink wine.
- × A lot of bars have this cool technology where they scan your face before entering...don't get in trouble and get banned from a bar.
- × If you appear to be too drunk in line or inside they will kick you out.
- × Drinks at the bar are pretty weak – they use very precise measurements for shots.

Sundays:

- Coogee Pavilion: people go really early (like 3pm) and wear heels, but I've also been at like 7pm in casual clothes for a glass of wine
- Bucket List

Mondays:

- Sidebar

Tuesdays:

- Scary Canary: silent disco every other week - SO FUN like one of my favorite nights to go out, very casual

Wednesdays:

- Golden Sheaf: you will see almost all American kids, lots of fun but very "scene-y"

Thursdays:

- Ivy: a ridiculous club/venue with like nine stories, a pool, 20+ bars, multiple buildings
- Soda Factory: so so fun with a live band and lots of dancing

Fridays:

- Middlebar: lots of dancing, bowling alley and games on the third floor

Saturdays:

- World bar: very popular, different rooms with different vibes so very adaptable and lots of fun!

Activities/Places to Explore

Circular Quay/Rocks/CBD

- Botanical Gardens
- Museums
- Opera House: see a show or go on a tour
- Luna Park: cute little amusement park
- Boat tour: did a dinner tour with my program
- Harbor Bridge: walk across or do the super touristy "bridge climb"
- Sydney Tower Eye: did a morning yoga class at the very top
- Vivid Light Festival: all of downtown lights up for 2 weeks at night and there are cool art installations in the gardens

- × Randwick Horse Races: go at least once! So fun to see aussies dressed up like British people
- × Hunter Valley Wine Tour: didn't do it because it's pretty far
- × Bondi Icebergs: the famous pool, you can pay \$6 to go in or take a yoga class
- × Gay Mardi Gras Parade (Darlinghurst): get dressed up in rainbow!
- × Australian Open (Manly): surf competitions
- × Manly Food and Wine Festival
- × Port Stephens: day trip (2 hour drive) to go ATV riding on the sand dunes

Take the ferry to...

- Watson's Bay: walk to the lighthouse
- Manly Beach

Shop at...

- Westfield Mall (Bondi Junction): has EVERYTHING
- Gould Street (Bondi)
- Oxford Street (Paddington)
- Bondi Markets (food on Saturdays, clothes on Sundays)
- Glebe Markets (Saturday flea market)
- Newtown: vintage

Nature Things

- × Coogee to Bondi Walk: (~5km) do it a million times
- × Spit to Manly Walk: (~9km) took the ferry to Manly then did the walk and bussed back home, not strenuous and lots of cool diverse scenery
- × Surf lessons
- × Figure 8 Pools: rented a car and did the hike down (about 1 hour) and then walked to the pools. GO DURING LOW TIDE! Check online the night before to see what time that will be.
- × Wedding Cake Rock: one of my favorite days – we took the bus, train (to Cronulla), and ferry (to Bundeena). Royal National Park is just stunning. The actual Wedding Cake Rock is fenced off now but there's still tons to see.
- × Blue Mountains: went with orientation but you can take the train there too!
- × Featherdale Wildlife Park: kangaroos!!! go on your way to Blue Mountains
- × **BEACH**: Bondi, Coogee, Maroubra, Manly, all of the beaches between Bondi and Coogee

Trips

General Notes:

- × Pack light! Carry on luggage can only be 7kg so either bring a backpack or check a bag. Your normal carry-on luggage will probably be too heavy.
- × **Jetstart** and **TigerAir** are the cheaper budget airlines.
- × Use Student Universe to search for cheap tickets.
- × YHA hostels are great (for the most part)!
- × Don't freak out if your trip is 2 weeks away and you haven't booked anything. It will be okay.

Byron Bay

hippie, like Venice Beach in LA, small, amazing beach with surfers, live music, great vibes

accommodation: YHA

- Flew to Gold Coast and rented a car → drove down (1 hour)
- Had 1.5 days and 1 night in the YHA - brand new, nice for a hostel
- Amazing beach with good beach walk
- Just walk around the town and shop around!
- food: Folk (best breakfast ever), Combi (amazing breakfast and lunch), Miss Margarita's (fun drinks and Mexican food)

Brisbane

city vibes like Melbourne, divided by a river, good walking city

accommodation: YHA

- Drove up from Byron (2 hours or more with traffic)
- Stayed in the YHA for 2 nights
- Not as many ~health focused~ cafes
- We were here for St. Patty's so there was a mini parade by nothing major
- Walked around the city a ton - saw Brisbane sign, went in the big communal pool (so cool that this exists), did some shopping in the mall, went in the big ferris wheel looking out at the city, walked around/to kangaroo point along the water

Gold Coast

seems like a replica of Miami, touristy beach with high rises

accommodation: YHA

- We stayed in the YHA in Surfer's Paradise - would not recommend staying in this hostel
- Just went to the beach and tanned all day...very chill
- Food recs I didn't get to: Cardamom Pod Brickworks, Mandala & Co, Greenhouse Canteen & Bar

Melbourne

fun, artsy, hippie, more like NYC

accommodation: Airbnb and The Langham

- Went for Ultra music festival and again with my family

- Brighton Bathing Boxes (40 min train out of the city)
- St Kilda - cool area to walk around
- Street art (all over downtown)
- Flinders St and alleys around there (cute cafes and shops)
- Food - Vegie Bar, Tall Timber, White Mojo, Cocomama, Laneway Greens, Flower Drum, Chin Chin (wanted to try but didn't get to - Combo cafe, matcha mylkbar, serotonin)
- Great Ocean Road: did a day long tour (you could also rent a car)

Thailand

accommodation: The Lantern Resorts; De Chai the Oriental

first ½ of spring break, email the hotels ahead of time to arrange for a driver to pick you up from the airport, need phone adaptors, exchange money at the airport or from atm, be careful with food safety (we only ate cooked food), bottled water only!

