



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Melbourne
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2 2021
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Geography

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Disaster Resilient Cities	English	300 Geography unspecified
East Timor Field Class	English	300 Geography unspecified
Information Visualisation	English	300 Geography unspecified

Total Otago credits gained: 54 points 72 points 108 points _____

Any comments about these papers?

Because I study geography, I sought papers that included class field trips out of Melbourne. In the East Timor paper, the week-long field trip to rural Victoria was shortened to a two-night camp due to COVID, but it was still an amazing opportunity to visit beaches, see wildlife and learn about both the cultural significance and geomorphology of the landscape. There are many fascinating stories about volcanic eruptions and the history of human presence in the land over the last 30,000 years.

The disaster resilience paper was great to do online because lectures were a Q+A style and tutorials involved discussions, which allowed us to meet our lecturers and other students. I'd recommend this paper to Art or Science geography students.

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

For each paper, it was typical to have pre-recorded lectures to watch before scheduled lectures, which meant additional preparation on the side of readings. Because I was taking three papers, I found the workload very manageable. Due to online learning, there was a lot of freedom to study to your own schedule, with the exception of tutorials. I found I had plenty of time to get out and experience the city in between learning.

Accommodation

What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?

After not being able to find a share house on Flatmates.com that suited me, I settled for a student accommodation in Carlton. I wish I knew that the Fairy Floss Facebook page was where many young people advertise room vacancies. I don't recommend my specific accommodation, but Carlton is a great location – it neighbours the CBD, university campus, Queen Victoria markets and Fitzroy shops. I know many other kiwi exchange students stayed in Brunswick, as this is an affordable student suburb with plenty of nice op shops, cafes and bars. They enjoyed living in these flatshare houses for the social aspect, though university accommodation would be great for this too (just a fair amount more expensive!).

Money matters

Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance

My one-way flight was about \$300. Accommodation was \$190 AUD a week, bills included, however many flats and apartments will be over \$200 a week if close to the city. The university ran a food bank program where they handed odd frozen meals and groceries to students each week. I was able to save a lot of money on food, spending no more than \$30 a week on groceries.

Applying for Medicare was a long process because of COVID delays, but it meant that GP visits were covered. All New Zealanders should be eligible for this.

What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)

I set up an Australian bank account soon after I arrived using Commonwealth Bank. This was very straightforward to set up. Before my card was sent to me, I was able to use my NZ Visa Debit everywhere, which has a small exchange fee with each purchase.

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?

No.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

No.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Because of lockdown all events were online and there seemed a lacking interest by local students to participate in these events. I went along to a few online quiz nights. MUSEX is an exchange student club that I would highly recommend signing up for. I was able to attend pub meet-ups and dinners where I could get to know the other exchange students (almost all kiwis) and Melbourne students. Also, the MUSEX Facebook group chat was great for regular, informal communication with others during lockdown.

The student services at University of Melbourne, like getting support regarding career guidance or course advise, is a simple process. There also a lot of yoga or mindfulness classes and workshops - the university and student union put a lot of focus on helping students with stress and mental health issues.

What was the university/ city like?

The university campus is gorgeous. Like Otago, they have a big clocktower building and there is a Hogwarts-like courtyard quad. There are also many gardens and native trees. I recommend doing a walking tour of the history of the campus and what the landscape was like pre-Europeans from a free app you can download on your phone.

Melbourne as a city is very exciting. If you like sports and the arts, there are always events happening. Even in lockdown, I was able to explore the laneways and arcades in the CBD, beautiful parks and gardens in the suburbs and the famous Queen Victoria Market. Many central suburbs have their own weekend markets, popular foodie spots and gardens to explore so I recommend taking the trains and trams to different areas.

Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

Melbourne is known for its food scene. The CBD is like a smorgasbord of every cuisine. You can find the best dumplings in Chinatown and French pastries in the laneways. Lygon St is full of Italian restaurants. Fitzroy is a very trendy area with bars and cafes that cater to vegans.

