

University of Western Australia, Perth

Bachelor of Commerce (3rd year)
Major: International Business
Exchange: Semester 1, 2015



My exchange to Perth was really a last-minute escape from another year in a freezing cold Dunedin flat. I had my heart set on going to Santa Barbara in California after reading the reviews and becoming captivated by the unique beach lifestyle. To my utmost surprise, the first morning that I awoke at the Ocean Beach Backpackers in Cottesloe, I discovered that I had landed myself in the midst of exactly that in Perth. It was 30 degrees and after a 2 minute walk, I found myself standing on one of many white sand beaches along a stunning coastline dotted with restaurants, gelato stands and utes with surfboards in the back. This was so far from the isolated, desert-like city that I had imagined!

Accommodation

Finding suitable accommodation in Perth can be difficult because almost all of the students live at home with their parents. It's also expensive. I was paying 200AUD per week for a room in a pretty old, run-down house, although it was in one of the most expensive suburbs (Claremont). The best place to look is on gumtree (our equivalent of trademe). Luckily, because you'll likely just be looking for a room in a flat with people already living in it, it should be fully furnished when you move in. I would recommend looking for a place in either Cottesloe or Claremont if you don't mind paying a bit extra to be close to the beach, Nedlands if you prefer to be close to uni, or otherwise an apartment in the city. If you're close to uni, you're likely to be living with other exchange students. Otherwise, be prepared to live with people older than you. All of my flatmates were 25-30 but it actually ended up being really great. We didn't spend too much time together but got along really well when we did. My flatmates were extra awesome and often offered to drive me places and bought my friends and I drinks in town knowing that we were poor students!

Lifestyle

Most of my close friends ended up being other exchange students. Be prepared to meet a lot of Swedes and Norwegians because they seem to



flock to Australia in large numbers. I personally got on really well with the Swedes because they were all such genuine, adventurous and fun people. Meeting Aussies can be hard as uni seems to be like a continuation of high school for them. I was lucky enough to meet a really friendly guy in a tutorial who invited me to some events down at the Surf Lifesaving Club and through that, I was able to meet a few of his other friends.

My favourite place to go out was Fremantle. You can start the night at a laid-back bar with some live music (think Bon Iver/Ben Howard style) and then move to more of a club scene later in the night. It costs \$10-\$15 to get into almost every club and getting home from a night out can be difficult. Although there were free trains from the city for a few hours after midnight on Friday and Saturday nights, we'd often miss them and end up having to split a taxi.

The weather in Perth is insanely good. It's sunny 90% of the time (rained about 7-10 days in the entire four months I was there). This might be part of the reason why drinking on a Sunday is so popular there. There are some particular bars that focus on 'Sunday sessions' and we used to spend the morning sunbathing on the beach and then head in for some drinks and snacks in the sun at one of these. It's a really great way to meet people because you can actually relax and have a conversation without being drowned out by music!

Trips

Go to Rottnest Island on the day of the Cottesloe swim. Everyone docks their boats up near the island and parties in the sun all day. This is definitely one of my most memorable days/nights in Perth.

Your options for travel are basically up North to Karijini National Park and Exmouth or down South to Margaret River. I didn't do the big road trip up North in the Easter break but a lot of the other exchange students did and said that it was amazing, although you do spend a lot of time in the car and the flies were apparently awful. We went down to Margaret River to watch the final of the surf pro one weekend and camped out in a national park. You can drive around all the wineries, chocolate and cheese factory during the day and get free samples of everything. Growing up being spoiled by the beauty of the NZ landscape, I didn't find the wineries to be anything extraordinary but there are some really stunning beaches down there.



Bali is a very popular holiday destination because it's only a 3 hour flight from Perth. A big group of us did a trip at the end of semester and it was incredible. For 100AUD per night, you can get a modern villa big enough for 8-10 people with a fully equipped kitchen, 3-4 rooms with ensuites, open-plan living area and private pool. Otherwise, you can get a really nice hotel room to share with a friend with buffet breakfast and regular cleaning included for about 20AUD each per night. I'd

recommend staying at Bingin or Balangan beach. The Sunday session at the Single Fin is also a must. It's a ritzy bar/club on the edge of Uluwatu cliff overlooking a surf break and it gets completely packed with 20-30 year olds looking for a good time! I didn't get the chance to visit the islands but apparently Nusa Lembongan and Gili T are also incredible. Just make sure you do your research and book accommodation before you go to avoid getting overcharged for a noisy, dirty place.



Transport

Perth is very spread out. If you don't love public transport now, you will learn to! If you download the Transperth app and get a SmartRider card from the university, it's really very convenient and cheap. You basically just tell the app where and when you want to go and it will tell you everything, even how long you need to walk to the bus stop. A bike could also be a good option.

Insurance and Academics

Being an NZ citizen means that you don't have to pay the Overseas Student Health Care fee. You can get a Medicare card and visit the doctor at uni for free whenever you need to. I used Southern Cross Health and Travel Insurance and it cost me 190NZD.

I can only speak for Commerce but UWA had even less contact hours than Otago. I was taking two marketing papers, a 300-level finance and 200-level German, and still had Thursday and Friday completely free. Most of the papers only had a 1½ hour lecture and 45 minute tutorial each week and the exams were only 2 hours. Don't be too complacent though because some of the Commerce papers are designed really poorly, in that they only have a small number of multi-choice questions each worth a big percentage of the total, so you really have to know what you're doing.

Conclusion

I still can't believe that I have had the best five months of my life in a place that I was rather unsure about. If you love heat, nice beaches and want to be in a city where there is always something happening, then go to Perth. It may not offer the same student life as some other cities, but I can say that I might have just, completely unexpectedly, found the place that I want to live in the future. The fact that I booked flights to the US for my second exchange on the day I was leaving Perth for Bali shows just how amazing this whole experience was – Be warned, it's addictive once you start!