Phuket: stayed in Patong beach (touristy, lots of markets, bars and clubs, kind of dirty)

- The Lantern Resorts (2 nights) - fabulous location, great staff, not the NICEST but had a room with 2 kings for 4 girls and very affordable
- Walked around for a day and got massages (walk in anywhere, should be less than \$10)
- Full day boat tour of Phi Phi islands - MUST DO THIS!!!! We did one with 7 stops. One of the best days of the trip!
- The Big Buddha - hiked to the top: NOT EASY! Through the forest, very steep, not long though
- Food: ate at the hotel a good amount, use Yelp!

Chiang Mai: stayed about 10 min outside of the old city (a square in the middle of the city), super cool to walk around, 100s of temples, yummy food

- De Chai the Oriental (3 nights) - amazing hotel, fabulous staff, free breakfast
- Walked around the square, tons of cute cheap shopping, lots of temples everywhere, a couple famous ones you pay a few dollars to get into, need to cover shoulders and knees to get in

- ELEPHANTS - **must** do Elephant Rescue Park. About \$90 US for the day - cut grass for them, feed them twice, make vitamin balls, go for a walk, bathe them
- Monk's trail hike
- Food: Service 1921, Ginger, Taste from Heaven, (others I didn't try: Whole Earth, Zoe in Yellow, Aum)

Bali

accommodation: The Payogan; Airbnb

½ half of spring break, also arrange for drivers from the hotel since the airport is far from Ubud and Seminyak (a bit closer), don't need adaptors for all plugs (just depends on the wall), also be careful with food and water safety (including ice!)

Ubud: in the jungle, lots of nature, need a driver (contact me for our guy Bobby! We love him!)

- The Payogan (2 nights) - simply unreal, private pool, villa, not expensive
- Bali Swing - DO NOT DO THIS!!! Waste of \$\$, waste of time, find a different swing
- Nungnung Water Fall - easy "hike" (aka 100000 stairs) down, unreal waterfall
- Downtown - super cute with cafes and shops (even a Starbucks)
- Yoga Barn - 2 hour yoga classes, amazing cafe, spa (need to book in advance)
- Monkey Forest - so fun, feed the monkeys
- Rice Terraces
- Food: Bali Buda, Yoga Barn, Clear Cafe (others I didn't try: Atman cafe, Alchemy Cafe, The Seeds of Life, Sayan House, Ibu Susu)

Seminyak: more beachy/touristy, beach clubs

- Airbnb (3 nights) in a good location
- Beach clubs to hang in the day: The Lawn (in Canggu), Potato Head
- Padang Padang - UNREAL beach with super warm water, where Eat Pray Love was filmed
- Single Fin - best sunset ever
- Food: The Fat Turtle, Cafe Organic, Shelter (went twice!!!), The Yoga Searcher (others I didn't try: Motel Mexicana, Sea Circus, Bo and Bun, The Plantation Grill, Divine Earth, Ku De Ta, Barbacoa, Kynd Community)

Great Barrier Reef

accommodation: Silky Oaks Lodge

- Day trip on a big boat to the outer reefs, helicopter back - UNREAL
- Port Douglas restaurants are pretty good

Uluru (the Outback)

go for 48 hours max, buy the fly masks (you'll thank me), the 2 main sites are Ayer's Rock and Kata Tjuta

accommodation: The Outback Lodge - kind of like camp/a hostel

- So the actual "town" of Ayer's Rock/Uluru is owned by one resort with multiple hotels and restaurants ranging in price...
- Would recommend getting a car and doing stuff on your own instead of doing a tour
- Camel ride!
- Wake up for sunrise both mornings - one view at Ayer's Rock and the other at Kata Tjuta
- Food is not good...it's all expensive (even the not so good stuff) so eat at the nicer restaurants and buy groceries at IGA if you can

New Zealand

went for 6 days during study week (first week of June), rented a campervan with one other friend and it was the best part of the trip, went in the winter so it was COLD but magical – looked like a winter wonderland

accommodation: campervan!

Queenstown: touristy, pretty busy

- Southern Discoveries Milford Sound Cruise: 10/10 recommend. Full day on the bus and boat. You stop at all of the cool places (Mirror Lakes, Eglinton Valley, Hollyford Valley), eat lunch on the boat and are on the water for ~1.5 hours. You could do the drive yourself if you're there NOT in the winter.
- Ben Lomond: This hike took us almost 7 hours in the snow without hiking boots. It was absolutely epic and exhausting. The part of the trail from the saddle to the summit is slightly treacherous but worth it.
- Beautiful walk around the lake – gardens, ice skating rink
- Lots of adventure stuff (bungee jumping, sky diving, big swing etc)

- Food: Fergburger, The Cookie Palace

Wanaka: cute little town about 1.5 hours north of Queenstown

- Walk around the lake and see the Lone Willow Tree
- Roy's Peak: took us about 6 hours WITH hiking boots 😊 This hike is a gradual constant incline with switchbacks.

Mount Cook: We didn't get to go because the roads were blocked with snow.

Things we meant to do...

- Lake Tekapo
- Hooker Valley
- Lake Pukaki
- Tasman Lake

YAY! Obviously this is just one person's perspective on study abroad in Sydney, but I hope it's helpful to you! As always, let me know if you have any other specific questions, and send me your pictures when you go!
Safe travels! xo