There are many museums and galleries to visit. The National Gallery of Victoria has two large buildings in the central city that require a few visits to properly take in every space and exhibition.

Melbourne does itself proud with providing greenspaces for its urban residents. Carlton Gardens, the Royal Botanic Gardens and Fitzroy Gardens were my personal favourites. Walking tracks extend all along the Yarra River and its tributary streams. Places like Merry Creek are great to escape from the city and feel like you're in the wilderness. I definitely utilised these spaces for my running training.

The public train network is pretty extensive, so if you don't have a car you can still make it to Geelong, Werribee, Mornington Peninsula and Dandenong Ranges. Everyone mentions the Great Ocean Road as a must-do, but this would require renting a car or going on a tour.

Any tips for future students?

Definitely try to make the most of the fun opportunities in the city, without occupying too much of your time studying. Embrace living in a big city and be sure to see live comedy and music and other cultural events on offer! If you're a female enrolled in a science subject, be sure to get involved with STEM, as they have networking nights and workshops. As a kiwi, its also possible to get casual or part-time work which would help with finances if you're able to fit the time in.

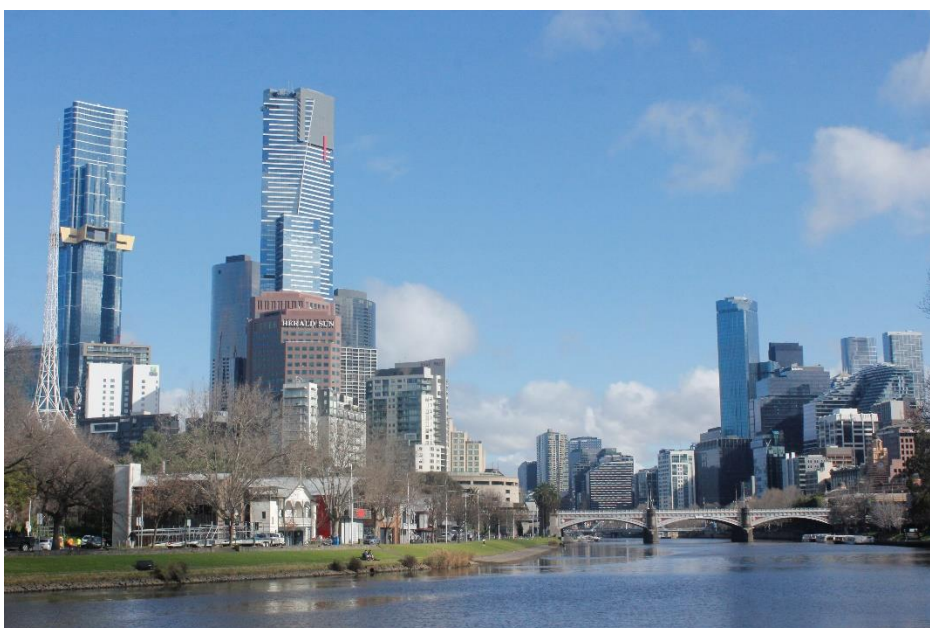
Melbourne has great career opportunities. It is definitely worth making the effort to network with fellow students, professors, organisations/companies that catch your attention (cold-calling about work vacancies can sometimes lead to fantastic experiences). The university of Melbourne has a very good reputation and is known as one of the highest-ranking in Australia, which gives you an advantage if seeking graduate roles or internships in Australia after finishing your semester.

Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!

My exchange experience will be unique to previous years because we were in lockdown for most of the semester and off-campus the entire semester. As someone who has huge enthusiasm for travelling, I found my favourite thing about the exchange experience was exploring the vibrant city and the student areas. There are always so many things to see and do. The city goes big on celebrating cultural festivals, such as comedy and fashion, and the Christmas season. There are many kiwis who live in Melbourne who are always friendly to meet and form a network of friendships between.

After my exchange, which was the final semester of my degree, I was able to get a short-term graduate position so that I can spend more time living in Melbourne. I am excited to begin a new chapter in my life here!



Central City Landscape



Brighton beach



Red cliffs lookout (Werribee)