

My experience at the University at Sydney (August – December 2022)

The end of July 2022 I arrived in Sydney. I had one and a half weeks to get ready for the upcoming Semester 2. I would recommend planning to spend at least two weeks before the lecture period purely because I struggled a lot with jetlag.

HOUSING

I was lucky to know a student from FU that already lived in Sydney and recommended me to his landlord. After one video call and 4 weeks later, I moved into a flat share in Surry Hills which is a very nice neighborhood close to the campus. It is a very diverse and open-minded neighborhood with lots of fun bars and dance clubs. Unfortunately, the place was also home to two cats which I was allergic to. Because of that the search started all over again and I signed up for flatmates.com.au the Australian version of WG-gesucht.de. The semester had already started at that time, so the two weeks of searching were very stressful. I recommend finding a place BEFORE the semester starts if possible. Finally, I found a flat share with 9 other students in Forest Lodge which is situated right next to the main campus. I could walk to my classes every day in under 10 minutes. I would say I got very lucky, but you can find a decent place on flatmates.com.au, just look out for scams. I paid 320 AUD per week. I know that student housing is usually MUCH more expensive so taking the time to find a place on your own is worth it if you want to save money.

UNI LIFE

USYD puts a lot of effort into introduction and orientation events for international and exchange students. The only issue is to notice them. Try to ask people and pay attention to reminder-emails so that you don't miss out on important events. I participated in a guided tour through the botanical garden in Sydney led by an aboriginal woman. You normally need to be a USU member, the Union of USYD. It is cheap and easy to sign up. The Union also organizes several events during the semester like Baby Goat Yoga (it was super cute, and I highly recommend).

Compared to Berlin, I found the workload to be higher. This is because there were three to four assignments per class and weekly reading quizzes. All the assignments are graded and make up a percentage of the final grade. That means from week one to the final week you will be quite busy. Try to balance it out and meet friends, go on hikes or to the beach.

HEALTH SYSTEM / INSURANCE

I decided to take an additional insurance because the OSHC (that is a visa condition) is very basic. If you are at higher risk of getting sick (like me) you should consider buying another insurance.

TRANSPORTATION

Sydney has got busses, trams, metro, and trains. Overall, a good running system. Apply for an OPAL Concession Card which gives you reduced student-fares for public transportation. It is worth it! You just tab on when you enter and off when you leave the bus etc. I was also surprised how cheap it was to use the regional trains that take you to many hiking spots and national Parks around Sydney like to the Blue Mountains.

FREETIME ACTIVITIES

Depending on where you live you will make a lot of friends that you can plan fun activities with. However, if you decide to find a place on flatmates instead of student housing or cannot join the introduction events, it might be a bit more difficult to find friends. In this and in any case, you should join 2 or 3 societies or clubs at university. Some of them are fun and only cost a small fee to join (0-20 AUD). I recommend the Bushwalking Society. Anyone in the society can organize and lead a trip. I did the coastal walk from Bondi to Coogee Beach, Blue Mountains and Royal National Park. They also provide gear for camping trips or rock climbing.

If you prefer a more relaxing activity you can choose from many beaches in and around Sydney. There are also seawater pools that are usually public and free. I really like Manly Beach, which from my location I needed to take a bus and then the ferry to get to. But the Opal Card works easily with ferries as well. Bronte has a nice beach and a public rockpool too.

WHAT I WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY / ADVICE

If I would have known that the semester would go by so quickly, I would have gone to the beach way earlier. I would also pack a little scarf and long sleeve shirts and a rain jacket and water-proof shoes. Like many other I arrived with the idea of sunny Sydney, white sandy beaches, and warm weather all the time. No. Be prepared for chilly/cold and windy days. Otherwise, you will end up buying a lot of clothes that you could have brought with you.

You are allowed to work with the student visa. Remember to apply for a TFN Tax File Number online if you are interested in finding a job. I signed up for Find-a-babysitter and found a job the same day. Another option is Sidekicker which helps you find casual jobs.